

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Saidov Bakhtiyor Odilovich. The Deputy Prime Minister shared with him his recent discussions in Kabul regarding the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Railway Line Project.



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Pakistan threatens Simla accord exit

National Security Committee decides to cuts trade ties with India, closes Wagah border; calls water usurpation ‘Act of War’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday announced to suspend the trade ties with India, close Wagah Border crossing, downgrading of diplomatic ties and warned of holding all bilateral accords in abeyance, calling any attempt to usurp its water rights as an "act of war."

The decisions were taken in the meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC), chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and discussed the national security environment and the regional situation, particularly in the wake of Pahalgam attack in the Anantnag District of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on April 22, 2025.

The committee expressed concern over the loss of tourists' lives, and reviewed the Indian measures announced on April 23, 2025 and termed them "unilateral, unjust, politically motivated, extremely irresponsible and devoid of legal merit." Rejecting the Indian announcement to hold the binding Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, the top security body observed that water was a "vital national interest" of Pakistan, and a lifeline for its 240 million people which would be safeguarded at all costs.

"Any attempt to stop or divert the flow of water belonging to Pakistan as per the Indus Waters Treaty, and the usurpation of the rights of lower riparian, will be considered as an Act of War and responded with full force across the complete spectrum of National Power," the committee declared. It said that noting the reckless and irresponsible behaviour of India in total disregard of international conventions, UN Security Council Resolutions and international obligations at will, "Pakistan shall exercise the right to hold all bilateral agreements with India including but not limited to Simla Agreement in abeyance, till India desists from its manifested behaviour of fomenting terrorism inside Pakistan; trans-

national killings; and non-adherence to international law and UN Resolutions on Kashmir."

The committee decided that Pakistan would close down the Wagah Border Post, with immediate effect suspending all cross-border transit from India through this route without exception. However, those who have crossed with valid endorsements may return through that route immediately but not later than April 30, 2025.

Pakistan announced the suspension of all visas under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) issued to Indian nationals and deems them cancelled with immediate effect, with the exception of Sikh religious pilgrims. The Indian nationals currently in Pakistan under SVES have been asked to exit within 48 hours, excluding Sikh pilgrims.

Pakistan declared the Indian Defence, Naval and Air Advisors in Islamabad persona non grata, directing them to leave Pakistan immediately but not later than April 30, 2025. Annulling the said posts in the Indian High Commission, the support staff of these advisors have also been directed to return to India. Pakistan also announced to reduce the strength of Indian High Commission in Islamabad to 30 diplomats and staff members, with effect from end of this April.

"Pakistan's airspace will be closed with immediate effect for all Indian owned or Indian operated airlines. All trade with India including to and from any third country through Pakistan, is suspended forthwith," the committee decided. The security body underscored that Pakistan and its armed forces remained fully capable and prepared to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against any misadventure, as clearly demonstrated by its measured yet resolute response to India's reckless incursion in February 2019.

"India's belligerent measures have vindicated the Two-Nation Theory as well as the apprehensions

of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, as encapsulated in the 1940 Pakistan Resolution, which continues to echo the sentiments of the complete Pakistani nation. The Pakistani nation remains committed to peace, but will never allow anyone to transgress its sovereignty, security, dignity and their inalienable rights." The National Security Committee observed that Kashmir remained an unresolved dispute between Pakistan and India as recognized through multiple UN resolutions.

"Pakistan continues to support the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. The continued Indian state oppression, abrogation of statehood, political and demographic gerrymandering, has persistently led to an organic backlash from the people of IIOJK, which perpetuates cycles of violence," it said. The participants believed that India's systemic persecution of minorities, particularly Muslims, had become more pervasive with attempts at forced passage of Waqf Bill the latest one to marginalize Muslims across India.

"India must resist the temptation to exploit such tragic incidents to its advantage and take full responsibility for its failure to provide security to the people." The committee unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and that Pakistan was the world's front-line state against terrorism, having suffered immense human and economic losses.

"Indian attempts to inject volatility in the environment along Pakistan's eastern borders is aimed at distracting Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts. In the absence of any credible investigation and verifiable evidence, attempts to link the Pahalgam attack with Pakistan are frivolous, devoid of rationality and defeat logic," the committee said. The NSC said that India's worn-out narrative of victimhood could not obfuscate its own culpability in fomenting terrorism on Pakistan's soil, nor could it distract attention from its systematic and state spon-



sored oppression and human rights violations in IIOJK.

"Contrary to Indian claims, Pakistan has in its custody incontrovertible proof of Indian-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan, including the confession of a serving Indian Navy officer, Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav, who remains a living testament to India's state-sponsored terrorist activities." The National Security Committee deplored the implicit threat contained in the Indian statement of April 23 and urged the international community to remain mindful of India's state sponsored extraterritorial assassinations or attempts on foreign soil.

It said that Pakistan had recently exposed such Indian heinous acts along with various other states with undeniable evidence. Pakistan will pursue all those responsible, planners and perpetrators alike and ensure that justice is served. Any threat to Pakistan's sovereignty and to the security of its people will be met with firm reciprocal measures in all domains, the NSC resolved. The top security body asked India to refrain from its reflexive blame game and cynical staged managed exploitation of incidents like Pahalgam to further its narrow political agenda which served only to inflame tensions and obstruct the path to peace and stability in the

Pakistan summons Indian Charge d'Affaires over diplomatic row

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan summoned Charge d'Affaires of India Geetika Srivastava to the Foreign Office and officially handed over a demarche. The Indian Charge d'Affaires was officially informed about decisions taken in National Security Committee meeting in Islamabad following Indian aggression. Pakistan has decided to declare the Defense, Air, and Naval Attaches of the Indian High Commission 'persona non grata'. These officials, along with supporting staff, have been asked to leave Pakistan. Additionally, the staff of the Indian High Commission has been capped at 30 personnel. Geetika Srivastava was also informed about other decisions that all Indian nationals, except Sikh pilgrims, have been given 48 hours to depart Pakistan. Furthermore, Pakistan has decided to close the Wagah border crossing and has formally notified India that its airspace will be closed to all commercial Indian flights.

Indian BSF soldier arrested

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Rangers on Thursday captured a soldier of the Indian Border Security Force in Punjab, according to reports on Indian media. The Indian soldier reportedly strayed into Pakistani territory when he was arrested. According to Indian media, the trooper was captured in the Ferozepur area and was identified as Constable P K Singh of the 182nd battalion of the BSF. "During the routine movement, Singh inadvertently moved beyond the Indian border fence and entered Pakistani territory, where the Pakistan Rangers detained him across the Ferozepur border," said India Today.

region Extremely irresponsible war-mongering Indian state-controlled media, fueling volatility in the

regional calculus is reprehensive, which requires serious introspection, it added.

‘Will pursue them to ends of Earth’

Modi on Pahalgam attack perpetrators, backers

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday vowed to punish backers and those responsible for carrying out attack against tourists in the Pahalgam area in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), resulting in over two dozen fatalities.

"I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer [...] We will pursue them to the ends of the Earth," PM Modi said while addressing a gathering in the state of Bihar.

Speaking at his first public speech since the attack, Modi said: "I say this unequivocally: whoever has carried out this attack, and the ones who devised it, will be made to pay beyond their imagination". "They will certainly pay. Whatever little land these terrorists have, it's time to reduce it to dust. The willpower of 1.4 billion Indians will break the backbone of these terrorists."

He finished his speech with rare comments in

India summons Pak's diplomat

NEW DELHI: India summoned Pakistan's top diplomat in Delhi, Saad Ahmad Warraich, and handed him a formal persona non grata notice for its military diplomats, reported Indian media on Thursday. On Wednesday, Indian Prime Minister Modi chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which lasted over two hours. The Ministry of External Affairs briefed the media on the measures announced following the deadly attack in Pahalgam. — Agencies

India blocks Govt of Pakistan's X account

ISLAMABAD: India has blocked the official social media account of the Government of Pakistan on X (formerly Twitter) across its territory, intensifying tensions between the two countries. The action was taken without investigation, allegedly in response to the recent Pahalgam incident in Indian-occupied Kashmir. According to Indian media, the decision was made upon the request of India's Ministry of Information Technology, leading X to restrict the account's visibility within India. This came after India accused Pakistan of involvement in a terror attack in Pahalgam, which claimed the lives of 28 tourists.

English, directing them to an audience abroad. "Terrorism will not go unpunished," Modi said, adding: "Every effort will be made to ensure that justice is done". The premier's remarks come as India, as

reported by the local media, has summoned the top Pakistani diplomat to New Delhi to give notice that all defence advisers in the Pakistani mission were persona non grata and given a week to leave.

Trade with India out of question: Atta Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said the unilateral action of India to suspend the Indus Water Treaty had no legal justification, which denotes its disregard and ignorance of trans-boundary accord.

"The statement from India about the suspension of Indus Water Treaty is childish and highly non-serious, which shows that they neither read the Indus Water Treaty nor ever tried to fathom its legal standing," the minister said while addressing a news conference along with Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar. He said Pakistan had given an appropriate response to India's hollow and shaky threats.

He said bilateral trade with India was out of the question, and through any third country, it has also been suspended today, which will inflict losses on the Indian economy. He said that Pakistan's airspace had been closed to India, which would eventually cause millions of dollars in losses to Indian airlines.

The Minister remarked that India could only resort to hurling hollow threats, and it was all just from their side. Attaullah Tarar paid tribute to Pakistani journalists who effectively pleaded country's case in the Indian media. He said the entire world knew that India did sponsor terrorism in Pakistan and had been this tactics for its political gain. He emphasized that Pakistan was a front-line state in the fight against terrorism.

He said the Pakistani narrative had prevailed against India, which churned out distorted narrative to divert global attention from its actions of sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan. In response to a question, he said that successes had been achieved against terrorists by the security forces which are effectively tackling them, and that's why India seemed perturbed, and it was obvious that it had been sponsoring terrorism in Balochistan and KP.

KP CM strongly condemns Indian govt stance after Pahalgam incident

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information & Public Relations Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif said Thursday that the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur had strongly condemned the behavior of the Indian government following the Pahalgam incident.

Presiding over the 31st meeting of the Provincial Cabinet held here, the Chief Minister, he said, has termed the Indian government's aggressive posture in the wake of the incident as highly regrettable and utterly unacceptable. "Pakistan is fully prepared to give a befitting response to any form of Indian aggression," stated the Chief Minister Gandapur.

The Chief Minister, he said, further observed that the Modi-led government is attempting, under a well-orchestrated conspiracy, to exploit the Pahalgam incident against Pakistan, but this malicious attempt has completely failed. "The incident itself is a glaring proof of the Indian government's security and administrative failure".

Barrister Dr. Saif said that the Chief Minister Gandapur had expressed deep sorrow over the loss of precious human lives in the incident and criticized the Indian government for hurling baseless accusations at Pakistan in an effort to conceal its own incompetence.

He said the CM Khyber Pakhtunkhwa warned that if the

Indian government tries to use the incident as a pretext for any kind of hostility, it will have to bear severe consequences. "We are fully united for upholding the sovereignty, integrity and interest of our country, Pakistan. We are always prepared to make every sacrifice for our nation and homeland" asserted the CM. The Chief Minister, he said, reiterated that the Indian government's belligerent attitude has always posed a serious threat to regional peace and stability.

The meeting was attended by the cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, Senior Member Board of Revenue, Administrative Secretaries and Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Elaborating the decisions of the Cabinet, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif said that the Cabinet approved draft Bill for Amendment in Section-12 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Charities Act, 2019. The amendment provides for every renewing the registration of a charity after every two years of its registration.

Earlier, the cabinet also approved adding new set of rules Part IX-A in the West Pakistan Land Revenue Rules, 1968 in pursuance of the provisions of sections 121, 122 (2), 129 (1), 148 and 182 of the West Pakistan Land Revenue Act, 1967. The new set of rules pertains to demarcation of land and eviction of unauthorized landowners.

The cabinet, he said, accorded approval to the appointment of two members for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Information Technology Board. It also allowed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BOIT) to utilize Rs. 25.00 Million out of the Leftover Fund to cover the staff salaries and operational expenses. The cabinet also approved Rs. One Billion as grant in aid/subsidy for smooth operation of Peshawar BRT Services during the current financial year.

According to Barrister Dr. Saif, the Cabinet approved forwarding the joint Resolution No. 132 adopted by the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the Federal Government, which states that "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly categorically rejects the proposed amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), as they are contrary to the principles of a free press and freedom of expression. The Assembly stands in full solidarity with the journalist community and strongly condemns any action aimed at restricting or suppressing journalistic freedoms. We therefore call upon the Provincial Government to recommend to the Federal Government that all controversial, undemocratic, and oppressive amendments to the PECA law be withdrawn."

The cabinet approved amendments in the Rules of Business 1985 in respect of Social Welfare, Special Education & Women Empowerment Department allowing the department to place gender parity report before the Provincial Assembly on annual basis, concluded Barrister Dr. Saif.

Terror incidents in India self-sponsored: Kh Asif

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Thursday categorically said that any terrorists attack on Indian soil was always sponsored by India itself to achieve its ulterior motives.

Addressing a news conference with Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Tarar, he said that when Pulwama incident occurred, the then Indian government subsequently revoked Article 370 in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

He said that India had been the sponsored of ter-

rorist activities in the region, adding that India had deputed 0.9 million armed troops in IIOJK to suppress the voice of innocent Kashmiris people. The minister questioned how Pahalgam incident occurred and stated that, following the attack, India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty which is tantamount to a clear violation of international law.

He said that Pakistan has always been ready to give a befitting response to Indian aggression and adventurism, without yielding to international pressure. He said that following the Pulwama incident, India violated Pakistan's airspace, prompting Pakistan's valiant armed forces to shoot down their two fighter jets.

"Pakistan is fully capa-

ble to give befitting reply to India if it violates the country's soil or airspace again and Pakistan armed forces and people will protect every inch of its motherland and teach an exemplary lesson to India," he vowed. He went on to say that Pakistan is a responsible sovereign state that does not engage in terrorism anywhere in the world. "India is responsible for terrorist incidents within Pakistan, including those in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he added.

The minister reiterated that India was behind terrorists' attacks in Pakistan and Kulbhushan Jadhav was ample proof of it, who confessed that he was involved in terrorists' incidents and killing of innocent citizens in Pakistan.

posted in Islamabad persona non grata. These officials must leave the country by April 30. The strength of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad will be reduced to 30 diplomats and staff," he said.

In a major move, he said Pakistan had closed its airspace to all Indian-owned or Indian-operated airlines, whereas all trade with India, including third-country transits through Pakistan, was suspended. "India has a long history of using false flags and blame games to justify aggressive policies," Dar said, asserting that Pakistan possesses credible evidence of foreigners entering Indian-held Kashmir, allegedly with the support of Indian intelligence agencies.

He said Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued a formal statement on the Pahalgam incident before India's evening press briefing, expressing concern over the attack, he added. Dar warned that unilateral Indian actions may prompt Pakistan to suspend other bilateral agreements, including the historic Simla Agreement.



Murad, IsDB team discuss WASH project, houses for flood affectees

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah held a meeting with a high-level delegation from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), led by Regional Director Dr. Walid Abdelwahab and the discussion focused on two key projects: the Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project (SFEHRP) and the Sindh Integrated Health and Women Empowerment Project, both of which involve collaboration with the World Bank.

The meeting took place at CM House and included Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, PSCM Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Najam Shah, Secretary Health Rehan Baloch, and CEO SPHF Khalid Shaikh. The IsDB delegation included Country Manager Ishtiaq Akbar and IsDB Pakistan Representative Muhammad Alio Yazdai, among others.

The Chief Minister welcomed Dr. Abdelwahab and expressed gratitude for the IsDB's support in rebuilding homes for the flood-affected population. The IsDB is financing \$200 million for the reconstruction of houses for those impacted by the flooding. The Chief Minister stated that his government, in partnership with international collaborators and NGOs, is actively implementing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) projects in various districts to improve public health, particularly in flood-affected and underserved communities. In response to the Chief Minister's request, the IsDB agreed to provide additional support for the WASH project.

Murad Shah emphasised that the SFEHRP and WASH projects have been designed to enable owner-driven, multi-hazard resilient reconstruction of core housing units following the 2022 floods. Regarding the physical progress of the projects, the Chief Minister mentioned that the first instalment of Rs 75,000 has been processed for 155,000 beneficiaries to start reconstructing their homes. Additionally, the second instalment

CM meets US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah met with US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker to discuss mutual cooperation between the United States and the Sindh government, emphasising climate change and its impact. The meeting took place at CM House and was attended by US Consul General Scott Oberum, Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Haider Shah, Principal Secretary Agha Wasif, and other senior officials. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and Natalie Baker exchanged views on various bilateral matters, including agricultural development and the use of modern farming technologies. They also explored collaboration in education, healthcare, and investment, with both sides underscoring the need for joint measures to address environmental challenges.

The rehabilitation of flood-affected communities and the reconstruction of homes were key points of discussion. Murad Ali Shah stated that his government is building 2.1 million homes for flood victims and has granted them ownership rights. Natalie Baker expressed satisfaction with the developmental efforts of the Sindh government and assured continued US support and cooperation. Murad Shah thanked the US government for its assistance and reiterated his commitment to further strengthening bilateral ties. The meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides agreeing to enhance mutual relations.

of Rs 100,000 has been processed for 72,384 beneficiaries, the third instalment of Rs 100,000 has been processed for 21,645 beneficiaries, and the fourth and final instalment of Rs 25,000 has been processed for 1,494 beneficiaries who have completed their houses.

Sindh Integrated Health & Women Empowerment Project: This \$280 million project involves financing of \$50 million from the IsDB, \$30 million from the Sindh government, and \$200 million from foreign fund assistance (FPA). Murad Shah explained that the project aims to enhance the utilisation and quality of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent, and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) services for poor and vulnerable populations, particularly adolescents and women, in targeted areas of the province.

The program will sustainably improve and build the health and economic resilience of communities in the project locations by adopting an integrated approach to address

socioeconomic determinants and the impacts of natural disasters and pandemics on vulnerable populations, especially poor women."

The process to hire a third-party firm to oversee the skill development of 6,000 eligible women has begun in consultation with the IsDB. Under the program, 124 government dispensaries will be rehabilitated and upgraded, with diagnostic and preliminary design reports already completed. The survey for the rehabilitation and upgradation of a Regional Training Institute has also been conducted, and estimates for the rehabilitation have been shared with IsDB.

As for the rehabilitation and upgradation of six Public Health Schools, it was mentioned that the survey and initial needs assessment reports have been completed, and estimates are under review. Similarly, survey and initial needs assessment reports have been prepared for the rehabilitation and upgradation of nine Community Midwifery (CMW) Schools.

Federal, provincial leadership push for uniform climate and water policy

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A consultative session on climate coordination and environmental challenges was held in Karachi, chaired by Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik. The session was attended by Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh on Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development, Mr. Dost Muhammad Rahimo. The meeting focused on the need for a cohesive national framework to address diverse provincial challenges and promote Pakistan's environmental progress internationally.

Opening the session, Federal Minister Dr. Musadik Malik emphasized the importance of showcasing provincial initiatives to global stakeholders: "The world must know about the steps being taken in Sindh. The greater the awareness, the more institutions like the World Bank, UNDP, and others will take notice and support these efforts." He urged that Sindh's pioneering work should be highlighted, as mentioned by Mr. Dost Muhammad Rahimo: "Massive plantation has been done in Thar Coal Block 2; the Sindh government has approved a ban on plastic shopping bags, which will soon be implemented; urban forestry projects are underway; and Pakistan's first carbon credit project focusing on mangrove protection has been initiated by Sindh."

Dr. Malik further noted the under-utilization of international support mechanisms: "UN grants, WHO scholarships, and technological updates are available, but not being

used to their full potential. We must mobilize to benefit from these opportunities."

Highlighting Sindh's specific concerns, Advisor Dost Muhammad Rahimo explained:



"The dynamics and topography of each province are different. Coastal development directly impacts livelihoods, especially in Thatta, Badin, Sujawal, and Karachi, where the lack of fresh water discharge into the delta is becoming critical. It is important if mini port can be established at Kaiti Bander which will reduce pollution levels in Karachi." He also added: "Air quality monitoring units must be installed in Karachi, as urban pollution has reached alarming levels."

Dr. Musadik Malik stressed collaborative planning and policymaking at the federal level: "We need to form a uniform national water policy based on consensus. I urge you to submit four to five practical suggestions to

incorporate into this policy." He emphasized inter-ministerial coordination: "Relevant ministries such as Water Resources, Ports and Shipping must be brought onboard. Mr. Dost will involve the ministries of

Industries, Water and Sewage. Groundwater and surface water boundary issues-such as those from Ghotki and Punjab-must be handled systematically."

The Federal Minister concluded: "A standardized national policy is essential. Shipbreaking at Gidani releases heavy metals into the sea. Punjab's agricultural waste and KP's water runoff also affect our shared river systems. A uniform, enforceable approach across provinces is the only way forward." This meeting marks a step toward aligning federal and provincial environmental agendas, ensuring that national and international stakeholders recognize Pakistan's climate leadership and ongoing regional challenges.

Notorious dacoit killed in encounter

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The most dangerous accused, wanted in countless cases of robbery and vehicles, was killed in firing between Crime Control Department Iqbal Town and dacoits in Lahore. The police team was taking the accused Allah Rakha, who was remanded, to the Sanda police station to recover the stolen goods and arrest his accomplices.

Meanwhile, the unknown accused opened indiscriminate fire on the police party to rescue their detained accomplice and to avoid arrest. The accused Allah Rakha was seriously injured in the crossfire and was being shifted to the hospital, where he died on the way.

DSP CCD Iqbal Town Muhammad Qamar Sajid said the deceased accused was a notorious previous record holder in serious crimes related to robbery and vehicles.

ANF holds drug burning ceremony

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Sindh held a drug burning ceremony today in Karachi, reaffirming its resolve to combat drug trafficking and substance abuse. The event showcased the destruction of a substantial quantity of narcotics and contraband, seized during successful operations across the province.

Mukesh Kumar, Minister for Excise, Taxation & Narcotics Control, Government of Sindh, graced the occasion as the chief guest. He lauded the efforts of ANF in the fight against narcotics and emphasized the importance of inter-agency cooperation for a drug-free society.

The Director General of ANF, Major General Abdul Mueed, HI(M), was the keynote speaker. In his address, he highlighted



ANF's strategy, operational achievements, and the ongoing commitment to eliminating the drug menace from Pakistan. He called upon all stakeholders-including government institutions, civil society, and the public-to play their part in this national mission.

A special feature of the event was a tableau performance by students of Customs Public School, which conveyed a power-

ful anti-drug message. The performance was highly admired and appreciated by all participants for its emotional impact and relevance to the theme of the event.

The ANF destroyed the following quantities of narcotics and liquor: Hashish: 4,068 kilograms, Heroin: 123 kilograms, Opium: 36 kilograms, Methamphetamine (Ice): 3.5 kilograms and Liquor: 575 liters.



ISLAMABAD: Senior Advisor, Wafaqi Mohtasib office along with other members of Inspection Team talking to an airport official on the eve of the visit of WM inspection team.

Mayors explore urban development collaboration

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab met with the Mayor of Shanghai, Gong Zheng, during his ongoing visit to China, and discussed enhancing bilateral ties and cooperation between the two major port cities.

In the meeting characterized by mutual warmth, both leaders explored opportunities for collaboration in urban development, infrastructure, public transport, and environmental sustainability. The Shanghai Mayor shared insights into his city's advanced transport network, underlining its global reputation as a model of urban planning and sustainable technology.

As part of the visit, Barrister Wahab toured the Shanghai Transportation Command Center, where he received a detailed briefing on the city's mass transit system and traffic management powered by modern technology. Recognizing the value of Shanghai's urban model, Mayor Wahab expressed Karachi's intention to adopt best practices from Shanghai to upgrade its infrastructure and public services. Both sides emphasized learning from each other's experiences and fostering deeper municipal-level engagement.

The visit will also include meetings with Shanghai's senior officials, technical experts, and visits to key municipal institutions, enabling Karachi's leadership to observe first-hand the administrative frameworks and civic systems in place.

Mayor Gong Zheng underscored the importance of extending China-Pakistan economic collaboration to the municipal level and proposed joint initiatives in urban development and public welfare. He noted that sustained interaction between cities could reinforce the broader bilateral partnership. Barrister Wahab reaffirmed Karachi's commitment to achieving global urban standards and modernizing its governance through such international exchanges.

Lashari quits as DG Walled City Authority

F.P. Report

KARACHI: DG Walled City Authority Kamran Lashari on Thursday resigned from his post, citing personal reasons.

According to media reports, in his resignation letter sent to Walled City Chairperson Maryam Nawaz, he said it was a matter of honour for him to serve as the DG. "I did my best to project Pakistan's culture. It was my endeavor to show a positive image of the country to the world. But due to some personal reasons, I cannot get on with my job," he added.

However, Lashari reportedly resigned from the seat because he was not pleased with the return of historical sites of Lahore such as Lahore Fort and Shalamar Bagh to the Department of Archaeology. Likewise, holding of marriage functions at Lahore Fort without amending the 1950 rules also did not go down well with him. Another factor that led to his resignation was an anti-encroachment operation around the historical sites.

Wafaqi Mohtasib team visits Islamabad Airport

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Responding to a large number of complaints, an Inspection Team under the directions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, visited the Islamabad Airport here today to obtain first-hand knowledge of the state of affairs prevailing at the airport.

Headed by a Senior Advisor, the Inspection Team interacted with the passengers at the airport, listened to their complaints and gave directions for their prompt redressal on the spot. The team also went round the national and international lounges, luggage area, CIP lounge apart from the immigration and other counters. Most of the complaints of the passengers proceeding abroad were related to delays in immigration and non-cooperative and intimidating behavior of the personnel of the FIA, ASF, ANF, Customs etc. Whereas the Pakistanis coming home from abroad mostly com-

plained about the late delivery and missing items from their luggage.

The Inspection Team also reviewed the progress made with regard to the recommendations given during the earlier visits of the Inspection Teams. It may be recalled that the inspection team had earlier directed the airport authorities to install CCTV cameras to monitor the FIA, ANF, ASF counters and search desks in addition to placing awareness bill boards and standees containing directions for the passengers in English and Urdu apart from displaying the instructions through the TV screens. The airport management informed the Inspection Team that it has already implemented the directions.

The Inspection Team also took note of some complaints about Visa Protector Stamp and observed that there was no justification for the same since the introduction of this facility at the airport.

The Team instructed the airport authorities to increase the Facilitation Counters in proportion to increasing number of flights. It also directed that polio vaccination cards may be provided to the passengers at the airport.

Later, the Inspection Team also visited the One Window Facilitation Desk (OWFD) set up at the airport which are being manned by the 12 Federal Agencies and inquired about the nature of complaints mostly filed with them. It may be recalled that during the previous visits, the Inspection Team had received complaints regarding highhandedness of certain airport officials, who indulged in extorting money from the passengers.

The Team directed the authorities concerned to conduct a thorough probe and furnish report into the matter. The Inspection Team will submit a detailed report of its visit to the Wafaqi Mohtasib.

Youth empowerment must for national growth

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) organized a significant event on the theme "Youth Participation in National Youth Policy", which was graced by the special presence of Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. The event was attended by the university's academic and administrative leadership, a large number of students, faculty members, and experts from various sectors.

While addressing the gathering, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan shed light on the various initiatives under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. He emphasized that



sized that no child will be deprived of education or skills due to lack of resources. "The government has launched inclusive programmes aimed at empowering youth from all segments of society," he stated.

He highlighted key initiatives such as they Digital Youth Hub, Talent Hunt Programme, and Girls' Education Scholarships, which are designed to pro-

vide modern training, scholarships, and employment opportunities to the youth.

Earlier Vice Chancellor KUST, Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseer ud din, warmly welcomed the Chairman and praised the government's initiatives. "These steps not only ensure a bright future for students but also contribute to the educational and economic development of the country," he said.

SITUATION VACANT

Application are invited for the post of Sub Engineers BS-12 and Draftsman BS-11 under **Minority quota** of the candidates belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as per prescribed qualification and other conditions mentioned below:-

S.No.	Name of vacancy with BPS	Minimum Qualification *	No. of post	Allocation of posts	Age limit
1	Sub Engineer BS-12	Diploma of Associate Engineering in civil technology from a recognized Institute/Board of technical Education	7	Minority = 07	18-30 years
2	Draftsman BS-11	a.SSC from a recognized Board and b.Two years certificate course in civil /Draftman ship from a recognized institute /Board of Technical Education	01	Minority = 01	18-30 years

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Interview call letter will be issued to the short listed candidates only.
- Candidate will be provisionally allowed to appear in the screening test if so required. However detailed scrutiny will be carried out by the appointing authority and if any candidate is found ineligible in any case at any stage of the recruitment candidature will be cancelled,
- Candidates should be eligible in all respect till the last date of receipt the applications.
- Relaxation of age is admissible as per rules.
- The candidates working in Government/Semi Government bodies should apply through proper channel.
- Original documents shall be provided at the time of interview alongwith attested copies of all testimonials
- No T.A./D.A. will be admissible for test/Interview.
- In case of foreign degree, equivalency certificate from HEC must be provided
- Error/omission in advertisement and in number of posts are subject to rectification.
- Appointment will be made as per criteria mentioned in the Esta code.
- Last date of submission of applications will be 21-5-2025.
- In case of non availability of Diploma holders candidates, degree holders candidates can also be considered for appointment as Sub Engineer under minority quota.

INFP)1530/25

**Chief Engineer (North)
Irrigation Department Peshawar**



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah presenting commemorative shield to Andreas Papaconstantinou, Director General of European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations during his visit to Peshawar.

HMC launches free kidney transplants

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a groundbreaking step for public healthcare, KP Health Advisor Ihtesham Ali inaugurated transplant and implant services at MTI Hayatabad Medical Complex under the new "Transplant and Implant" Sehat Card Scheme.

During a special ceremony, two successful kidney transplants were performed, and children received cochlear implants

restoring their hearing ability. Hospital Director Dr. Faisal Shehzad briefed the health advisor on the services provided.

Speaking to media, Ihtesham Ali highlighted that CM Ali Amin Gandapur's vision prioritizes accessible and quality healthcare. "This scheme is a lifeline for the common man," he remarked.

Ihtesham Ali visited post-operative transplant patients who expressed

gratitude to the Chief Minister. Children with hearing impairments experienced sounds for the first time after receiving implants, marking a new beginning in their lives.

The advisor shared that HMC's ENT department has completed 15 cochlear implants to date, now formally integrated into the Sehat Card "Transplant and Implant" scheme. Speech therapy for implanted children is also being initiated.

DG EU Civil Protection, Humanitarian Aid calls on CS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Director-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, Andreas Papaconstantinou, called on Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, at the Chief Secretary's Office here on Thursday.

The meeting was also attended by the Additional Chief Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs and the Secretary Relief.

Discussions focused on matters of mutual interest, particularly enhancing cooperation in areas of resilience building and sustainable development.

Bol Utho delegation meets Qasim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation from the movement for persons with disabilities, "Bol Utho" met with the Minister for Social Welfare of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Qasim Ali Shah. The delegation apprised the minister of the issues faced by persons with disabilities. Former Member of Provincial Assembly Dr. Samira Shams was also present during the meeting.

The delegation presented several key proposals concerning the rights of disabled persons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These included the early approval of the proposed Disability Bill, measures to ensure easy access to hospitals, public transport, educational institutions, and other public places, fee waivers and special quotas in higher education, provision of Braille toolkits for visually impaired students, promotion of social entrepreneurship, and issuance of electric wheelchairs and special ID cards.

The provincial minister listened attentively to the proposals and stated that integrating persons with disabilities into the mainstream is one of the government's top priorities.

will be established between the two countries - something India never wants.

He added that India is killing its own unarmed people in Occupied Kashmir and blaming Pakistan, in an attempt to intimidate the country.

He declared that India will never succeed in its malicious intentions. This time, India should remember that if they make a mistake, they will not be served tea - instead.

Session on Humanitarian Policing Practice concluded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, successfully organized a three days session on "Humanitarian Policing Practices under International Law."

The session concluded with a formal closing ceremony held on Thursday, April 24, 2025. Law enforcement officers from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with a special focus on those serving in the Merged Areas, were invited to participate in the training session.

The closing ceremony was graced by several dignitary officials and academicians.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naeem Qazi, Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, joined the event as Guest of Honour and graced the occasion with his presence.

The ceremony commenced with opening remarks by Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain, Chairman, Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar. He emphasized the importance of continued collaboration between the Department of Criminology and KP Police for mutual learning and support.

Mr. Bruno Raddichi, Head of Sub-Delegation, ICRC Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, appreciated the collective efforts of his team and the Department of Criminology in facilitating the session. He also acknowledged the dedication and enthusiasm of the participants.

The Chief Guest of the closing ceremony, Mr. Muhammad Akhtar Abbas, Additional Inspector General, KP Police, welcomed the partnership between the Department of Criminology and KP Police. He stressed the significance of such training initiatives in enhancing humanitarian policing practices across the province.



India should not dare to look at Pakistan with malice: Khizer

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: India should not dare to look at Pakistan with malice or make false accusations, because Pakistan is not weak. This time, we will strike inside their home in such a way that they will think a hundred times before accusing Pakistan again.

These views were expressed by the Additional Secretary of Information of Pakistan Muslim League-

Nawaz (PML-N), Arbab Khizer Hayat, in a statement.

He said that India is disturbed by the visit of Pakistan's Foreign Minister to Afghanistan, as evidence has been found of India's involvement in terrorist incidents in Pakistan carried out from Afghan soil.

He further stated that India never wants Pakistan to have good relations with Afghanistan, because if relations improve, peace

Fakhar flays Indian provocations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jihan has strongly condemned the India's recent provocative actions and its baseless attempts to blame Pakistan for failing to protect its own citizens.

He stated that such irresponsible behavior threatens regional peace and stability. He warned that while Pakistan remains a peace-loving nation, it prioritizes its national security and sovereignty above all else and will deliver a robust response to any Indian aggression.

In a statement, the Minister described India's actions as politically motivated, legally indefensible and utterly reckless. "Instead of scapegoating Pakistan, India must accept its own failures in ensuring the safety of its citizens," he emphasized.

Talking regarding the recent suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, Syed Fakhar Jihan labeled it a direct assault on Pakistan's water rights and a violation of international law.

He added that India's unilateral decision to undermine it is highly irresponsible and escalates tensions in the region," he said. He further stated that such provocations, including incendiary rhetoric from Indian leadership, reveal India's aggressive agenda to destabilize the region. "While Pakistan seeks peace, we reserve the right to take all necessary measures to defend our sovereignty and natural resources," he affirmed.

PHC orders provision of 100% death grant (Group Insurance) to teachers

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has set aside the government's decision to pay only 25% of the Death Grant (Group Insurance) to over 150 teachers of the Education Department and ordered provision of 100% group insurance, on Thursday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Sabi and Justice Sabit Ullah has ruled in favor of the petitioners. The court has directed the relevant authorities to pay the entire amount of Death Grant (Group Insurance) to the petitioners as per the law.

The counsel Zia-ur-Rehman Tajik advocate argued that deductions were made from their

salaries under the Group Insurance scheme, which was later renamed as Death Grant. The provincial government amended the rules, stating that employees who were deducted from 2016 onwards would receive payments according to the new rules.

The lawyer argued that the law requires payment of 100% of the Death Grant (Group Insurance) to the petitioners, not just 25%. He noted that the government's stance violates various provisions of the Constitution.

The counsel referred to previous judgments of the Peshawar High Court and the Supreme Court, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the law. PHC accepted the petitioners' plea and

directed the authorities to pay 100% of the Death Grant (Group Insurance) to the petitioners.

PHC acquits one in double murderer case

A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Farah Jamshid has acquitted killer named Abdullah, who was previously sentenced to life imprisonment for a case involving the murder of two individuals and injuring three others in Swabi, on Thursday.

According to prosecution Abdullah was accused of firing at the victims following a verbal altercation, resulting in the deaths of Karim Khan and Asad Khan, and injuring Sada Khan, Shaker, and Dawlat Khan.

The police registered a case based on the complaint of Sada Khan and arrested the defendant. The Criminal Model Court Swabi had convicted Abdullah and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

The defendant's counsel, Syed Mubashir Shah advocate argued that the case was a cross-case, and the prosecution failed to prove the presence of witnesses at the scene. The counsel highlighted contradictions between the medical report and the FIR, arguing that these inconsistencies warranted the defendant's acquittal.

PHC observed that the prosecution failed to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt. The court gave the benefit of doubt to the defendant and acquitted him of the charges.

KP set to create new ACS (General) post to bolster governance reforms

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is poised to introduce a major administrative reform by establishing a new post, Additional Chief Secretary (General) - aimed at reinforcing governance structures and ensuring more streamlined administrative oversight, according to

the initiative stems from Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's vision for a more efficient, transparent, and accountable public administration system.

The proposed role of ACS (General) will serve as a pivotal addition to the provincial bureaucracy, with its primary responsibility being the supervision of the Establishment

and Administration Departments. These two departments are considered the backbone of government operations, responsible for policymaking, human resource management, and coordination among various government arms.

Sources reveal that the initiative stems from Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's vision for a more efficient, transparent, and accountable public administration system. The post is expected to play a key role in driving institutional reform, enhancing interdepartmental coordination, and facilitating the implementation

of governance-related decisions at a faster and more effective pace.

The move is part of a broader restructuring agenda that seeks to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks and delegate clear responsibilities to senior officers, thereby improving service delivery across the province. By creating the ACS (General) position, the provincial leadership aims to provide focused leadership for internal government functions and inject greater discipline and direction into core administrative affairs.

While the proposal is still under consideration

and awaits formal approval, insiders indicate that high-level consultations are already underway, and the post is likely to be created in the near future. Once established, the ACS (General) will work in close coordination with the Chief Secretary and other key officials to implement reform agendas and monitor compliance across departments.

The government believes that this structural addition will significantly contribute to modernizing KP's administrative machinery and aligning it with national and international standards of public sector efficiency.

Farewell, welcome ceremony held for outgoing and newly appointed DG Sports KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A farewell and welcome ceremony was organized by the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in honor of the outgoing Director General Abdul Nasir and newly appointed DG Sports Tashfeen Haider. The event was attended by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan, Secretary Sports Zia-ul-Haq, Director General Sports Tashfeen Haider, officials of the Directorate of Sports and a large number of department employees.

Speaking on the occasion Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan and Secretary Sports Zia-ul-Haq praised the services of Abdul Nasir in the field of sports. They stated that under his leadership significant progress was made in promoting sports across the province. His valuable services to the department will always be remembered.

The speakers emphasized that public service



offers an excellent opportunity to address the grievances and problems of the common man with sincerity. Serving humanity is a means to attain the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger. They noted that officers who consider themselves true public servants and work wholeheartedly to solve issues are always held in high esteem by the public which is a real asset. People should remember such officers with kind words both during their tenure and after their transfer.

The speakers added that outgoing DG Abdul Nasir is among the most capable officers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and that his remarkable contributions to the sports department will not be forgotten. During his tenure he exhibited outstanding performance and played a crucial role in the development of sports in the province leaving behind a strong infrastructure.

In his speech Abdul Nasir expressed gratitude stating that he learned a lot from his seniors during his

tenure and received full cooperation and guidance in fulfilling his responsibilities. He thanked all the department's employees for their support.

Newly appointed Director General Sports Tashfeen Haider said that he would work day and night for the betterment of the Sports Department and continue the mission of Abdul Nasir.

At the end of the ceremony, Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar Jahan presented a souvenir to Abdul Nasir.

Prof. Bhutta for revolutionary thinking in education

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A highly insightful and thought-provoking session was held at Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, featuring globally renowned physician and public health expert, Professor Dr. Zulfiqar A. Bhutta. The session was attended by KMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, PhD faculty members, and young doctors. The purpose of the gathering was to reflect on the future of research and academic leadership and to benefit from the esteemed guest's expertise and guidance.

Professor Bhutta is an internationally recognized Pakistani clinician and researcher who has made revolutionary contributions to the field of maternal, newborn, and child health. He is currently serving as the Co-Director of the Centre for Global Child Health at SickKids,

Toronto, Canada, and as a Senior Scientist with the Child Health Evaluative Sciences program. His research and practical work have laid the foundation for various local programs in South Asia and Africa, in addition to influencing global health policies at the World Health Organization. He is also the founding Director of the Institute for Global Health and Development at Aga Khan University and led the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health from 2012 to 2024.

During his address, Professor Bhutta commended KMU's overall performance and capabilities, and held a detailed discussion on academic and research leadership. He emphasized the critical importance of early childhood education, which he described as the foundation of human development and consciousness. He asserted that every university bears

the responsibility of positively impacting society through its scientific and research work.

He stated, "Research publications alone are not sufficient; their true value lies in their impact on policymaking, healthcare systems, and meaningful improvements in human lives."

He urged institutions to align their research with local needs while elevating it to meet global standards. Professor Bhutta further highlighted the significance of scientific inquiry during crises, the pursuit of indigenous solutions, and inter-

institutional collaboration.

Encouraging young researchers, he remarked, "Youth have the power to change the world. We need scientists who are driven by innovation, compassion, and purpose. KMU and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possess the potential to make significant contributions in the global health arena."

The session also included a lively Q&A segment where faculty members raised questions related to research funding, international collaborations, policy impact, and mentorship for young professionals.

KMU Vice Chancellor

Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq expressed deep gratitude to Prof. Bhutta for his inspirational presence and praised his global contributions to healthcare. He stated that KMU is fully committed to strengthening its research capacity and playing a knowledge-based role in societal development.

The academic session concluded with renewed enthusiasm and a shared commitment by the faculty to position KMU as a leading institution in addressing global health challenges through research, policy formulation, and academic excellence.





In brief

Cleanliness drive kicks off F.P. Report

KARAK: In the light of the orders of Peshawar High Court, a weekly cleanliness campaign has been started across the province. The campaign was inaugurated in Karak by District and Sessions Judge Syed Yasir Shabbir. The judges of District Court Karak, President of District Bar Karak Malik Akhtar Nawaz Advocate, and District Police Officer Shahbaz Elahi attended the inaugural ceremony. The speakers emphasized the importance of cleanliness and said that a clean environment is not only essential for the health of the citizens but is also a sign of a civilized and developed society. District and Sessions Judge Syed Yasir Shabbir said in his address that cleanliness is half of faith and it is the primary responsibility of the TMA officials to clean the city from dirt so that a healthy environment can be provided to the citizens. DPO Shahbaz Elahi, in his address, emphasized on environmental cleanliness as well as social cleanliness and said that Karak Police is taking full and indiscriminate action against drug peddlers, criminal elements and those who create social unrest.

Crackdowns against defaulters Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Excise and Taxation department has initiated a crackdown against defaulter individuals and businesses with outstanding property and professional tax liabilities amounting to millions of rupees, on Thursday. The crackdown launched on the special directives of Minister for Excise and Taxation Khaliq ur Rehman, Secretary Excise Fayyaz Ali Shah, and District General Excise and Taxation Abdul Halim Khan. A team comprising officers Tauseef Khan and Shahzad Anwar, along with other officials, conducted the operation, sealing shops, warehouses, and commercial properties of tax defaulters in Tehsil Pabbi, Nowshera. The Excise and Taxation officers stated that tax defaulters had been issued repeated notices and strict instructions to pay their taxes on time. The officers emphasized that the operation would continue across the entire district of Nowshera, urging the public to pay their taxes promptly to avoid any action. The public is advised to pay their taxes on time to avoid any legal action. The department aims to raise awareness about tax laws and regulations, encouraging individuals and businesses to fulfill their tax obligations.

Siyawal elected as chairman F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Organizational Meeting of the Abasin Adbi Tolana, Kohat was held under the chairmanship of Feroz Khan Sadiq at Kohat which was attended by all the members of the Tolana. The meeting discussed 2-Point Agenda including the selection of a new Chairman on the seat vacated due to the death of Professor Mohabbat Khan Khattak and the publication of the book of Hazrat-ur-Rehman Hazrat, the former president of the Tolana, and the joint memoir of the organization. The meeting unanimously selected the current Deputy Chairman of the organization, Pehlwan Shah Siyawal, as Chairman, while Muhammad Rokhan was selected as Deputy Chairman. Similarly, it was decided to publish not only the joint memoir of the organization and book of Hazrat-ur-Rehman Hazrat on self-help basis and the support of district government, but also to publish the books of other poets in stages.

Enrolment campaign continue in full swing

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: On the instructions of the provincial government, activities are underway under the enrollment campaign in all male and female schools in the district. District Education Officer Female Samina Ghani visited various schools in Mardan district in connection with the admission campaign.

DEO participated in the activities held in the schools and while addressing the parents' gatherings, she explained the importance of education, especially the need and importance of education for girls. She said that the provincial government provides free education and free textbooks to children, as well as various other facilities so that our new generation could be decorated with the ornaments of education to serve the country and nation.

She said that with the cooperation of teachers and parents, more than 14 thousand girls have been enrolled so far, while thousands more girls will be admitted by April 30. Admission campaign activities are going on in different tehsils under the supervision of DEO Muhammad Zahid.

During this campaign, teachers are going door to door to persuade parents to admit their children to school. Meanwhile, on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, administrative officers are also working for the success of the admission campaign and Assistant Commissioners in all tehsils are also visiting the school side by side with the Education Department for the success of the admission campaign.

Job fair held Pakhtunkhwa college of Arts: A job fair was organized at Pakhtunkhwa College of Arts under the

supervision of the Career Development Center at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah was the chief guest on this occasion, while Group Leader Mardan Chamber of Commerce Zahir Shah also specially attended.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah said on this occasion that the aim of the job fair is to provide job opportunities to students and graduates with various companies and institutions. Such events help students to showcase their skills, understand job opportunities and connect with industry people.

Companies from various sectors are expected to participate in this job fair, which will provide students with opportunities to submit their CVs and conduct interviews. This event is an excellent opportunity for students to make important decisions regarding their careers and connect with the practical world. On this occasion, Group Leader Mardan Chamber of Commerce Zahir Shah said that Abdul Wali Khan University is one of the leading universities of Pakistan and Mardan Chamber of Commerce is in constant touch with the university in this regard and Mardan Chamber of Commerce encourages students at all levels.

They are considering organizing a joint international conference in the field of agriculture soon, in which scientists from abroad and within the country related to agriculture will participate. Director IBL Dr. Ehtesham, Director CDC Dr. Shah Hussain, Director ORIC Dr. Tariq Mehmood, Principal PCA Fazal Sattar Durrani, Director Admin Farhad Safi, Museum Incharge Dr. Ijaz and heads of other departments were present on the occasion.

Completion of Girls Cadet College project directed

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Nisar Ahmed has expressed serious concern over the delay in the completion of the priority project of Girls Cadet College Mardan and directed the Communication and Works (C&W) Department to expedite construction work to ensure that new classes begin by September this year.

He issued these directives while presiding over a progress review meeting regarding the new building of the college. The meeting was attended by the college principal, Superintending Engineer Building and Mega Projects (C&W), Deputy Director Monitoring, Assistant Commissioners



(Development and Revenue) and other relevant officials.

The forum was informed that Rs 310 million have been released to the college during the current financial year, while an additional Rs 110 million are still needed to complete the priority blocks.

Commissioner Nisar Ahmed reminded officials that during his visit to the

under-construction college last month, it was assured that the construction of the priority block would be completed by April 20. However, the deadline was missed, prompting his displeasure. He urged the C&W officials to convene urgent meetings with all contractors involved in the project and submit a detailed progress report by next Tuesday.

‘Those who know are not equal to those who don’t know’

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Markazi Muslim League divisional president Abdul Ghaffar Mansoor has asked people to get their children educated in religious and contemporary education. He was addressing an event at Jamia Ahya ul-Sunnah in Kumbhar Maidan as chief guest here the other day. Addressing students and teachers, he emphasized that acquiring foundational Islamic knowledge was not just beneficial but obligatory for every Muslim.

He reminded the audience that the very first word revealed in the Holy Qur'an was "Iqra" (read), underscoring the divine emphasis on literacy and learning. "The Qur'an makes it clear," he stated, "those who possess knowledge and those who do not are not equal." He urged students to embody the teachings of Islam in their daily lives and to maintain integrity both inside and outside the seminary.

Mansoor also highlighted the spiritual significance of sincerity, cautioning that deviation from learned values not only undermines personal character but also

tarnishes the reputation of educational institutions. "Let your actions be a reflection of your education, for that is the true measure of learning," he told the students.

He expressed appreciation for the efforts of the teaching staff and was accompanied by Muhammad Yaseen, general secretary of the Markazi Muslim League Lower Dir, and Maulana Rahmatullah, general secretary of the party's Maidan chapter. **Farewell party:** A dignified farewell ceremony was held at Government Postgraduate College Timergara in honour of retiring Professor Mushtaq Ahmad and Senior Clerk Nisar Ahmad. The event was organised by the college faculty to pay tribute to their years of dedicated service.

During the ceremony, both retirees expressed their heartfelt gratitude to their colleagues, recalling fond memories of their time at the institution. They described their service years as some of the most memorable moments of their lives and said they would always cherish the love and respect they

received from their fellow staff members.

Sports' competitions: The Malakand Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education achieved an impressive second position in the national swimming and cycling competitions held under the ongoing All Pakistan Inter-Board Sports Championships in Lahore.

Chairman of the Board, Muhammad Naseem Khan, Secretary Prof. Ghulam Zahid Jan, and Deputy Controller of Examinations Naeemullah congratulated the athletes for their remarkable performance. According to Director of Physical Education Mukhtiar Khan, securing second place at the national level is a significant achievement that reflects the dedication and hard work of both the athletes and the managing team.

The athletes from Malakand stood out among competitors from across the country, earning praise and recognition for their outstanding efforts. The board officials expressed hope that the team would continue to bring laurels to the board in the future as well.

Zakat Day observed

F.P. Report

SARGODHA: Zakat Day was observed on Thursday at the central office of the Punjab Zakat and Ushr Committee, marked by a special appearance from Chairman Rana Munawar Ghous Khan.

During the event, the Chairman interacted with the participants and listened to the concerns of those seeking financial assistance through the program. Addressing

the gathering, he emphasized that allowances such as subsistence grants and support for the visually impaired were now being disbursed through mobile banking, following biometric verification.

He said that the data of beneficiaries was fully digitized to ensure transparency in zakat distribution. Officials of the department briefed the Chairman on the need for an increased zakat budget, stating that only then

could all eligible individuals be supported effectively.

In response, Rana Manawar Ghous assured that efforts would be made to allocate special funds based on the population of each district to improve the reach of zakat assistance. He also urged philanthropists to pay their zakat on time, stressing the importance of timely contributions in keeping the hearths of deserving families burning.



MULTAN: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Akamatsu Shuichi handover grant aid project to Managing Director Water and Sanitation Agency, Khalid Raza Khan.

Aman Bangash notified DBA Kohat President



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: In order to resolve the dispute of Presidency of District Bar Association (DBA) Kohat between Aman Bangash Advocate and Dr. Amir Ajam Advocate, a jirga of the Lawyers Community comprising of Khurshid Ahmed Advocate, Malik Mohtasham Advocate, Asim Bukhari Advocate and Bakhtiar Hussain Advocate was held at the District Bar Kohat on Thursday.

After threadbare discussions, the ongoing dispute of Presidency of DBA Kohat was amicably resolved and Dr. Amir Ajam Advocate withdrew his application in favor of Aman Bangash Advocate.

The Jirga was held on the instructions of the Vice Chairman of the KP Bar Council, Farooq Ahmed Khattak Advocate. After fruitful discussions of the Jirga, formal notification of Aman Bangash Advocate was issued for the Presidency of DBA Kohat.

On this occasion, Aman Bangash Advocate thanked all the members of the jirga including Amir Ajam Advocate and reiterated his resolve to serve all the lawyers without any discrimination.

DC Kohat holds youth open court F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda", held the 3rd consecutive Youth Open Court at his Camp Office on Thursday. The aim of the Youth Open Court was to providing a platform to the youth where they can openly present their problems, suggestions and recommendations before the district administration and play an active role in the decision-making at the local level.

The open court beside others, was also attended by Officers of District Administration, Line Departments, OGDCL, MOL Pakistan, Kohat Cement Factory, Students, Volunteers, and Youth.

On this occasion, while presenting the progress of the previous youth open courts, it was informed that more than half of the problems presented in them have already been resolved, while work is underway to resolve the remaining problems soon.

The youth highlighted important issues such as education, skill development, career counseling, sports facilities and transparency in the government jobs. The Deputy Commissioner assured the participants that all the issues would be addressed immediately and directions to this effect were issued to the concerned departments on the spot.

Deputy Commissioner, while speaking on the occasion, said that the youth are our asset and without involving their energy, thinking and determination, the dream of development cannot be cherished.

D&SJ led cleanliness awareness walk

F.P. Report

BUNER: District and Sessions Judge (D&SJ) Samira Wali on the instructions of Peshawar High Court, has led an awareness walk in connection with the special cleanliness campaign, on Thursday.

The aim of awareness walk was to highlight the importance of cleanliness among the public. The awareness walk was attended by Assistant Commissioner Daggar Madam Basharat Shah ADJ

II Buner Javeria Sartaj Khan, TMO Daggar Zahoor Ahmed Khan, TMA staff, District Bar Buner President Advocate Israr Khan, General Secretary Advocate Tariq Nazir with lawyers' Community, president Judiciary Employees Asad Khan and his colleagues and TMA Daggar Special Cleanliness Campaign In-charge Sadaqat Khan.

During brief address to the participants of the walk and chats with media, the D&SJ Judge Madam Samira

Wali, Assistant Commissioner Daggar Madam Basharat Shah, TMO Daggar Zahoor Ahmed Khan, President of District Bar Association Advocate Israr Khan and President of Judiciary Employees Association Asad Khan highlighted the importance of organizing an awareness walk by the Peshawar High Court to convey the message behind the ongoing special cleanliness campaign of the provincial government to the public.

Both contemporary & religious education vital

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Markazi Muslim League (MML) divisional president Abdul Ghaffar Mansoor has asked people to get their children educated in religious and contemporary education. He was addressing an event at Jamia Ahya ul-Sunnah in Kumbhar Maidan as chief guest.

Addressing students and teachers, he emphasized that acquiring foundational Islamic knowledge was not just beneficial but obligatory for every Muslim.

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BISEM arranges sports competition: The Malakand Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education achieved an impressive second position in the national swimming and cycling competitions held under the ongoing All Pakistan Inter-Board Sports Championships in Lahore.

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The athletes from Malakand stood out among competitors from across the country, earning praise and recognition for their outstanding efforts. The board officials expressed hope that the team would continue to bring laurels to the board in the future as well.

Four killed over domestic disputes

F.P. Report

LARKANA: As many as four persons including a woman killed in different areas of Larkana district over domestic disputes and enmity, while two people were critically injured due to gunfire, on Thursday.

According to details, gunmen opened fire on a 25-year-old youth Barkat Ali Noohani in the limits of Allahabad police station in Larkana city on a minor issue and managed to escape. On receiving information, the police reached the spot and took the body into custody and handed it over to the heirs after necessary procedures from Chandka Hospital.

After which SSP Larkana took notice of the incident and sought a report from SHO Allahabad. On the other hand, in village Bachu Boraho under the limits of Rehmatpur police station in Larkana city, the accused husband Arbab Ali Brohi had subjected his wife Sawera Brohi to torture due to domestic unrest and was admitted to the trauma center where she succumbed to her injuries. According to the heirs of the deceased woman.

The accused Arbab Brohi tortured his wife daily and took her for treatment several times, but this ruthless man had no mercy on Sawira Brohi. Meanwhile, a 20-year-

old youth, Nasrullah Phulpoto, who worked at a hotel in Phulpoto Street of Badah city, committed suicide by consuming poisonous medicine at home. The police took the body to the hospital and handed it over to the heirs after necessary formalities.

It is being said that the young man was not satisfied with the daily wage he received, which is why he took the very important step of committing suicide, while near government pilot higher secondary school, unknown armedmen fired and killed Dedar Ali Abro due to enmity.

Police arrests 9 POs: Police arrested proclaimed offenders involved in the double murder case, Muhammad Ali Chandio, Mumtaz Ali Chandio, Ayaz Ali Chandio, Zahid Ali Chandio, Allah Dinuchandio and Abdul Hafeez Chandio are included.

The above-mentioned accused have been declared in the double murder case Aslam Chandio and the murder case of Dilsher Chandio since 2018. On the other hand, three wanted accused in serious cases, Ghulam Ali Khukhrani, Kashif Hasrani Abro and Muhammad Siddique Narejo, have also been arrested from the Dosudra area of Kati Mumtaz.

Regional Director Ombudsman commits for

prisoners' welfare: Regional Director Ombudsman Sindh Ali Akbar Jagirani reached Central Jail Larkana to find out the problems of the prisoners, Ghulam Murtaza Afridi, Superintendent Central Jail, and other officers were also present, on Wednesday.

Regional Director Ombudsman met the prisoners and listened to their problems carefully. After which the Director Ombudsman gave necessary instructions to the Superintendent of Central Jail Larkana to resolve the problems on a priority basis. During the visit to the prison, the hospital inside the prison was also inspected and the prisoners, while informing the patients about the medicines, food, and structure of the hospital, expressed their distrust in the hospital for not keeping any records of the medicines received and instructions were given to provide the patients with the required medicines at the structure so that their health can improve.

LCCI passes resolution proposed canals: An important meeting of the business community of Larkana Chamber of Conference and Industries was held under the chairmanship of President Khair Muhammad Sheikh in which a resolution was passed against 6 canals being built on the Indus River.



Ukraine ready to negotiate but not to surrender: Dy PM

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine is ready to negotiate but not to surrender. Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said as details emerged in media reports of a US proposal for a deal which would see Ukraine give up almost all territory currently occupied by Russia.

"There will be no agreement that hands Russia the stronger foundations it needs to regroup and return with greater violence," Svyrydenko wrote on X. "Our people will not accept a frozen conflict disguised as peace," she added. Media outlets have this week reported details of a broad proposal by Washington for a deal between Kyiv and Moscow which proposes the formal recognition of the occupied Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea as Russian as well as Moscow keeping de facto control of most captured Ukrainian territory.

On the other hand, Ukraine has pushed for a full, immediate and unconditional ceasefire with negotiations proceeding after it is established. "A full ceasefire - on land, in

the air, and at sea - is the necessary first step," Svyrydenko said, adding that if Moscow instead opted for a limited pause, Kyiv would respond in kind. Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for an "immediate, full, and unconditional ceasefire", hours after a Russian drone strike on a bus killed nine and as his top aide met Kyiv's allies in London.

Images published by Dnipropetrovsk Governor Sergiy Lysak showed a bus with a hole punctured through its ceiling and what appeared to be blood and shattered glass scattered across its floors. Zelensky called it an "egregiously brutal attack and an absolutely deliberate war crime". "In Ukraine, we insist on an immediate, full, and unconditional ceasefire," he said on social media, adding that "stopping the killings is the number one task".

Lysak said nine people had been killed and 49 wounded in the attack on the southern town of Marganets. Zelensky also repeated his call for a par-

tial halt on some missile and drone attacks. "We are also ready for an immediate ceasefire at least for civilian targets," he said. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a surprise Easter truce over the weekend.

It saw fighting dip and air attacks practically halt for 30 hours. But Ukraine and its allies dismissed it as a PR exercise from the Kremlin leader, saying Putin had no interest in real peace talks. Russia launched more than 100 drones at Ukraine between, the Ukrainian air force said. Ukrainian authorities also reported fires in several regions overnight after Russian attacks. Strikes were reported in the regions of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Poltava and Odesa.

In Russia, one person was reported wounded by Ukrainian shelling in the Belgorod region, the local governor said. Zelensky's chief of staff, defence and foreign ministers were in London for talks with Kyiv's allies -- downgraded at the last minute after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio cancelled plans to attend.

Explosions at military base near Moscow injure four

MOSCOW (Reuters): Shells exploded at a military base east of Moscow, injuring four people and prompting the evacuation of about 450 people, the regional governor said. Alexander Avdeev, governor of Vladimir Region, wrote on Telegram that ammunition had caught fire and shells had exploded at a storage area of the base in the region's Kirzhach District.

The Defence Ministry said earlier the fire had been caused by a breach of safety requirements and had resulted in the detonation of ammunition stored in a warehouse. A state of emergency was declared and local authorities were working with the Defence and Emergency Ministries to make the area safe, he said. Three of the injured were being treated in hospital. Avdeev said the base had been evacuated along with residents of at least seven nearby settlements.

Unverified video published earlier on Telegram channels showed a huge fire ball and clouds of thick smoke rising into the sky. Baza, a Telegram channel close to security services, said at least 10-11 explosions had occurred and firefighters from neighbouring regions had been called in to contain the blaze.

Palestinian president urges Hamas to lay down arms

RAMALLAH (Reuters): Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas to lay down arms and hand the running of Gaza to his Palestinian Authority, part of efforts to answer international doubts over the authority's role at a key moment for the region. Abbas was speaking at a leadership council where he is expected this week to name a successor amid pressure from Western and Arab powers concerned about the PA's ability to play a viable long term role in peace efforts. While Abbas had previously called on Hamas to put its forces under the PA's control, he has not done so since the start of the war in Gaza, when the militant group's gunmen attacked Israel, prompting fierce military retaliation by Israel.

Hamas killed around 1,200 people and seized about 250 hostages in its October 7, 2023 attack, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's campaign has killed more than 50,000 people, local health authorities say, and left much of Gaza in ruins. Diplomatic efforts to craft a plan for Gaza's future have focused on pushing aside Hamas but Israel has also said it will not accept any role for the PA, which exercises limited autonomy in the West Bank.

"Hamas must hand over (its) Gaza responsibilities and hand over its arms to the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority and transform into a political party," said Abbas.

Hamas, which ousted the PA from Gaza during a brief civil war in 2007, has refused calls in recent months by Israel and the United States to lay down its arms. Abbas was speaking to the Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which holds observer status at the United Nations as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and dominates the PA.

Abbas, 89, took over the Palestinian leadership after the death of veteran PLO leader Yasser Arafat in 2004. He has for years resisted naming a deputy or successor but the war in Gaza has intensified pressure for him to do so.

Last month, Arab states proposed a post-war plan for Gaza to be temporarily run by a committee before being returned to the PA's control. The United States, European Union and Gulf monarchies expected to play a role in financing any post-war reconstruction of Gaza have repeatedly urged PA reform. Abbas has criticised the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which he said gave Israel a pretext to destroy Gaza. Israel launched its military campaign against Hamas in Gaza after the Hamas-led attack.



GAZA: Palestine Red Crescent Society staff gathered to protest against Israel military's killing of their colleagues in Khan Younis.

Russia's Rosatom says will proceed with Myanmar N-plant

BANGKOK (Reuters): A plan to build a nuclear power plant will continue in Myanmar, a war-torn Southeast Asian country partly devastated by a massive earthquake in March, the Russian state-owned firm leading the project told Reuters.

Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and Russian President Vladimir Putin last month signed an agreement for a small-scale nuclear facility, three weeks before the 7.7 magnitude quake flattened communities and left more than 3,700 people dead - the country's deadliest natural disaster in decades. The agreement involves cooperation to build a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) in Myanmar with an initial 110 MW capacity, consisting of two 55 MW reactors manufactured by Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom.

"The recent earthquake has not affected Rosatom's plans in Myanmar," the company's press office said in an email. "Rosatom adheres to the highest international safety and reliability standards, including strict seismic resistance requirements."

The company's intention to go ahead with the nuclear plan despite the quake, which crippled critical infrastructure, has not been previously reported. Rosatom declined to provide any construction timeline or details of the location of the proposed nuclear facility that will be powered by RITM-200N reactors, which were made by the company for use initial-

ly on icebreaker ships.

A Myanmar junta spokesman did not respond to calls from Reuters seeking comment. The push for nuclear power in Myanmar comes amid an expanding civil war triggered by a 2021 military coup that removed the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Facing a collection of established ethnic armies and new armed groups set up in the wake of the coup, the ruling junta has lost ground across large parts of the country and increasing leaned on its few foreign allies, including Russia.

The conflict, which stretches from the border with China to the coast along the Bay of Bengal, has displaced more than 3.5 million people and left Myanmar's mainly agrarian economy in tatters. Myanmar is currently evaluating options for financing the Russia-backed nuclear power project. "This may involve both own and borrowed funds," Rosatom said. In places such as Bangladesh and Egypt, Russia has funded conventional nuclear power projects through low interest loans. Authorities in neighbouring Thailand, which is closely monitoring Myanmar's nuclear developments, assess that a plant could be built in Naypyitaw, a fortified purpose-built capital that was heavily damaged by the earthquake, according to a security source briefed on the matter.

Two other potential sites include a location in the central Bago region and the Dawei special economic zone

in southern Myanmar, where the junta and Russia have announced plans to build a port and an oil refinery, according to the Thai assessment. Myanmar lies on the boundary between two tectonic plates and is one of the world's most seismically active countries. Southeast Asia's first nuclear facility - the 621 MW Bataan Nuclear Power Plant in the Philippines - was finished in 1984 with a price tag of \$2.3 billion but mothballed in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster in the then Soviet Union two years later.

The Philippines and other regional countries have since mounted repeated efforts to explore nuclear energy but made limited progress. Vietnam is, however, renewing a bet on nuclear power after it suspended its programme in 2016. Russia and Myanmar have been collaborating in the sector for years, with Burmese students studying nuclear energy and related subjects in Russian universities under government quotas since 2019, according to Rosatom.

In comparison to a large conventional nuclear power reactor, components of SMRs can be assembled and transported as a single unit to the installation location, according the International Atomic Energy Agency. "I do not foresee any complication, technology-wise," said Doonyapong Wongsawaeng, a lecturer at the Department of Nuclear Engineering at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University.

US cancels hundreds of grants for police, crime victims

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US Justice Department has canceled hundreds of ongoing grants that funded everything from mental healthcare for police officers to support programs for victims of crime and sexual assault, according to internal records and four people familiar with the matter.

At least 365 grants from the Office of Justice Programs, the department's largest grant-making arm, were terminated, said two of the people, who were granted anonymity to discuss details that have not been made public. That office awarded \$4.4 billion worth of grants in the fiscal year ended October 2023, according to the Justice Department's website. Reuters could not immediately determine a total dollar value for the canceled grants, though records indicated it was at least tens of millions of dollars.

In notices sent to the affected grantees, the Justice Department offered a 30-day window to appeal its decisions, and several of the recipients told Reuters they intended to pursue that option. Targeted programs

on a partial list seen by Reuters included: grants that supported crime victims, including for transgender victims; hotlines used by crime victims; grants to fight human trafficking that have gone to organizations working with immigrants; programs to curb juvenile delinquency and safeguard incarcerated youth; and funding for state-run hate-crime reporting.

Attorney General Pam Bondi said the changes reflected the priorities of President Donald Trump's administration. "Grants for programs that do not align with the administration's priorities were rescinded but this Department of Justice will continue to ensure that services for victims are not impacted and any recipient will have the ability to appeal and restore any grant if direct impact on victims can be thoroughly established," Bondi said in a statement to Reuters.

Justice Department grants typically run for three years. New administrations often change the focus of grants awarded, but the department seldom cuts funding for previously

awarded grants that support ongoing programs.

The leaders of multiple groups whose grants were cut said the lost funding would take a toll on their programs. The National Center for Victims of Crime said it lost nearly \$3 million to fund crime-victim hotlines and initiatives to provide support and counseling, such as guidance on finding safe housing and referrals to victims' compensation programs. "The hotlines are going away," its CEO, Renee Williams, said in an interview.

Richard Morales, executive director of the Latino Coalition for Community Leadership, which helps communities develop re-entry, crime prevention and health programs, said he learned the Justice Department had canceled two grants worth about \$6 million. The cuts will affect 22 organizations that work with the group across 10 states.

Jean Bruggeman, who leads the non-profit Freedom Network USA which assists human trafficking victims, said abruptly canceling funding without warning could

leave vulnerable victims of domestic abuse on the streets without access to housing. For instance, some grants on the list help fund pet-friendly housing assistance to domestic violence victims who might not be willing to leave their homes without their animals. The Justice Department restored the pet-related shelter program after Reuters reported on its cancellation, an official said.

"We know that with domestic violence, it's when survivors leave that the risk of mortality is the highest," she said. In an email sent to Office of Justice Programs staff, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Maureen Henneberg said that canceled grants "no longer support the department's priorities."

She added that the new funding priorities will focus on "certain law enforcement operations, combating violent crime, protecting American children, supporting American victims of trafficking and sexual assault, and promoting coordination of law enforcement efforts at all levels of government."

Polish FM denounces Russian aggression

WARSAW (AP): Poland's foreign minister used an annual address to parliament to send a sharp message to Russian leaders as war continues in neighboring Ukraine, asking: "Don't you have enough land?" Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski described the difficult situation Poland faces with the war across the border and the threat of its expansion, and voiced concerns about the "disintegration" of Western unity.

Poland, on NATO's eastern flank, is one of Kyiv's strongest supporters, and Sikorski used his speech to strongly criticize Russia. He said, addressing Russian leaders: "Don't you have enough land? Eleven time zones and still not enough? Take care of better governing what is within your borders according to international law," Sikorski described the deteriorating security situation with a war next to Poland's border: "Anxiety, and the question of what will happen, have settled in Polish homes. Are we also at risk of Russian aggression? Are the relations between Europe and the United States heading

towards a crisis? Can Europe quickly improve its defense capabilities?" Poland and European allies are trying to strengthen their defenses, fearing that Russian aggression won't stop in Ukraine, while the Trump administration signals that Europe must take up more security responsibilities.

Though he did not mention US President Donald Trump by name, Sikorski's address appeared to include implicit criticism of concessions Trump has been willing to make to Russia to bring an end to the war. Since taking office again, Trump has falsely claimed Ukraine "should have never started the war," said Ukraine "may be Russian some day" and questioned the legitimacy of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government. Trump also upended the longstanding American position of isolating Russia over its aggression by beginning direct talks with Moscow and voicing positions sounding remarkably like the Kremlin's own. "For Poland, the greatest threat would be the disintegration of the Western

community. That is why we cannot afford illusions or inaction. We cannot afford to be alone," Sikorski said.

He had a warning for Russia. "You will never rule here again, neither in Kyiv, nor in Vilnius, nor in Riga, nor in Tallinn, nor in Chisinau," he said, listing the capitals of Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Moldova. He also noted that the situation on the front lines in eastern and southern Ukraine is "ambiguous," and that Russian forces' slow progress is paid for "with huge losses." "After three years of this stage of the war, which Putin planned for three days, Russian troops control only about 20% of Ukrainian territory and are still stuck in eastern Ukraine," Sikorski said.

"It is estimated that the war has already cost Russia at least \$200 billion, and almost a million Russian soldiers have been eliminated from the battlefield. Ukrainian losses are smaller, and they have not allowed either the capture of their capital or the installation of a puppet government."

China asks Korea not to supply products to US

SEOUL (Reuters): Beijing recently asked South Korean companies not to ship products containing China's rare earth minerals to US defence firms, the Korea Economic Daily reported, citing government and company sources.

The report had initially said China's Ministry of Commerce warned Korean companies they could face sanctions if they violated the export restrictions. The ministry delivered the message in letters to Korean companies which make power transformers, batteries, displays, electric vehicles, aerospace and medical equipment, the report said.

The Korea Economic Daily report was later corrected to the "Chinese government" delivering the message, rather than the

commerce ministry. South Korea's industry ministry said it was checking with the Chinese government and South Korean companies in order to confirm the report. "So far, it has not been confirmed that South Korean companies have received an official letter from the Chinese government as per the report," the ministry said.

China's Ministry of Commerce did not respond to questions. Early this month, China placed export restrictions on rare earth elements as part of its sweeping response to US tariffs, restricting the supply of minerals used to make weapons, electronics and a range of consumer goods. Exporters must now apply to the Ministry of Commerce for licences, a relatively opaque process that can range from six or

seven weeks to several months.

China produces around 90% of the world's rare earths, a group of 17 elements. The US government has stockpiles of some rare earths, but not enough to supply its defence contractors in perpetuity. South Korea said in early April it had more than six months of stockpiles of some of the seven rare earths restricted by China, including dysprosium, used in special magnets found in the clean energy sector, including electric vehicles and wind turbines. Senior South Korean government officials are set to meet their US counterparts in Washington to discuss tariffs. China warned countries against striking a broader economic deal with the US at its expense.

people died in the strike, including two other journalists and their driver.

Goldin, who also wrote for the military daily Krasnaya Zvezda, was taken to a military hospital in Moscow, but died of his wounds nearly a month after the attack. Russia's Foreign Ministry accused Ukraine of deliberately targeting the journalists in the attack. Data provided earlier

in the war by the Committee to Protect Journalists counted at least 15 journalists killed since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Nearly all of the Luhansk region has been captured by Russian forces as Moscow drives to take control of the broader eastern Donbas region, one of Ukraine's most industrialised areas.

LONDON (BBC): Diplomats from the UK, France, Germany, Ukraine and the US will hold fresh talks in London aimed at securing a ceasefire in the three-year war between Ukraine and Russia. The talks come amid growing speculation that Russia might be willing to halt its invasion along current front lines in return for significant concessions.

The pace of diplomatic efforts to end the war is quickening but there is little clarity about where they are heading or whether they will succeed. US President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and his Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, had been expected in London but they pulled out, sending Trump's Ukraine envoy, Gen Keith Kellogg, instead.

Rubio spoke to UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy about what he hoped would be "substantive and good technical meetings". Lammy himself called the conversation "productive", taking place ahead of a "critical moment for Ukraine,

Britain and Euro-Atlantic Security" as "talks continue at pace". The US secretary of state said he would reschedule his trip to the UK in the coming months, posting on X: "I look forward to following up after the ongoing discussions."

The White House said Witkoff would travel to Moscow this week for his fourth meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin. All this comes amid reports in the Financial Times that Russia might be ready to halt its invasion along current front lines and give

up some territorial ambitions in return for US recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said no such proposals had been shared with him and he ruled out recognising Crimea as Russian territory. Putin unilaterally called a temporary ceasefire for the Easter weekend but UK Defence Secretary John Healey told the House of Commons that British military intelligence had found no evidence of a let-up in attacks.

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Stress test no excuse for Kyiv's behavior

THE current occupant of the White House has established a reputation for being a master at exerting maximum pressure on others so that they dance to his tune. Such a song-and-dance show is now being played out with regard to the Ukraine talks, as high-ranking members of his administration have continued to threaten a US withdrawal from the talks this week.

On Wednesday, the US leader again lashed out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, accusing him of jeopardizing peace talks with Russia after the Ukrainian leader said Kyiv would never recognize Russia's occupation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

The remarks from the White House echo previous media reports that the US was offering its recognition of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea as part of a peace plan, which was separately delivered to Ukrainian and Russian officials after last week's talks in Paris. The US recognition would mark a major policy shift.

Zelensky has long said Crimea is a red line, but the US leader was not inclined to indulge him: In a post on his social media platform, Truth Social, the US leader rejected Zelensky's red line on Crimea being excluded from negotiations with Russia, saying the territory was "lost years ago" and "is not even a point of discussion".

Upping the ante on Ukraine, he stated that the Ukrainian leader can have peace or "he can fight for another three years before losing the whole country", even accusing the Ukrainian side of prolonging the conflict. Vice-President JD Vance also got in on the act, saying that it was time for Russia and Ukraine to either agree to the US peace proposal "or for the United States to walk away from this process".

It remains to be seen whether such megaphone diplomacy will work.

There is clearly a wide divide between the US administration and Kyiv and its European allies over how to end the conflict. A London-hosted Ukraine summit was thrown into disarray on Wednesday after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Steve Witkoff, US President Donald Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, withdrew from the gathering at the 11th hour, adding another proof of the transatlantic gaps.

All of which, along with the US' shake, rattle and roll of global trade, explains why China has been dragged into the mix.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that it had summoned the Chinese ambassador to express its "serious concern" over the alleged participation of Chinese citizens in hostilities against Ukraine, as well as the involvement of Chinese companies in the production of military products in Russia. Earlier, Zelensky had accused China of supplying weapons to the Russian military. But while the Ukrainian side might hope that portraying China in this way will act as a pressure reliever and help it secure a more favorable position with the White House with regard to any settlement, it is highly improper and inappropriate.

China has repeatedly made clear that it does not provide lethal weapons or dual-use items to any party involved in the conflict and it holds a principled and neutral stance on the conflict, advocating for a peaceful resolution through diplomatic dialogue.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun expressed China's firm opposition to the claims, calling them "groundless accusations and political manipulation".

That China's role as a mediator and advocate for peaceful negotiations has garnered recognition from various nations, including Russia and Ukraine, serves to underscore that.

Indeed, as the Russia-Ukraine conflict has unfolded, China's unwavering commitment to peace through talks and its efforts to highlight the importance of constructive engagement as the key to resolve the conflict has served as a vital touchstone for the peace process.

Having taken it on itself to secure a peace deal, the US administration cannot walk away now, which would only prolong the conflict. Ukraine on its part should try and secure the best settlement it can without resorting to throwing a friend under the proverbial bus.

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Tension...



India's Indus Waters Treaty Gambit

No immediate impact, but alarming portents

Syed Saqib Hussain

IN a worrying yet not entirely unforeseen escalation following the recent Pehalgam attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir, the Indian government has once again sought to leverage the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) as a tool of coercive diplomacy. On April 23, 2025, India issued a statement holding the IWT "in abeyance," a term loaded with diplomatic ambiguity but stark in intent. The statement framed this move as a reaction to what New Delhi has called a "cross-border terrorist provocation." Yet, at its core, the development underscores the weaponisation of water—a critical lifeline for millions in Pakistan—as a strategic pressure point.

The Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank and signed in 1960, remains one of the most resilient water-sharing agreements globally. Under its framework, India was allocated the three eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—while Pakistan received rights over the western rivers—Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab. Crucially, India was permitted limited use—up to 20%—of the western rivers' waters for domestic, non-consumptive, and hydroelectric purposes, without altering the flow.

Over the years, India has, on average, utilised 19.85% of this permissible quota. Despite nationalistic posturing in times

of political tension, India lacks the immediate infrastructural capacity to significantly reduce or divert flows of the western rivers. The Treaty does not permit India to unilaterally halt or store significant quantities of water from these rivers without extensive dam infrastructure, most of which requires years of planning and environmental clearances. At present, India's suspension appears symbolic rather than operational. The flow of the rivers remains largely unchanged. The actual implications of India's move—should it escalate to treaty abrogation or unilateral diversion—would require years of preparatory groundwork: construction of storage facilities, dams, or re-routing mechanisms. Given the technical limitations, this is not an immediate strategic threat but an early warning siren.

However, a more immediate and impactful step—already witnessed since 2019—is India's discontinuation of hydrological data sharing and bilateral meetings under the Treaty's Permanent Indus Commission. These annual meetings, mandated for dispute resolution and data exchange, form the institutional backbone of the Treaty's trust-build-ing mechanisms.

Their suspension corrodes the framework incrementally, turning a cooperative mechanism into an adversarial void.

Pakistan's most immediate and legitimate tool remains the legal route. The World Bank continues to be a guarantor of the Treaty. Any Indian violation—whether by new construction on western rivers or refusal to follow arbitration—can be challenged through the Treaty's graded dispute resolution mechanism, involving a Neutral Expert, followed by a Court of Arbitration. Simultaneously, Islamabad can raise the issue at global forums including the UN General Assembly and international climate change platforms, reframing India's actions as environmental aggression and contraventions of internationally mediated agreements.

Beyond legal and diplomatic measures, a more potent strategy involves leveraging China's upstream dominance over Indian rivers.

The Brahmaputra, one of India's most critical rivers, originates in Tibet as the Yarlung Tsangpo. Islamabad can align with Beijing to apply strategic pressure on India by highlighting its own vulnerabilities in the Brahmaputra basin. Joint environmental cooperation, satellite monitoring of dam constructions, and even trilateral dialogues may provide leverage. Pakistan should also explore avenues of regional cooperation with countries like Nepal and

Bangladesh, who share similar downstream vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Indian upstream control.

A South Asian Water Security Initiative could be proposed to pre-empt unilateral moves by any riparian state. At the same time, internal preparedness is vital. Pakistan must accelerate its water infrastructure development, including small dams, rainwater harvesting, and canal lining to reduce water loss. Reducing dependency on river water and increasing internal efficiency will neutralise India's strategic advantage in the longer run.

India's use of the IWT as a diplomatic weapon, even symbolically, sets a dangerous precedent. The Treaty has stood the test of multiple wars, insurgencies, and standoffs.

Its destabilisation not only threatens Pakistan's water security but also erodes regional confidence in multilateral agreements as mechanisms of peace and cooperation. While the current suspension may seem toothless in practical terms, its psychological and strategic implications should not be underestimated. Water is no longer just a resource—it is a domain of warfare, both political and infrastructural. For Pakistan, this calls for not just reactive diplomacy but proactive preparedness, robust alliances, and the foresight to safeguard a resource more vital than oil or arms.

UK should not let itself be hoodwinked by Washington

LI YANG

EVEN before he took office as prime minister of the United Kingdom in July, unlike other Western politicians, Keir Starmer held a comparatively practical view of China, being aware that if the UK really wanted to breathe life back into its stagnant economy it could not afford to turn the world's second-largest economy from a key trading partner and investor into an opponent. That made him one of the few among his Western peers to win an election without playing the "China card".

Although that does not mean the Starmer government has a rational outlook on China-related issues, such as those relating to Hong Kong, given that it still aligns closely with the United States on the agenda, it has done a good job in not letting these issues stall the overall healthy development of Sino-UK relations.

Ever since President Xi Jinping met Starmer in Rio de Janeiro in November, the two sides have doubled down on their joint efforts to not only break the ice frozen

during the earlier Rishi Sunak government — which blindly toed the then Joe Biden administration's China-containment policy — but also

have been resumed, including the China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue, Strategic Dialogue and Energy Dialogue. A series of high-level exchange channels and mechanisms that once played an important role in ushering in the "golden decade" of bilateral relations before the COVID-19 pandemic have been resumed, including the China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue, Strategic Dialogue and Energy Dialogue. To carry on the positive momentum of Sino-UK relations, Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy on Tuesday, in which Wang urged the two countries to bear the responsibility of upholding the international order against the current backdrop of rampant unilateral bullying. By saying that China, in the face of the US' tariff war, which also hurts the UK, aims not only to defend its own legitimate rights and interests but also to uphold international rules and the multilateral trading system, Wang was apparently trying to persuade the UK not to be hoodwinked by the US to collude with it in targeting China. By reiterating that China will remain committed to mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries, and to sharing development opportunities with the world, Wang was telling the Starmer government that as long as the UK can continue to uphold its strategic autonomy in handling relations with China, it can only gain from its rational decision.

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False flags and fabrications: India's dangerous game against Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

INDIA'S history of crafting elaborate narratives to malign Pakistan and justify its aggressive postures has been an ongoing concern for regional stability. The recent tragic incident in Pahalgalam, Kashmir, where tourists came under fire, is yet another episode in a long series of orchestrated events that serve as pretexts for provocations against Pakistan. Indian media and political leadership wasted no time in launching a disinformation campaign, hastily blaming Pakistan without any credible investigation or evidence. This false flag operation, thinly veiled as a terrorist attack, is now being used to whip up nationalist sentiment and prepare grounds for a so-called "surgical strike"—a tactic that India has previously employed to distract its public from internal unrest and international embarrassment.

Pakistan has consistently condemned terrorism in all forms and has made monumental sacrifices in its fight against extremism. Any attempt to link Pakistan to the Pahalgalam attack is not only irresponsible but deeply provocative. It reflects a pattern of behavior where India stages incidents or manipulates events, only to then act as judge, jury, and executioner, often at the cost of peace in South Asia.

This is not the first time India has resorted to such theatrics. One of the earliest and most glaring examples was the infamous Ganga plane hijacking of 1971. The Indian Airlines flight was reportedly hijacked by two Kashmiri separatists and taken to Lahore. The hijackers later surrendered to Pakistani authorities.

Its destabilisation not only threatens Pakistan's water security but also erodes regional confidence in multilateral agreements as mechanisms of peace and cooperation. While the current suspension may seem toothless in practical terms, its psychological and strategic implications should not be underestimated. Water is no longer just a resource—it is a domain of warfare, both political and infrastructural. For Pakistan, this calls for not just reactive diplomacy but proactive preparedness, robust alliances, and the foresight to safeguard a resource more vital than oil or arms.

ities, but India promptly rooted the incident to ban Pakistani overflights, effectively choking off West Pakistan from East Pakistan and strategically aiding its campaign in what became the secession of Bangladesh. Years later, Indian intelligence and former officials admitted the possibility of the hijacking being an inside job designed to serve a larger political purpose. This deceitful episode cast a long shadow on India's credibility and highlighted its willingness to use civilians and fabricated incidents for strategic gains.

Fast forward to 2016, the so-called "surgical strike" claimed by India following the Uri attack was another attempt to shape a narrative of military prowess and domestic strength. Despite international skepticism and Pakistan's denial of any such cross-border incursion, Indian media celebrated it as a great triumph, largely for political mileage. The lack of evidence, neutral verification, or independent reports did not deter the Indian government from exploiting the event for political gain, especially in the context of upcoming elections.

In 2019, the Pulwama attack that killed dozens of Indian paramilitary personnel was once again swiftly blamed on Pakistan. India responded with an airstrike in Balakot, claiming to have destroyed a terrorist training camp.

However, satellite imagery and ground reports contradicted these claims, showing nothing but a few uprooted trees and a damaged structure. Pakistan's swift and

measured response, including the capture and subsequent release of an Indian Air Force pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan, exposed the hollowness of India's aggression and reinforced Pakistan's commitment to peace and responsible state behavior.

The timing of the Pahalgalam incident and the subsequent threats of surgical strikes is also significant in the broader geopolitical context. The region is already tense due to Israel's ongoing hostile actions in Gaza and the rising civilian death toll in Palestine. The Muslim world, including Pakistan, is raising its voice against the atrocities. At such a time, India's military rhetoric and anti-Pakistan agenda may be aimed at diverting attention from global condemnation of its allies and shifting focus onto a manufactured security threat. Additionally, the recent visit of a high-level American delegation to India underscores Washington's strategic interests in the region. While the United States continues to build its Indo-Pacific alliance, it must be careful not to embolden India's aggressive behavior against its neighbors, especially Pakistan, which has consistently advocated for peace, dialogue, and regional cooperation.

Adding to this complex scenario is Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, where economic and strategic partnerships were emphasized. While strengthening bilateral ties is every nation's right, using such engagements as diplomatic leverage to isolate Pakistan or justify hostile intent would be a dangerous miscalculation. Pakistan enjoys deep-

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rooted and time-tested relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the broader Muslim world, and any attempt to sow discord in this brotherly relationship will not succeed.

The international community must view India's latest allegations and the threat of a surgical strike with critical scrutiny. Such actions risk not only bilateral escalation but also broader regional instability. False flag operations and unverified claims only serve to inflame tensions and erode trust. It is essential for global powers and multilateral institutions to urge restraint, demand independent investigations, and hold accountable those who deliberately fan the flames of conflict.

Peace between two nuclear-armed neighbors cannot be held hostage to propaganda, fake narratives, and political opportunism. The region has already suffered from decades of hostility, wars, and missed opportunities for cooperation. Repeating the same dangerous script of deceit and blame games will only further isolate India diplomatically and deepen mistrust.

Pakistan remains firm in its resolve to defend its sovereignty while advocating for peace. Any aggression based on lies will be met with full diplomatic, moral, and, if necessary, military response. The responsibility lies with India to choose facts over fiction, diplomacy over destruction, and peace over propaganda. The world is watching and history, as always, will be the ultimate judge.

‘The Art of the Deal’ meets global reality

“THE Art of the Deal” opens with an exhausting fly-on-the-wall account of a week in the life of Donald Trump the real-estate shark. He’s never still, always on the phone and cranking out deal-after-deal with big business pals.

The president hoped the first 100 days of his second term would uncork a similar torrent of deal-making as depicted in the seminal text of Trumpism.

But Trump has softened his tone on his trade war with China; he blinked over reciprocal tariffs on dozens of other nations; and he is fast losing patience with the Ukraine war, which he had predicted he’d end in 24 hours. Deals are proving more elusive when the stakes are not skyscrapers and casinos but entire economies, the credibility of powerful foreign leaders and national sovereignty.

Trump’s belief that every policy issue is a win-lose proposition has dominated his return to the White House – and has led to some nominal successes.

He’s worked out, for example, how to use his considerable executive authority as leverage against an adversary. By threatening to cut security clearances, he won concessions from some top law firms. By brandishing billions of dollars in government funding, he flexed power over several top universities. This is all ethically and constitutionally questionable. But it’s all about chalking up “wins.”

Trump’s fellow businessmen understand the game. The president offered an opt-out from 145% Chinese tariffs to iPhones following an “Art of the Deal”-style call with Apple CEO Tim Cook.

But the president is also finding out that geopolitics and global trade negotiations have little in common with selling a condo.

So far, the endless stream of stunning trade deals predicted by the president’s staff after he paused many tariffs for 90 days hasn’t materialized.

China has balked at being bullied.

And despite the president’s growing fury, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky has refused so far to accept onerous US conditions for ending the war started by Russian President Vladimir Putin – who has received no such pressure.

If Trump does pull a fair peace deal out of the hat in Ukraine, he’ll potentially save tens of thousands of lives and end three years of vicious killing. If he can rebalance US trade with China, he’ll go some way to redressing economic injustices in industrialized regions gutted by globalization.

None of these initiatives are closed. But they are all testing the core mythology of Trump as dealmaker that is crucial to his political appeal.

He caricatured his own approach taken to his logical and cruel extremes earlier this year when he

suggested moving Gaza’s entire population of more than 2 million people out of the territory devastated by Israel’s war with Hamas. He promised that this feat of ethnic cleansing would allow the US to build the “Riviera of the Middle East” with no thought of the dignity and sovereignty of Palestinians.

Not surprisingly, his hopes for forging Middle East peace have stalled.

China’s President Xi Jinping doesn’t do diplomacy by phone.

Beijing’s preference for formal, painstaking lower-level talks among officials before presidents meet means Trump’s approach to his China trade war was questionable from the start – as was the idea that Xi would bend following the humiliation of facing 145% tariffs that Trump slapped on Chinese goods. After all, his nationalist political project is based on remaking a world that he regards as unfairly shaped by American power.

Almost all US presidents over the last 20 years have been frustrated at China’s refusal to open its markets to US products, among other issues, including Chinese intellectual property theft. Intimidating Beijing might have worked 25 years ago. But China is now a superpower. It can hurt the US as much as the US can hurt China.

“I think the Chinese are going to feel vindicated,” Richard Haass, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations told CNN’s Kasie Hunt. “We imposed tariffs on China; China pushed back with large tariffs of their own. It looks to be the United States that is backing down. From China’s point of view, this is how they hoped it would play out.”

Beijing’s refusal to blink was predictable, although the White House, which seems to lack expertise on China, appeared surprised.

“If a negotiated solution is truly what the US wants, it should stop threatening and black-mailing China and seek dialogue based on equality, respect and mutual benefit,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said Wednesday. “To keep asking for a deal while exerting extreme pressure is not the right way to deal with China and simply will not work.”

Trump’s statements on Tuesday and Wednesday that tariffs wouldn’t stay near 145% and that he wouldn’t play “hardball” with Xi were a clear change of emphasis from a White House that had been demanding a call from the Chinese leader. It comes amid rising political pressure in the US – not least from tanking stock markets destabilized by Trump’s tariff policies, which have crushed the 401(k) pension plans of many Americans. Next year’s midterm elections are already spooking GOP lawmakers. Trump just met with CEOs who warned of supply chain crunches and shortages if China tariffs stay high. And a new Pew Research poll found Wednesday

Stephen Collinson

that the president’s approval rating has slumped to 40% — down 7 percentage points since early February.

China might have learned from the previous episode of Trump’s tariff war, which was marked by an earlier climbdown. Earlier this month, the president paused reciprocal tariffs on dozens of countries only hours after they’d come into force. He admitted he’d been watching alarming developments in the bond market as America’s reputation as a safe investment haven came under severe pressure.

The White House saved face on that occasion by arguing that scores of nations were lining up with attractive trade deals to bring to the president. But so far, no final agreements have emerged. Genuine trade deals typically take years to negotiate, since they require politicians of all sides to make painful political concessions on issues that often impact powerful constituencies. The US is, for example, insisting that Europe open its markets to US meats from hormone-raised livestock, a concession EU leaders would struggle to impose on their voters.

Despite the evidence of China’s hardline statecraft, Trump still appears convinced that what he calls his “great relationship” with Xi will unlock a deal quickly. “Everything’s active. Everybody wants to be a part of what we’re doing,” he told reporters on Wednesday. Hours later however, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is being credited with masterminding Trump’s walk back on tariffs laid out a less optimistic timeline for meaningful change in trade with China. He spoke of a “two- to three-year timeline for the full rebalancing” of the relationship – in a scenario that would require Beijing’s cooperation.

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Trump’s attempts to impose his vision and will on Ukraine mean that his

efforts to forge a peace deal have been as unsuccessful as his trade wars. As with China, some of his approaches appear not to appreciate the political forces acting on foreign leaders.

The president, for instance, expressed frustration with Zelensky on Wednesday because of his failure to sign up to a US-drafted agreement that appears to lock in many of Russia’s goals while compromising Ukraine’s sovereignty.

“The situation for Ukraine is dire — He can have Peace or, he can fight for another three years before losing the whole Country,” Trump wrote on Truth Social. “We are very close to a Deal, but the man with ‘no cards to play’ should now, finally, GET IT DONE.”

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the president’s “patience is running very thin.” She added, “He needs to see this thing come to an end.”

Trump is angry about Zelensky’s opposition to America’s proposed recognition of Russian sovereignty over Crimea – a region annexed illegally by Putin in 2014.

Yuriy Boyechko, CEO of Hope for Ukraine, a nonprofit organization, explained such a move would be politically impossible for Zelensky. “The only way it can be done is through a change of (the) Ukrainian constitution, and to get that done, referendums need to take place; the Ukrainian Parliament has to approve this amendment to the constitution; and (Ukraine’s) highest court has to rectify this before Crimea can be recognized as Russian territory.”

Boyechko added, “Surrendering Ukrainian territory to Russian occupiers will never be ratified by the Ukrainian Parliament and the Ukrainian people will never vote for it.”

The US approach comes after weeks Trump repeatedly escalated pressure on Ukraine while bringing his plans more closely in line with Russia’s goals, a process accelerated by US envoy Steve Witkoff’s frequent visits to Putin. The administration is also trying to negotiate a deal to exploit Ukraine’s rare earth mineral resources, which critics have likened to economic colonization of a vulnerable nation.

While Trump is angry at Ukraine, he’s convinced Putin is ready to deal – despite a lack of evidence that he’d compromise any of his goals to eventually destroy Ukrainian independence.

“I think Russia is ready. I think we have a deal with Russia,” Trump said Wednesday in the Oval Office, once again empathizing with the aggressor rather than the victim of the conflict.

At the start of “The Art of the Deal,” Trump wrote that while other people paint beautifully or write wonderful poetry, “deals are my art form.”

The world is wondering whether he’s lost his touch.

— CNN

The great collapse of US higher education has begun

Donald Earl Collins

have gone from 58 percent of all undergraduate college enrollees to only about 40 percent as of the early 2020s. Fully 71 percent of the decline in college attendance since 2010 coincides with the decline of men as students in higher education. Perhaps sexism disguised as disinterest in higher education in the wake of a women-dominant student body might be at least part of the explanation for this steep fall in enrolment.

But other higher education institutions are worse off: Clarion University of Pennsylvania, California State University of Pennsylvania, The College of Saint Rose in New York and Independence University in Utah, for example. These are among the 76 colleges and universities that have either closed their doors or have merged with other higher education institutions in the US, affecting the lives of tens of thousands of students and several thousand faculty members. Nearly all of these institutions have cited budget shortfalls and lower enrolment as reasons for their demise or mergers.

Nationally, the number of students attending US colleges and universities fell from a peak of 18.1 million students in 2010 to 15.4 million in 2021, including a drop of 350,000 students after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of this past fall, enrolment had climbed to 15.9 million students, a 4.5 percent increase, but hardly enough to stem the tide of closures, austerity and consolidations.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia’s financial stress test model for American higher education institutions, as many as 80 colleges and universities in the US could permanently close their doors by the end of the 2025-26 school year. They based their findings on “the worst-case scenario” predictions coming from the upcoming demographic cliff (or a 15 percent decline in enrolment).” Demographers have also foreseen an imminent drop in the numbers of college enrollees starting this fall, a consequence of the economic distress that began the Great Recession of the late-2000s.

Then there is Trump 2.0 and his administration’s persecution of foreign college students. The recent crackdowns on academic freedom under former President Joe Biden, with pro-Palestinian college faculty and student protesters, and under mostly Republican governors like Greg Abbott in Texas and Ron DeSantis in Florida over Critical Race Theory and DEI, have escalated under President Donald Trump. The Trump administration’s move to revoke the visas of more than 1,700 foreign faculty and students, and kidnap and deport many others, mostly over pro-Palestine activism and other political stances deemed against the interests of

the administration, threatens the one area of sustainable growth in higher education. Neither Alireza Doroudi, Rumeysa Ozturk and Mahmoud Khalil, nor any of the hundreds of other victims of this injustice, have committed any crimes under US laws. Unless going to a funeral or writing an op-ed or exercising the First Amendment right to protest is criminal behaviour.

In 2023-24, more than 1.1 million international students attended US colleges and universities at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels. But with the Trump administration threatening, arresting and deporting foreign students and scholars in their dozens, it is all but certain that international student enrolment from the Middle East and South Asia will drop in the coming year. There will also likely be a drop in students from China as a consequence of the ongoing tariff fight between the two nations. One-quarter of all foreign students in the US are from China.

After decades of universities hiring armies of part-time professors instead of full-time, tenure-stream instructors and researchers, and college presidents running their campuses like for-profit businesses, the implosion of US higher education has been almost inevitable. Despite Harvard recently providing the Trump administration opposition to their repression of colleges and universities, top-down hierarchies and disempowered workforces have rendered higher education’s responses to conservative and far-right movements in the US utterly impotent. Add to this the conservative assumptions of liberal arts fields as “immoral,” “indoctrination” and “libtards” instead of what they really mean: an expansion of one’s knowledge of people and the world. There has also been a decades-long overemphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The possibility of Trump’s Project 2025 gurus privatising the federal student loan programme would pretty much be the straw that broke US higher education’s back at this point.

Liberal arts departments especially will continue to consolidate, or university administrators will continue to find reasons to jettison them as a cost-saving measure. Ever larger numbers of senior faculty will take severance pay, early retirement, or will end up sacked. Non-tenured faculty and junior staff will simply be unemployed and, in many cases, unemployable in a shrinking US higher education landscape. Most of all, those students who find themselves at any institutions outside of the top 136 elite universities or the top 50 flagship public colleges and universities may no longer be able to afford college, with tens of thousands unable to complete their degrees. American higher education is not just staring into the abyss – it has already fallen into it.

Pope Francis’ lessons must guide the Middle East

NO tribute, obituary or testament can do justice to one of the greatest leaders of our time. Pope Francis has passed, but his embodiment of Saint Francis of Assisi’s humility, service and tireless calls for peace must stand the test of time.

Remembering him in the context of our devastated Middle East is indispensable. His values and spirit are an essential blueprint for how our region must be enabled to thrive. I chose to mourn on Easter Monday by reflecting upon eight of his brilliant lessons.

Lesson 1: Be a light-house; give light to darkness.

Lesson 2: Discard colonialism and bring back dignity.

Consistently engaging in his humble self, leaving no room for pomp or self-importance, Pope Francis in 2021 visited Iraq, including areas dev-

astated by Daesh, such as Mosul, to mourn with Iraqis and all Christians and communities of the Middle East. His presence reinstated our right to dignity and reaffirmed our collective fight for justice and a life worth living. In an address at Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, he said: “It is up to us to remind the world that human life has value for what it is and not for what it has.”

During his general audience upon his return from Iraq, he declared: “The Iraqi people have the right to live in peace; they have the right to rediscover the dignity that belongs to them.” His vision and language of human dignity was not about saving others but about being with them, restoring agency and holding space for healing.

Lesson 3: Humbly learn from those fighting and surviving.

Lesson 4: Offer hope

in abundance.

In his nightly video calls with Fathers Gabriel Romanelli and Youssef Asaad in Gaza since October 2023, Pope Francis joined their suffering and lived experiences, saying: “I am with you, don’t be afraid.” By connecting so compassionately with survivors of conflict, he instilled the hope they needed to survive another day. And in doing so, at a time when the world was facing the greatest leadership trust crisis in history, he embraced Gaza, elevating the voices bearing the truth.

By receiving, he could also authentically give back: Pope Francis relentlessly demanded an end to the “cruelty” of the Gaza War, up to his last Easter sermon: “I 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.” His theology was not abstract, but rather a living system of thinking and acting in empathy

During his historic visit to the Arabian Peninsula in 2019, Pope Francis co-signed with Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” underscoring the necessity for world leaders to work together to end conflict and achieve peace. He knew the Middle East’s narrative needed reclaiming and ensured our wisdom of fraternity and tenderness was shared with the world. The document stated: “We call upon ourselves, upon the leaders of the world as well as the architects of international policy and world economy, to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline that the world is presently experiencing.”

and deeply listening to those who are marginalized, invisible or forcibly forgotten.

Lesson 5: When power fails to do right, never lose your moral compass.

Lesson 6: Return to the essence of politics.

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By rejecting geopolitics and enforcing the rightful space for moral diplomacy, Pope Francis reimagined human dignity as deeply political: a commitment to the shared well-being of our planet, our people.

Lesson 7: Have courage; do not yield to collective indifference

and elusiveness.

Lesson 8: Inhumanity is the loss of civilization.

Despite his weakened health, the clarity, energy and truth of his words moved mountains. Whether in his sermons, moments with worshippers and citizens or meetings with political leaders, his critical thinking taught us the power of having the courage to say and to do the right thing. He understood the Middle East was being neglected by political convenience and he refused to normalize injustice by speaking up and saying no to what had become acceptable.

During an ecumenical prayer meeting in Italy in 2018 with leaders of Christian churches from the Middle East, Pope Francis stated: “Indifference kills and we desire to lift up our voices in opposition to this murderous indifference.” He taught us never to abandon humanity, especially when the

world thinks it can move on in collective indifference. He knew that to lose communities, humanity and human life was not a tragedy of the Middle East, but a defeat of worldly civilization. The loss of a life in this region or any part of the world must matter to everyone; no one was entitled to avoid responsibility.

As an Armenian Catholic philanthropist who calls Riyadh her second home, the moral compass of Pope Francis has profoundly shaped my giving, diplomacy and fearless fight for justice and truth.

His passing is a sacred calling to relearn what it means to be human and to honor the region where Jesus was born. The responsibility of love and justice must continue to be shouldered and shared. By doing so, our region stands a real chance of not only surviving but flourishing.



Financial system’s performance and resilience remained intact: SBP Financial Stability Review 2024

F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has issued its annual flagship publication Financial Stability Review (FSR) for the year 2024. The Review is prepared and published in terms of requirements prescribed in Section 39(3) of the State Bank of Pakistan Act, 1956. The FSR presents the performance and risk assessment of various segments of the financial sector including banks, microfinance banks (MFBs), development finance institutions (DFIs), non-bank financial institutions (NBFI), insurance, financial markets and financial market infrastructures (FMIs). It also assesses the financial soundness

of non-financial corporate sector, which is a major private sector user of bank credit.

The Review highlights that macroeconomic conditions improved considerably during CY24, as reflected by receding inflationary pressures and consequent significant monetary easing, fiscal consolidation, stable rupee-dollar parity, pick-up in economic activity, and improved external account balance. In this backdrop, financial sector-growing by a decent pace of 17.8 percent-maintained its operational and financial resilience during CY24.

Amid turnaround in macroeconomic environment, volatility in financial markets subsided. The

banking sector exhibited steady performance and maintained its financial soundness. The balance sheet of the banks expanded by 15.8 percent in CY24. The expansion in assets was driven by both investment as well advances. Private sector advances witnessed a strong rebound, due to revival in economic activity, easing in monetary policy, and advances-to-deposit ratio (ADR) linked tax policy for income from government securities. This tax policy also dampened the deposit mobilization, which further increased the banks’ reliance on borrowings. While revival of economic activity is expected to improve the repayment capacity of the borrowers,

the current level of credit risk of the banking sector also remained within a comfortable range as non-performing loans (NPLs) to gross loans ratio fell to 6.3 percent in December 2024 from 7.6 percent in December 2023. The provisioning coverage further improved amid implementation of IFRS-9, with allowances and provisions held for loan losses exceeding the stock of outstanding NPLs, indicating a minimal net credit risk to solvency. The earning volume remained steady, while key profitability indicators witnessed moderation over the year. The capital adequacy ratio, however, improved to 20.6 percent by end December 2024 and remained well above the

minimum regulatory requirements. Within the banking sector, Islamic banking institutions witnessed a strong increase in asset base and a marked expansion in branch network, which also reflects SBP’s focus on promoting Shariah-compliant financial services. Along with contained credit risk, resilience of the Islamic banks remained steady in CY24. Nonetheless, microfinance banks (MFBs) continued to remain under stress.

The Review further highlights that non-bank financial sector presented a mixed performance. The balance sheet of DFIs manifested a remarkable expansion. Moreover, insurance sector continued

to perform steadily.

Whereas the supply side of the financial sector presented a comfortable position, the demand side was affected by the erstwhile tighter financial conditions and subdued economic activity. In particular, the sales of non-financial large corporate sector witnessed pressure and moderation in earnings. However, liquidity profile and repayment capacity of the sector remained comfortable. Encouragingly though, the credit worthiness and repayment capacity of the large borrowers of banking sector remained steady during CY24.

The Review highlights that the FMIs continued to support financial system stability through opera-

tional resilience. The digital transactions continued to drive the momentum of the retail transactions. With a view to facilitate and support remittances from the Gulf region, SBP signed a MoU with Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) to enable the integration of Raast with Bana-a cross border payment system. Moreover, the Raast maintained the momentum of strong growth which particularly got traction after the introduction of Person-to-Merchant module in late 2023.

Going forward, a continued perceptible progress on structural reforms is crucial to a sustained economic growth, building of external buffers and reducing external financing risks. The heightened uncertainty

amid the recent wave of protectionist measures and its associated implications on global economic growth and financial conditions may also pose challenges for domestic economy. Nonetheless, results of the latest stress testing assessment of the banking sector reveals that the sector is expected to remain resilient to various severe hypothetical but plausible shocks over the projected horizon of three years and is expected to maintain its compliance with minimum capital adequacy requirements. SBP, on its part, will continue to ensure financial system stability by remaining vigilant to emerging risks and proactively strengthening its regulatory and supervisory regime.

Haroon: Govt focuses on export-oriented manufacturing with sick industries revival

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday emphasized that export-oriented manufacturing was the government’s primary focus, reviving sick industrial units in line with the vision of the Prime Minister.

“No country can progress without industrial development, and Pakistan’s manufacturing sector holds immense potential. It is imperative to make non-functional units operational again,” he said while chairing a high-level committee meeting on “Revival of Sick Industrial Units” on the directive of the Prime Minister.

The committee reviewed the key challenges faced by sick units, including expen-

sive financing, high utility costs, and excessive taxation, which were identified as the major obstacles to their revival, said a news release.

Haroon Akhtar stressed the importance of not just reviving these units but ensuring sustained performance. “Solutions will be proposed and I will personally ensure their implementation,” he assured.

The committee proposed the formation of a Banking Sub-Committee to address financial issues, with Muneer Kamal named as its convener. New responsibilities have been assigned to the committee, including identifying sick units and drafting relevant policies for their revival.

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled to

take place in ten days.

Haroon chairs meeting to enhance financing avenues for manufacturing sector: Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting to review ways to enhance financing avenues for the manufacturing sector, recognizing that easy access to credit is vital for industrial growth.

The meeting was held with the directives of the Prime Minister, for facilitating credit access for the manufacturing sector, said a news release.

Haroon Akhtar emphasized that resolving credit supply issues and policy bottlenecks is essential to boost the sector’s productivity and competitiveness.

A detailed discussion was held on the current

challenges in credit disbursement and the potential solutions to address them.

The committee underscored the need for a proactive role by the banking sector in providing loans to industrialists.

Haroon Akhtar reiterated the government’s commitment to supporting the manufacturing sector, stating, “Every possible step will be taken to facilitate the manufacturing sector.” He further mentioned that steps to ease credit access for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are also under active consideration.

The committee was directed to identify key issues faced by the manufacturing sector and propose relevant policy recommendations to ensure timely and effective credit support.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik chairing a meeting at Geological Survey of Pakistan.

SCCI announces back for Palestine Solidarity strike

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry fully backed 26 April (Saturday) Palestine Solidarity shutter down strike and urged traders to cooperate to make the strike successful.

Fazal Moqem Khan, president Abdul Jalil Jan, senior vice president, Shehryar Khan, vice president and members of the executive committee in a joint statement issued here on Thursday strongly denounced ongoing atrocities against the innocent people of Palestine, bombardment and illegal/extensive occupation in Gaza.

SCCI senior office bearers call upon World leaders, particularly Muslim countries, OIC and UN Security Council to take serious notice over illegal occupation of Israel on Gaza.

People of the Pakistan and business community standby shoulder to shoulder with the people of Palestine in their difficult and time testing situation, and we strongly deplore the ongoing situation in Gaza, senior office bearers said.

They strongly endorsed the 26 April (Saturday) Palestine Solidarity Shutter down strike and announced full support to make it successful.

Senior Office bearers on the occasion urged the government of Pakistan, international human rights organizations and institutions to take immediate notice of ongoing violation of human rights with people of Palestine and play a role to free Gaza from Israeli occupation at earliest.

Pakistan Stock Exchange stays bearish, loses 2,206 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Thursday, losing 2,206.33 more points on Thursday, a negative change of 1.88%, closing at 115,019.82 points as compared to 117,226.15 points on the last trading day.

A total of 506,702,532 shares were traded during the day as compared to 605,175,574 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs24.488 billion against Rs27.762 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 456 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 83 of them recorded gains and 339 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 34 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Power Cement with 37,316,356 shares at Rs14.45 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 31,229,796 shares at

Rs1.31 per share and Sui South Gas with 23,402,994 shares at Rs41.05 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs449.98 per share closing at Rs23,392.71 whereas runner-up was PIA Holding Company Limited with Rs263.83 rise in its share price to close at Rs2,983.90.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs145.00 per share price, closing at Rs8,800.00, whereas the runner-up Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs50.99 decline in its per share price to Rs6,998.00.

Rupee sheds 10 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.06 against the previous day’s closing of Rs280.96.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying

and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs281.10 and Rs282.60, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 15 paise to close at Rs320.06 against the last day’s closing of Rs319.91, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.97, whereas a decrease of 07 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs373.82 as compared to the last day’s closing of Rs373.89.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 02 paise each to close at Rs76.52 and 74.92 respectively.

Gold prices remained unchanged at Rs352,000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold remained constant at Rs352,000 on Thursday, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association

reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat and 10 gram 22 Karat also witnessed no change and were traded at Rs301,783 and Rs9,195 respectively.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs3,457 and Rs2,963 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market remained stable at \$3,338 whereas silver was also traded at existing rates of \$32.93, the Association reported.

Foreign reserves position

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at US\$ 15,436.0 million as of 18-Apr-2025. The break-up of the foreign reserves position is as under:

Foreign reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan: US\$ 10,205.9 million.

Net foreign reserves held by commercial banks: US\$ 5,230.1 million.

Total liquid foreign reserves: US\$ 15,436.0 million.

During the week ended on 18-Apr-2025, SBP reserves decreased by US\$ 367 million to US\$ 10,205.9 million due to external debt repayments.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Two ships, Hyundai Hong Kong and Fortune Youngin carrying Container and Palm oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal and Liquid Cargo Terminal respectively Wednesday.

Eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Hyundai Hong Kong and Al-Kheesah left the port on Thursday morning. Cargo volume of 173,959 tonnes, comprising 153,662 tonnes imports cargo and 20,297 export cargo carried in 3,374 Containers was handled at the port.

ICCI, PSW unite to enhance trade facilitation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Pakistan Single Window (PSW) have reaffirmed their commitment to work collaboratively for the benefit of the business community by addressing challenges related to trade facilitation and simplifying trade processes.

In a significant step forward, ICCI in collaboration with PSW organized a refresher session on “PSW’s Role in Simplifying and Strengthening Trade Processes” at the ICCI premises.

The session aimed to enhance awareness and understanding among the business community regarding PSW’s pivotal role in transforming international trade operations through digitization.

A large number of business leaders from the region participated in the session to familiarize themselves with the PSW procedures and explore avenues for promoting cross-border trade.

In his welcome remarks, ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi emphasized the transformative impact of PSW in reducing the time and cost of doing business by replacing paper-based processes with a single-entry digital platform for import, export, and transit documentation.

He also highlighted the platform’s inclusive approach in empowering women-led MSMEs by addressing their operational and financial barriers.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Maliha Allaiddin Senior Civil Judge Family Court Kohat Suit No. 14/FC, Date of hearing 02-05-2025, Titled:- Mst Mehnaz Iqbal Vs Asif Noor, Notice against:-(1)Asif Noor Son of Hayat Muammad R/o Mohallah Shainoo Khel District Kohat (now in Abroad Dubai UAE) (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dower against you defendant in which date of hearing 02-05-2025 is fixed for your appearance Since your information/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 02-05-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 16-04-2025 (Court of S C.J.F.C, Kohat)

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar, Suit No 47/1. Institution 3/3/ 2025. Date of hearing. 14/5/2025. Muhammad Yunas VS Ataulah Khan. Notice to Ataulah Khan son of Said Akbar Khan (late) resident of Koza Hujra Daggar Kalay thesels Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 14/5/2025 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#./10/1. Institution 11/01/2025. Next Hearing date 06/05/2025. Mastoria vs Syed Abdul Ullah. Notice to defendant. 1) Syed Abdul Ullah. 2) Saeed Ullah Mian sons Haazir Mian.3) Msts. Hussan Ara.4) Safooria.5) Sidra.6) Nadia daughter Haazir Mian r/o kalakot.7) Rahmat Hussain s/o Wazir Mian.8) Qasim Khan s/o Raza Khan.9) Saif Ullah s/o Raza Khan.10) Muhammad Aamir s/o Muhammad Amin r/o kalakot thesils Matta 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 06/05/2025, at 8.00 am. Ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you. Issued today on 22/04/2025. under my signature and seal of the court.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar, Suit No 12/12-2. Institution 15/9/ 2023. Date of hearing. 19/5/2025. Mst. Harnia Bibi VS Shamsur Rehman etc. Notice to No. 29/1. Hifzur Rehman s/o Abdul Ahad Shah. 30/1. Hidayatullah Shah s/o Amer Akbar Shah. 32/1. Muzafar Shah. 32/3. Said Ghani Shah sons of Muhammad Dawod Shah 65/1. Bakhtshad.65/2. Zarshad.65/3. Sher Muhammad. 65/4. Jamshet sons. 65/5. Mst Umrena daughters of Mst Fareha. 67/1. Hamdan. 67/2. Aman sons.67/3. Mst Mst Nusrat. 67/4. Mst. Laiba. 67/5. Jalwa.67/6. Mst. Tamana daughters Sher Muhammad. 23. Sakhiad Shah.26. Amerbad Shah sons of Amerdad Shah.27. Mst Nuren Zadgai daughters of Subhat Khan.28. Mst Mamnun Bibi widow Subhat Khan. 57. Abdar Ali Shah.58. Shahwali Khan.59. Amerall Khan sons of Amanullah Khan. 70. Nihar Khan s/o Rahim Khan resident of Kalpani thesels Gagra 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 19/5/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Chinese companies participated in 4th HEMS

ISLAMABAD (INP): A record number of Chinese companies participated in the 4th Health, Engineering, and Minerals Show (HEMS) in Lahore, reflecting the growing economic ties between China and Pakistan.

According to the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing, more than 200 Chinese firms joined this year’s event—double the number in 2024—making the Chinese contingent the largest among foreign participants.

The Embassy attributed the increase to coordinated efforts by its Beijing office and consulates in Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou.

During the three-day event, over 150 Chinese companies took part in business-to-business meetings across various sectors, including healthcare, engineering, and mining.

These meetings led to the signing of 37 MoUs, LOIs, and contracts valued

at over \$435 million, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday.

Key agreements included a \$60 million quartz stone export deal (with a \$10 million investment component), a \$50 million interest by Chinese company to invest in developing mineral resources, a \$45 million joint venture in medical device manufacturing, and an \$80 million technology transfer contract in electric vehicles.

Chinese interest also expanded into salt, copper, fluorite, gemstones, IT, real estate, and branding of Pakistani products.

A dinner hosted by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif brought together over 800 delegates from 50 countries.

The active participation by Chinese delegation, the largest foreign contingent, was widely acknowledged.

The Prime Minister commended the

Ambassador and his team for facilitating the largest-ever Chinese business delegation to Pakistan.

On the sidelines, the Ambassador met the Chinese Consul General in Lahore, and senior officials of Punjab Government, including the Chief Secretary and Additional Secretary of the BOI.

At the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT), he led a roundtable with senior provincial officials across agriculture, industry, healthcare, and investment, briefing them on Embassy’s facilitation efforts for Chinese investors and more targeted B2B engagements.

The Embassy also partnered with Habib Rafiq (Pvt.) Ltd. to host an exclusive networking lunch, bringing together key Chinese and Pakistani business leaders to explore opportunities in the minerals, construction, and auto sectors.



ARLINGTON, TEXAS: Alvaro Ortiz of Mexico hits a tee shot on the seventh hole during the first round of the Veritex Bank Championship 2025 at Texas Rangers Golf Club on Thursday.

Munro, Rizwan fined for code of conduct breaches

LAHORE (APP): Players and Player Support Personnel. Munro and Rizwan were found to have violated Article 2.13, which relates to personal abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an HBL PSL X match. The incident occurred during the 10th over of United's run-chase when left-handed batter Munro gestured towards the bowler Iftikhar Ahmed and in turn Rizwan got involved in an argument with the batter. Both players pleaded guilty to the charges and accepted the sanction proposed by match referee Ali Naqvi. The charges were imposed by on-field umpires Ahsan Raza and Chris Brown.

Pakistani Martial Artist Irfan Mehsud sets 150 Guinness World Records

ISLAMABAD (APP): Irfan Mehsud, a renowned martial artist from Pakistan has made history by becoming the first Pakistani to set an impressive total of 150 Guinness World Records in just nine years.

In a remarkable achievement, Mehsud broke the previous record held by a Chinese athlete by completing 78 squats with 100 pounds, surpassing the former record of 70. He has also set the most world records in the push-up category with a total of 70 records.

Mehsud has established 40 world records while lifting 100 pounds and holds the most records in various weight categories including 100 pounds, 80 pounds, 60 pounds and 40 pounds.

His record-breaking feats include martial push-



ups, squats, jumping jacks, step-ups, knee strikes, elbow strikes, side jumps, high jumps and star jumps.

He has traveled to 20 countries to break records, including the United States, Britain, India,

China, Norway, Germany, France, Finland, the Philippines, Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria.

In addition to his personal achievements, 20 of Irfan Mehsud's students

have also set Guinness World Records.

For his outstanding contributions to martial arts and record-setting, he received the Presidential Award for Excellence in 2023.

Jimmy Butler III injured as Warriors fall to Rockets

NEW YORK (Reuters): Jalen Green shot 8-for-18 from 3-point range en route to 38 points as the Houston Rockets evened their Western Conference first-round playoff series with a 109-94 win over the visiting Golden State Warriors in Game 2 on Wednesday.

Making the night more painful for the seventh-seeded Warriors was losing Jimmy Butler III to a pelvic contusion late in the first quarter. He missed the remainder of the game and was headed for an MRI exam.

Second-seeded Houston never trailed, building a lead of as many as 20 points in the second half. Green came up big while snuffing out the Warriors' comeback attempt in the third quarter, knocking down three of his 3-point-

ers in the period and scoring 15 points in the period. He was responsible for more than half of the Rockets' trey total on the night, as Houston shot 15-for-40 from deep (37.5 percent).

The Rockets went 39-for-86 (45.3 percent) from the floor overall, but their shooting both inside the 3-point arc and beyond it improved dramatically from Sunday, when they fell 95-85 in Game 1.

Without the versatile Butler, Golden State relied heavily on its 3-point shooting and went 17-for-43 (39.5 percent) from long range. Coupled with a poor 11-of-18 effort at the free-throw line, Golden State could not muster enough offense.

Celtics 109, Magic 100 Jaylen Brown scored a

game-high 36 points and Boston overcame the absence of leading scorer Jayson Tatum to beat visiting Orlando in Game 2 of their Eastern Conference first-round series.

Brown was 12 of 19 from the field -- including 5-of-7 from 3-point territory -- grabbed 10 rebounds and had five assists. Kristaps Porzingis added 20 points and 10 rebounds for the second-seeded Celtics, who have a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series. Derrick White (17), Payton Pritchard (14) and Jrue Holiday (11) also scored in double figures.

The seventh-seeded Magic received 32 points, nine rebounds and seven assists from Paulo Banchemo. Franz Wagner finished with 25 points and Wendell Carter Jr. had 16.

Cavaliers 121, Heat 112 Donovan Mitchell scored 17 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter and Darius Garland contributed 21 points and nine assists as Cleveland held off visiting Miami to take a 2-0 lead in an Eastern Conference first-round series.

The Cavaliers made 11 3-pointers in the second quarter, a team playoff record for any period. Evan Mobley had 20 points and six rebounds, and Mitchell finished 7 of 10 from beyond the arc.

Tyler Herro collected 33 points, six rebounds and five assists for the Heat. Bam Adebayo had 11 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists, and Haywood Highsmith scored 17 points and made 5 of 6 3-point attempts.

Pakistan junior hockey camp concludes Pakistani travel guides

WAH CANTT (APP): A ten-day long training camp for the Pakistan Junior Hockey Team led by head Coach Olympian, Tahir Zaman and Coach, Olympian Muhammad Usman here on Thursday concluded at the state-of-the-art POF Sports Complex, as part of its preparations for upcoming international competitions.

The officials of Pakistan hockey federation (PHF) told APP that camp was organized in connection to preparations of the Pakistani team for the upcoming FIH Men's Nations Cup. The prestigious international tournament will take place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from

June 15 to 21.

"The PHF is optimistic that the junior team will deliver strong performances in Malaysia and make a mark on the international stage", the officials added.

The hockey squad was trained under the supervision of distinguished Olympians: Head Coach Muhammad Usman (National Bank), Assistant Coach Muhammad Usman (PIA), and Assistant Coach Zeeshan Ashraf (National Bank).

The trio brings a wealth of international experience and technical expertise, ensuring that players receive advanced training across all aspects of the game.

The training camp features a strong lineup of players across all positions. Among the goalkeepers are Abdullah Ishtiaq Khan (Mari Energy), Waqar (WAPDA), Umair Ali (WAPDA), and Owais Rashid (Customs).

The defensive unit includes Muhammad Sufyan Khan, Muhammad Abdullah, and Arshad Liaquat from Mari Energy, Hammaduddin Anjum, Muhammad Sameen, and Tanzeem ul Hassan from WAPDA; Abdul Manan, Usama Bashir, and Rizwan Ali from Air Force; along with Imad Shakeel Butt, Faizan, and Faisal Qadir from National Bank, and Izhar

from Punjab.

In the midfield, the squad features Moin Shakeel, Mohib Ullah (WAPDA), Zakaria Hayat (Navy), Ghazanfar Ali and Rana Sohail Riaz (Customs), Arslan (Army), Umar Mustafa (Mari Energy), Mubashir Amin (POF), Haseem (Punjab), and Farhan Tariq (Rangers). The forward line is spearheaded by Abdul Rehman and Mohsin Khan (Air Force); Salman Razaq, Ejaz Ahmed, Owais Arshad, and Abdul Hannan Shahid (WAPDA); Afraz (Mari Energy), Rana Waleed (Navy); Nowhaiz Zahid Malik (National Bank), and Muhammad Younis (Quetta).

Flintoff: Cricket ‘saved me’ after Top Gear crash

L O N D O N (ESPNcricinfo): There's a point in Flintoff, the Disney+ documentary released on Friday about the life of England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, that stands out from a cricket perspective.

Amid harrowing, never-seen-before images of the devastating injuries he suffered in a car crash just over two years ago, interspersed with footage from the highs and lows of a storied career, Flintoff's wife, Rachael, says it first: cricket saved him.

In the most confronting examples imaginable of cricket's influence on his life, and the accident itself, Flintoff describes his instincts during the crash while filming the TV series Top Gear in December 2022 as being like the split-second decision a batter makes on how to deal with a delivery hurtling towards him.

As the open-topped three-wheeled Morgan Super 3 he was driving around Surrey's Dunsfold Aerodrome overturned on that fateful day, he believed that if he turned his head a certain way, he would likely break his neck or die. So he made the decision to fall face first.

He was left with broken ribs and serious facial injuries, which required extensive reconstructive surgery and left him with noticeable scarring.

"You get 0.4 seconds to make your mind up where the ball's going, what shot are you going to play, how are you going to move your feet," Flintoff says.

"As it started going over, I looked at the ground and I knew if I got hit on the side, I'm going to break my neck. If I get hit on the

temple, I'm dead. My best chance is go face down. I thought my face had come off. I was frightened to death."

And perhaps it is his cricket background that has contributed to the difficulty he has experienced healing the psychological scars of the accident.

As a player, he says, he was able to not just visualise performing a particular skill, but to feel like he was living it. In the documentary, he likens that experience to the intensity of the nightmares and flashbacks he has of the crash, remembering everything in vivid detail. It left him battling anxiety which kept him housebound for months except for medical appointments early on in his recovery.

"After the accident, I didn't think I had it in me to get through," Flintoff says. "This sounds awful, part of me thinks I should have been killed. Part of me thinks I wish I had died. I didn't want to kill myself. I wouldn't mistake the two things. I wasn't wishing, I was thinking: that would have been so much easier. Now I try to take the attitude, the sun will come up tomorrow and my kids will still give me a hug. I feel in a better place now."

Again, cricket has played a pivotal role in Flintoff reaching this point, finding comfort and purpose in his role as head coach of England Lions.

"The common theme through my life is obviously my family - parents, brother, grandparents, Rachael, the kids - but then it seems almost everything comes back to cricket," he tells friend and former England rugby player now presenter Martin Bayfield

in a Q&A session after the film's premiere in London.

"That's been the one constant thread through my life. It's probably the one thing, like Rachel again said, probably saved me. I've been welcomed back into that fold and I'm loving it. I've got the opportunity now to coach. Who would have thought a 31-year-old me would be put in charge of kids, the next-best England players? And I absolutely love it.

"So for everything that's happened, I think sport has been the one thing that's given me the coping mechanisms to get through pretty much anything, because some of the lows in cricket were so low, and you have to come back. It was resilience, it was passion, surrounded by people you love and people you trust. It was probably one of the most important things in my life after my family and my friends."

One of the friends most instrumental in Flintoff's return to cricket is Rob Key, a former team-mate who is now director of England men's cricket.

In a moving scene in the documentary, Key sheds rare tears talking about how cricket has helped to look after his mate of nearly 30 years.

The film reveals how, after the accident, Key would invite Flintoff to attend England Test matches in virtual secrecy, watching from a secluded area and visited by a select few mutual friends as he began to venture out of the house after so long.

Key is now also effectively Flintoff's boss, overseeing the Lions coaching role he has held since last October. And Flintoff was eager to bat away a ques-

tion from Bayfield about progressing to the England head coach role, held by another friend, Brendon McCullum.

"As a player, you're always looking for the end of the game," Flintoff says. "It's about making decisions now, make a good decision now, and make a move, and then put yourself in a position to win a cricket match. I was guilty of that with a lot of things. You do a TV job, and it's, 'what's the next job?' It's always chasing something."

"We have got an exceptional England coach who is incredible. I'm so happy with where I'm at now. I'm not looking for the next job, I'm coaching the Lions, and I think for me, that is the perfect place for me to sit.

"I can work with these young lads. You're not just coaching them as cricketers, you're trying to help them navigate through a career, through life, to be better people. I don't see it as a stepping stone, I see it as the perfect job for me at this moment in time. I hope I am the perfect choice for them."

Flintoff says he will also continue to work in television from time to time.

The crash interrupted filming a second series of Flintoff's Field of Dreams programme, where he teaches a group of young men from his hometown of Preston about cricket as a positive influence on their lives and which he has since finished and seen go to air. He also filmed a special edition of the gameshow Bullseye with plans for more to come.

But cricket is very much back as an integral part of his life again. Perhaps it never left.

PCB announces regional inter-district U19 tourney from April 25

LAHORE (APP): The Regional Inter-District U19 One-Day tournament 2025-26 is set to begin on Friday, 25 April with 110 district/zonal teams scheduled to take part in 264 50-over red-ball matches across the country.

Over 1,600 U19 players will get an opportunity to showcase their talent in the event, which is part of Pakistan Cricket Board's pathways development programme. The tournament will kick-start in Abbottabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir

(AJK), Bahawalpur, Dera Murad Jamali, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Sialkot on 25 April.

In the remaining six regions including Quetta, FATA, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Larkana and Hyderabad the Inter-District U19 tournament will begin on 26, 29 April, 2, 5, 10, 15 May, respectively.

The district teams in Faisalabad, FATA, Quetta, Rawalpindi and Sialkot regions have been divided into two pools, where the

winner of each region will be determined via a final match between toppers of each pool. In the remaining 11 regions the district team on top of the table in each region will be declared winner.

In 2025, the PCB has awarded playing rights to three districts Khushab, Toba Tek Singh (Faisalabad region) and Lakki Marwat (FATA region) in order to expand the outreach of talent scouting and to provide more opportunities to players from far flung areas in

the country.

The top performers in the PCB Regional Inter-District U19 tournament will have the opportunity to represent their respective regional teams in the U19 regional development academies and Inter-Regional U19 tournament scheduled later this year. The PCB is also set to introduce inaugural U19 Champions event as well following the conclusion of the Regional U19 activity, where the best of the best U19 talent will compete against each other.

Vardy to leave Leicester at end of the season

LONDON (BBC): Leicester City captain Jamie Vardy will leave the club at the end of the season but intends to continue his playing career.

Announcing the news on Thursday, the Foxes described Vardy as "our greatest ever player".

The 38-year-old striker, who joined in 2012 from non-league side Fleetwood Town, is the club's record Premier League scorer with 143, and in all competitions has scored 198 goals in 498 appearances.

Vardy scored 24 times in the 2015-16 Premier League campaign, helping Leicester to the first ever top-flight title in their history.

The former England international was also part of their 2021 FA Cup-winning side, when the Foxes beat Chelsea 1-0 at Wembley.

"To the fans of Leicester, I'm gutted that this day is coming, but I knew it was going to come eventually," Vardy said in a video posted by Leicester on social media.

"I've spent 13 unbelievable years at this club, with lots of success, and some downs, but the majority have all been highs.

"It's finally time to call it a day, which I'm devastated about, but I think the timing is right.

"Leicester will always, always have a massive place in my heart."

He added: "This isn't retirement. I want to keep on playing and doing what I enjoy most - scoring goals. "I may be 38 but I still

have the desire and ambition to achieve so much more."

Leicester boss Ruud van Nistelrooy said Vardy had stuck with the club "through thick and thin", adding: "He has achieved everything and now can go and enjoy these last years with his family.

"For his next manager, he is one of the most open and honest people I have met.

"He will tell you how he feels and what he is thinking. He isn't hard to manage."

Vardy described the club's season as "miserable" and a "total embarrassment" after the Foxes were relegated earlier this month.

Leicester are 19th in the table, having collected 18 points from their 33 matches.

After helping the club back into the top flight during his second season in the Midlands, Vardy was then an instrumental figure in the side's 'great escape' in

the 2014-15 campaign.

Bottom of the table at Christmas and with just four wins by the start of April, the Foxes seemed destined to return to the Championship.

But 22 points from their final nine matches helped Nigel Pearson's side complete the most unlikely of revivals.

If that was unlikely, then what followed was unfathomable.

Leicester, 5,000-1 outsiders at the start of the season, went on to win their first ever top-flight title as they were crowned Premier League champions in 2015-16 under the management of Claudio Ranieri.

Vardy was named the Premier League Player of the Season after scoring 24 times in 36 appearances, including a record-breaking run that saw him find the net in 11 consecutive league matches - a mark that still stands today.

Vardy would go on to score in the side's subsequent Champions League

campaign and he was the winner of the Premier League Golden Boot in 2019-20 with 23 goals.

The forward became the first player in FA Cup history to appear in 13 of the 14 rounds of the competition when he played in the 2021 FA Cup final as the Foxes, managed by Brendan Rodgers, lifted the trophy for the first time in their history.

Vardy remained with the Foxes after their relegation from the Premier League in 2023.

He hit 18 goals in 35 matches in the Championship after being named club captain by Enzo Maresca, helping them to win the title 10 years after Vardy's first promotion with Leicester.

Vardy has featured in 31 of the east Midlands club's 33 Premier League matches this term, scoring seven times.

His final game at the King Power Stadium will be on 18 May, when the Foxes host Ipswich.





In brief

Ambassador calls on minister

RAWALPINDI (APP): Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye Dr. Irfan Neziroglu called on Federal Minister for Defence Production, Muhammad Raza Hayat Harraj here on Thursday. They discussed matters of mutual interest and expressed satisfaction on brotherly relations between two countries, said a press release. The Federal Minister appreciated defence cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye and expressed Pakistan's strong desire to broaden its partnership with Türkiye in all fields. Both sides stressed on joint ventures in emerging technologies and investment by private sector companies in these areas would be useful. The Minister was impressed with the progress of Turkish Defence Industry. He also mentioned the high quality of Pakistan's Defence Industrial Products. He expressed his gratitude for Defence collaboration and support Türkiye has been extending to Pakistan for provision and modernization of various defence systems. He also emphasized on importance of defence industrial/technical cooperation as integral part of Pak-Turkey strategic relationship.

9,647 Afghans repatriated

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The deportation of illegal foreign nationals, including Afghan Citizen Card holders, continues with full force. Yesterday alone, 9,647 Afghan nationals were repatriated to their homeland. This recent action brings the total number of illegal Afghan nationals returned to 993,089. The government remains committed to ensuring the dignified return of these individuals to their home countries.

107,800 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (INP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 107,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 131,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1431.77 feet which was 29.77 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 38,500 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1126.70 feet, which was 76.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 44,800 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 72,000, 43,400, 29,000 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 25,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 14,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Session concluded

ISLAMABAD (INP): Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has underscored the importance of a balanced approach to early childhood education, highlighting that learning should not be confined to academic assessments alone. He stressed that equal attention must be paid to children's social, emotional, and psychological development to build a solid foundation for their future. He made these remarks during the closing session of a seminar titled "Foundational Learning Assessment in Pakistan: Challenges and Opportunities" held at AIOU.

Opportunities in Digital World for Women: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, said that USF is assisting women, startups, and freelancers in connecting with the digital world adding that USF has completed 161 projects so far, through which digital services have been provided to 37 million people.

She attended an event here on Thursday organized by USF on the occasion of ICT Women's Global Day. In her address, she highlighted the significant role of USF in promoting the IT industry and empowering women. She further stated that this year, USF has been allocated a budget of 23 billion rupees.

She added that women-led tech ventures have also achieved global success. The Federal Minister stated that the "Smartphones for All" policy is in its final stages and efforts are underway to provide internet access to every household. She further added that the internet and smartphones will prove to be helpful for women in acquiring education and digital skills.

The event also mentioned that 4.5 million people are being provided with online freelancing training under the DG Skills program. Shaza Fatima said that the Ministry of IT supports women at all levels and is striving to create an environment of equality.

Expressing concern over the attitude towards women in society, Shaza Fatima urged those who use religion as a basis to hold women back to reconsider their attitudes. She further stated that women play a crucial role in the country's development.

At the event, USF's Chief Executive, Chaudhry Mudassar Naveed, reported that tenders for 16 new projects have been issued for 20 districts across the four provinces. Senior officials of the Ministry of IT and Telecom, USF, Parliamentary Secretary Sabeen Ghori, and Member of National Assembly Sharmila Farooqi also attended the event.

WHO: Climate change intensifies malaria impact

SLAMABAD (APP): The World Health Organization (WHO) and Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services on Thursday warned that climate change is worsening the impact of malaria in the country amid over two million cases reported annually.

On the occasion of World Malaria Day being observed on 25 April, WHO and Pakistan are calling on all stakeholders to urgently intensify efforts to contain the increasing threat to the country and the Region. "Malaria is a major global threat, and we are seeing firsthand how climate change is increasing both the risk and the cases in our country,"

Despite challenges, Pakistan is fully committed to end this disease. It is not just a health imperative – it is an investment in a healthier, more equitable, safer, and more prosperous future

for every nation," said Pakistan's Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal. Under the international theme "Reinvest, reimagine, reignite," WHO is urging all stakeholders to join the Big Push to End Malaria and support Pakistan to ensure that the response is not jeopardized due to lack of resources.

The catastrophic 2022 floods in Pakistan led to 6.6 million additional cases over the 3-year period from 2022 to 2024 – including a peak of 2.7 million cases in 2023, compared to 399,097 cases in 2021.

As a result, the malaria burden in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region surged with an estimated 10.2 million cases reported in 2023, a 137% increase compared to 2015.

Despite challenges, significant progress has been made throughout the last decade in terms of preven-

tion and treatment.

In partnership with WHO and with funding support from the Global Fund to defeat HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria in 2024 Pakistan screened over 11.4 million malaria suspects and provided treatment to 2 million confirmed malaria patients.

In addition, 7.8 million insecticide treated nets were distributed across 22 high-malaria burden districts of the country, helping to reduce the number of cases from 2.7 million in 2023 to 2 million in 2024.

"WHO is proud to partner with Pakistan to continue saving lives by preventing and treating malaria,"

"We have proven that investing in malaria response saves lives, but we are also seeing how climate change is hampering progress, posing a threat not only for Pakistan, but also for the Region and the world."

PR generates Rs13.547b by leasing land

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has generated Rs 13.547 billion in revenue by leasing its valuable commercial and agricultural land over the past five financial years, aiming to transform the department into a profitable entity.

"The department has been leased out around 14,042 acres of railway land for various purposes through competitive bidding," an official from the Ministry of Railways told APP.

The official said that Pakistan Railways leases its land through open auctions under the Railway Property and Land Rules, 2023, which were approved by the Federal Cabinet.

He said the efforts to generate non-fare revenue are being led by the Real

Estate Development and Marketing Company (REDAMCO), a subsidiary of the Ministry of Railways.

To a question, the official said the department has also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operations against land grabbers nationwide to reclaim railway land from individuals, groups, and even business organizations.

Under the directives of Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, anti-encroachment operations have been launched across the railway network. A joint procedural order was issued to all divisional superintendents for the retrieval of encroached land.

"These operations are being conducted with the

assistance of the Railway Police and the district administrations of the respective provincial governments," he added.

In a recent operation in the Lahore Division, the department successfully conducted a major anti-encroachment drive in the Mehmood Booti area, reclaiming 15 acres of prime land worth Rs 50 billion.

The official revealed that the recovered land had been illegally developed into a housing society, which also housed seven factories, seven markets, and two petrol pumps.

"Pakistan Railway authorities have sealed the housing society, commercial markets, and petrol pumps during the operation," he said.

PTA initiates action against IMEI cloning, tampering

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and local police, conducted targeted raids on four mobile repair shops in the NLI Market, Gilgit City, involved in IMEI tampering and cloning.

During the operation, law enforcement officials confiscated two laptops and two CPUs from the shops, said a news release.

The FIA has initiated a formal inquiry and taken the confiscated equipment for forensic analysis. The findings will determine the future course of legal pro-

ceedings. These raids are part of PTA's continued commitment to combat illegal practices affecting mobile network integrity.

The crackdown is aimed at deterring the unlawful manipulation of IMEI numbers and safeguarding consumer interests in Gilgit City.



RAWALPINDI: A group photo of Executive Director Major Gen. Qamarul Haq Noor and DD Admin Dr. Suleman Shah, Dr. Hajra Waheed Kiani, doctors and volunteer team on occasion of organizing a free dementia awareness camp.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja addressing during an event organized by USF on occasion of ICT Women's Global Day.

UNICEF assures support for health sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): UNICEF Representative Abdullah Fadil on Thursday assured to further strengthen collaboration with Pakistan in health sector.

During meeting with Federal Minister for Health, different option were discussed to enhance collaborative efforts in key health areas across the country.

Fadil briefed the minister on UNICEF's ongoing initiatives in Pakistan, particularly in the fields of immunization, nutrition, and digital health.

They discussed avenues to further strengthen cooperation in these areas, especially in enhancing preparedness for health emergencies.

Minister Kamal highlighted the significant burden on tertiary hospitals due to the lack of functional referral systems and insufficient primary healthcare centers.

He emphasized that telemedicine was the only viable solution to reduce this load, enabling timely medical advice and services to reach remote communities.

"The day is not far when every citizen will have access to doctors and essential medicines at their doorstep," the Minister said.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services across the country.

The minister also shared updates on the government's work toward a comprehensive national policy for securing patients' medical records.

In collaboration with NADRA, the new system will link each citizen's Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) with a unique Medical Record (MR) number, streamlining health data management nationwide.

"Our mission is rooted in compassion," said Minister Kamal. "We are dealing with Allah's beloved creation. When people are in pain, they turn to us—and we are doing everything possible to ease their suffering."

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to deepen cooperation between the Government of Pakistan and UNICEF, aiming to build a more resilient and inclusive healthcare system for all.

Islamabad water supply adequate

— DG dismisses rumours of shortage

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad's water reserves are sufficient until July, and monsoon rains are expected to replenish supplies further, Director General Water CDA Sardar Khan Zimri confirmed on Thursday.

Talking to APP, Zimri dismissed rumours circulating in some sections of social media platforms of shortages as "false and baseless," assuring residents of continued chlorinated water supply.

"Alhamdulillah, water reservoirs are currently

stocked, and chlorine supplies are ample under the existing contract for the next six months," the DG stated.

Laboratory staff conduct daily water quality tests to ensure safety.

Of the city's 200 tube wells, 180-185 are operational, with repairs underway for the remaining. "Tube well maintenance is routine, and contractors have already begun restoration work," he said.

Meanwhile, 15-18 of Islamabad's 30 water

tankers remain active daily, though staff shortages are being addressed.

The water management CDA receives 200-250 complaints daily, which are "resolved promptly." Zimri noted, stating most sectors receive normal supply, low pressure occasionally occurs due to pipeline repairs.

He urged residents to ignore rumors and avoid water wastage, particularly for car or floor washing, with warnings of "strict action and heavy fines" for violations.

Islamabad IT Park to be inaugurated on August 14

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad Information Technology Park is set to be inaugurated on August 14, offering purpose-built facilities for tech startups, freelancers, and export-oriented software companies, an official from the Ministry of IT said.

Spanning 66,893 square

meters, the state-of-the-art park will comprise two basements, a ground floor, and nine upper floors. It is designed to accommodate 120 office spaces for IT and IT-enabled service (ITeS) companies, as well as a startup incubation center with 15 dedicated offices.

The official added that the park will feature a business support center providing legal, marketing, and

financial advisory services. It will also host an industry-academia linkage center to promote collaboration between educational institutions and the IT sector, and a Tier III Data Center—Pakistan's first of its kind—to ensure uninterrupted power and data security.

"This will be one of the highest standard data centers in the country and a significant milestone for Pakistan's IT infrastructure," the official said.

He said that the park would serve as a platform for fostering cooperation among local and international academia, researchers, industry professionals, and policymakers.

In addition to the

Islamabad facility, a similar IT park is planned near Karachi airport. The initiative aims to improve workspace availability and supporting infrastructure for IT and ITeS firms, while also boosting the industry's growth.

According to the ministry official, both parks will help bridge the infrastructure gap in the IT sector, promote technology transfer, facilitate research and development, support the commercialization of innovation, and strengthen links between higher education and the production sector. These developments are also expected to enhance Pakistan's IT exports and global competitiveness.

ANF conducts operations

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting eight operations across the country, recovered as many as 45 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 10 million and arrested nine suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that 14 kg and 400 grams of hashish were recovered from a resident of Charsadda near Hayatabad Chowk, phase 3, Peshawar, tactfully hidden in the secret compartment of a Suzuki pickup.

As much as 100 grams of ice was recovered from a suspect around a private university area, near Kakpul Sihala Road,

Islamabad. In another operation, 2 kg of ice, 2 kg of hashish and 1 kg of heroin were recovered from a rickshaw during an operation near Sangiani Toll Plaza, Islamabad.

Similarly, 18 grams of weed were recovered from a parcel sent from Birmingham to Kotli at the Rawalpindi Courier Office, and two suspects were arrested, residents of Peshawar and Khyber areas. During an operation at Karachi International Airport, 976 grams of heroin were recovered from the trolley bag of a passenger going to Bahrain.

As much as 12 kg of hashish was recovered from

two suspects, residents of Quetta, on a tip-off near Gadani RCD Road. During an operation near Chaman Chaman-Pak-Afghan border, 530 grams of heroin and 610 grams of ice were recovered from a suspect, resident of Chaman.

As much as 11 kg of ice was recovered from a suspect, a resident of Jacobabad, during an operation near Quetta Baleli Road.

The aforementioned drugs were recovered from the fuel tank of the car. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and an investigation has been initiated.

Japan hands over sewerage upgrade project worth ¥1.236b

ISLAMABAD (APP): Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Akamatsu Shuichi, on Thursday formally handed over a major Grant Aid project worth 1.236 billion yen for the upgrading of sewerage and drainage services in Multan, a critical initiative for improving the city's deteriorating sanitation infrastructure.

According to the Japanese embassy, the official handover ceremony was attended by Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Naoaki Miyata and Managing Director of the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Multan, Khalid Raza Khan.

Multan has been grappling with frequent urban

flooding and sanitation-related challenges, largely due to overburdened sewer systems caused by rapid population growth and increased waste discharge.

Overflowing sewage has become a common occurrence on city roads, often leading to closures and posing serious health risks, including the spread of the polio virus, which has been detected in the city's waste water.

To address these pressing issues, the Government of Japan, through JICA, has provided WASA Multan with advanced equipment installed under Japan's project will be fully utilized in a sustainable manner and that the expertise and experience gained will benefit

for the maintenance of sewer pipes and drainage channels.

WASA Multan has already begun utilizing the equipment to clean clogged sewer lines and improve the overall efficiency of the city's drainage system. Officials say the intervention is significantly reducing sewage overflows and helping to restore hygienic conditions for local residents.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Akamatsu expressed confidence in the sustainable use of the provided resources, stating, "I hope that all the equipment installed under Japan's project will be fully utilized in a sustainable manner and that the expertise and experience gained will benefit

the people in Multan."

JICA Pakistan Chief Representative Mr. Miyata added, "We hope that this project will improve the living environment for the people of Multan and contribute meaningfully to public health."

The project also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6, which will "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."

The Government of Japan and JICA reaffirmed their continued commitment to supporting Pakistan in strengthening its urban sanitation systems, especially in areas facing heightened health and environmental.

DAB to auction \$15 million

KABUL (Pajhwok): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) is set to inject \$15 million into the market this Saturday through a currency auction aimed at stabilizing the afghani. In a post on X, Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) invited eligible lenders and money-exchange services to take part in the auction. The winners will have to settle their accounts by the end of the day, according to DAB, which said partial payments were unacceptable.

Young girl commits suicide

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): A young girl has ended her life after ingesting a poisonous substance in northeastern Badakhshan province, an official said on Thursday. Ehsanullah Kamgar, spokesperson for the provincial police, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the incident occurred in the Sheghnan district. “A young girl took her own life by consuming a toxic substance. The motive behind the act is not yet known,” he stated.

Afghanistan, Uzbekistan renew Hairatan rail contract

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) announced on Thursday that the contract for the operation and maintenance of the Hairatan–Mazar-i-Sharif railway line has been extended for another two years with an Uzbek company.

Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, spokesperson for the Ministry, wrote on X that Maulvi Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, Deputy Minister of Railways, along with his accompanying delegation, made an official visit to Uzbekistan.

During this visit, the contract for the operation and maintenance of the Hairatan–Mazar-i-Sharif railway line was renewed between the Deputy Minister and the head of Uzbekistan’s Sogdiana Trans Company for the years 2025 and 2026.

Haqshenas added that during this trip, agreements were also reached between



the Afghan Deputy Minister and the head of the Uzbekistan Railway Administration regarding the launch of feasibility studies for the Afghan-Trans project. Discussions also included progressing survey and design work for the Mazar-i-Sharif–Herat railway line.

Additionally, a separate

agreement was signed to extend the railway repair project for the Hairatan route between the Deputy Minister and the Uzbekistan Railway Authority.

Haqshenas noted that tri-lateral negotiations were held between Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan concerning the practical implementation of the

Afghan-Trans project. Uzbekistan has committed to financing the feasibility study, which is expected to begin soon.

According to the Ministry, survey and design work on the Mazar-i-Sharif–Herat railway line is already underway and being carried out by Uzbekistan.

‘West seeks to setup its presence in Afghanistan’

KABUL (Pajhwok): Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says Western countries are seeking to re-establish their presence in Afghanistan, despite the return of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

Lavrov made these remarks during a press conference following his visit to Uzbekistan.

“We have observed that the West is actively trying to return to the Afghan arena, which it abandoned after the Taliban assumed power,” Lavrov said.

“We have no objections, as long as their participation in these joint efforts is fair and without hidden agendas—especially since we are also part of the Doha process,” he added.

He noted that Russia’s involvement in Afghan affairs has remained consistent. “Our embassy in Kabul has not closed for even a minute,” Lavrov emphasized. Meanwhile, Afghan officials reaffirm that the policy of the IEA is to foster positive relations and constructive engagement with all neighboring countries and the international community.

5 killed and 6 injured in accidents

M E H T H A R L A M (Pajhwok): Five people have been killed and six others injured in separate traffic accidents in central Logar and Nuristan provinces, officials said on Thursday.

In Nuristan, the accident occurred in the Patigal Dara area of Kamdesh district on Wednesday, when an Auto-type vehicle veered off the road and overturned, according to police spokesman Ghulam Rahman Haidari.

He confirmed that a woman, a child, and two men lost their lives at the scene, while another person was injured.

Haidari blamed the accident on reckless driving.

In Logar, one person was killed and five others injured in two separate incidents in Mohammad Agha and Baraki Barak districts, police spokesman Maulvi Ahmadullah Anas said.

He also cited reckless driving as the cause of the accidents.

60 Afghans return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) says 62 more Afghan citizens have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan.

According to border officials in Kandahar’s Spin Boldak town, the ministry wrote on X the 62 Afghans, who spent one to four days in jails, had been arrested in Pakistan.

After receiving humanitarian assistance, the returnees were transported to their respective native areas, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) added.

103,000 Afghan migrants repatriated

KABUL (TOLONews): In recent weeks, a significant wave of Afghan migrant returns has been underway from neighboring and regional countries.

According to the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, in less than one month, more than 103,000 Afghans have returned to the country from Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey.

Abdulmutalib Haqqani, spokesperson for the ministry, stated: “Among them, over 82,000 returned from Pakistan, more than 20,000 from Iran, and over 700 from Turkey. Additionally, more than 2,000 individuals who had been imprisoned in Pakistan were released and returned via the Torkham and Spin

Boldak crossings.”

At the same time, Pakistani media, citing the country’s Ministry of Interior, reported that in the first three weeks of April alone, more than 100,000 Afghan migrants had left Pakistan.

Mohammad Khan Talebi Mohammadzai, a refugee rights expert, told TOLONews: “The current government of Pakistan has a social responsibility towards Afghan migrants. Their residency challenges must be addressed in cooperation with the United Nations, and a mechanism should be developed to delay deportations.”

Some of the deported migrants from Pakistan have stated that they

urgently need access to education, shelter, and employment opportunities. They are calling on the government and humanitarian organizations to support returnees.

Abdul Ghafoor, a deported migrant, told TOLONews reporter: “Afghan migrants returning from Pakistan face educational and economic challenges. They lack access to schooling and are struggling with financial hardship. Therefore, we urge the Islamic Emirate to address issues in education, economy, and housing.”

The Pakistani government had previously announced its plan to expel around 3 million Afghan migrants from across the country.

United Nations supports deported migrants

PAKTIA (TOLONews): Arafat Jamal, the UNHCR representative in Afghanistan, announced during his visit to Paktia that the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) is assisting newly returned Afghan migrants in starting small-scale businesses.

In an interview with TOLONews, Arafat Jamal also emphasized that efforts are being made to attract support from other organizations for these initiatives.

As part of this support program, each returning family may receive up to \$1,000 in assistance.

The UNHCR representative stated: “No one can build a future without work. This is a challenge not only faced by recently deported migrants but by the entire Afghan population. We are encouraging donors and investors to provide financial backing for small businesses.”

Shirzaman, a 45-year-old resident of Gardez, who was deported from Pakistan with his nine-member family, used to work in the heater-manufacturing business.

He is now seeking support to restart his work. He told TOLONews: “My request is to be provided with professional tools so I can both train others and earn an income for myself. At the moment, I have neither tools nor equipment, and I need help in this regard.”

Mirajan, another deported migrant from Pakistan, said: “We are unfamiliar with this place and don’t know what to do. If we are given job opportunities, it would be very helpful.”

The Department of Labor and Social Affairs in Paktia announced ongoing efforts, in collaboration with partner organizations, to create job opportunities



for the recently deported migrants.

Etebar Bismal, head of the Labor Department in Paktia, told TOLONews: “We offer vocational training to individuals aged 15 to 45 through vocational training centers and private institutions. Additionally, those who qualify for teaching positions are employed at these centers.”

The UNHCR representative in Afghanistan also urged Iran and Pakistan to treat Afghan migrants humanely and to collaborate on ensuring the gradual and organized repatriation of migrants.

Afghanistan remains UN top humanitarian priorities

KABUL (Amu TV): Afghanistan remains one of the United Nations Population Fund’s top humanitarian priorities, the agency said on Thursday, as it released its 2024 regional report detailing support for more than 900,000 people in the country amid deepening restrictions on women’s rights and growing health needs.

Despite operational challenges under Taliban rule, UNFPA said it continued to provide life-saving reproductive health services, gender-based violence support, and maternal care through local partners, mobile teams, and emergency supply chains.

In 2024, UNFPA said it reached over 900,000 individuals in Afghanistan with health and protection services, delivered 25,000+ dignity kits to women and girls, supplied 1,019 health facilities with reproductive health commodities, deployed 46 mobile health teams to serve remote or

crisis-affected areas and distributed 2,662 emergency reproductive health kits and 199 obstetric kits to address childbirth-related emergencies.

“Even in the most complex and politically constrained environments, women and girls must not be left behind,” said Pio Smith, UNFPA’s regional director. “Afghanistan is a humanitarian priority.”

UNFPA’s work in Afghanistan also included support for safe spaces, legal referrals, and psychosocial care for survivors of gender-based violence. These services were vital, the agency said, in a country where many women have been barred from public life and continue to face elevated risks of violence and isolation.

Afghanistan was one of five countries in the region where UNFPA conducted supply chain monitoring to ensure timely delivery and quality control of health

commodities. The agency also involved Afghan stakeholders in regional consultations to improve the design of dignity kits for women and girls with disabilities — part of a broader push for inclusive humanitarian response.

The report noted that maternal mortality remains high in Afghanistan, and that unmet needs for family planning and reproductive health continue to grow, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas.

Regionally, UNFPA warned that more than six women die every hour from preventable maternal causes across Asia and the Pacific — with fragile countries like Afghanistan disproportionately affected.

The agency called for sustained donor support, warning that without renewed international investment, Afghanistan’s women and girls risk losing access to even the most basic care.

Foreign aid cuts cripple women’s business in Herat

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): The suspension of international aid and the cancellation of key projects have severely impacted women-run businesses in western Herat, forcing many workshops to reduce staff or shut down entirely.

A number of women entrepreneurs in Herat say the suspension of operations by several international organizations that supported women, along with the cancellation of key humanitarian projects in Afghanistan, has dealt a serious blow to women-led businesses and industries in the region.

Women involved in handicrafts, garment production, and other small enterprises told Pajhwok Afghan News that without international financial support, many workshops have been forced to either reduce staff or shut down entirely.

Lailuma Jahangiri, a 48-year-old carpet weaver, shared that with the help of an international organization, she launched a weaving workshop employing more than 40 women two years ago. Now, with that support discontinued, only 16 employees remain.

She attributed the reduction in staff directly to the withdrawal of aid from

international organizations that previously championed women’s economic empowerment.

Jahangiri underscored the urgency of restoring those programs, noting that demand for Afghan-made carpets has long been in decline, and without support, the situation has only worsened.

Other female business owners echoed her concerns, stressing that humanitarian support — especially for women — should not be caught in political crossfires.

Muslima Hajizada, who heads a women’s clothing production workshop, said the suspension of US-funded aid had led to the shutdown of several international organizations’ operations in Afghanistan. This, she explained, has had a ripple effect on the livelihoods of countless Afghan women and girls.

“In the current environment, where women already face restrictions in employment and education, halting international support only worsens their situation,” Hajizada said.

Her workshop had previously provided jobs for many young women who were denied access to education, as well as widows. Now, she fears she may not

be able to continue without financial assistance.

Fatema Noori, another woman in carpet weaving, said she had recently opened a small workshop after years of honing her craft, but is now struggling to maintain operations due to a lack of financial backing. She urged international organizations to renew their commitment to Afghan women. “With their support, women’s economic activities can thrive — and we can stand on our own feet,” she said.

Officials at the Chamber of Commerce and Industries for Women in western Afghanistan also voiced serious concerns over the loss of international aid, particularly for women-run businesses. They warned that without renewed support, many women may be forced to abandon their work in small industries and handicrafts.

Behnaz Saljoogi, head of the chamber, said that despite increasing restrictions on women’s access to work and education, interest in small businesses and handicrafts had grown significantly. In the last three years, the number of employed women in the western region has risen by 80%.

However, Saljoogi said

the suspension of institutional support has caused widespread anxiety among working women. Most of these women, she added, launched their businesses with minimal resources and are now in critical need of support to survive.

Following his inauguration, US President Donald Trump issued an executive order suspending the funding and activities of international organizations for 90 days. This move led to the immediate halt of several US-funded projects — not just in Afghanistan, but in multiple countries.

Meanwhile, officials from Herat’s Department of Commerce and Industry said they are working to fill the gap by supporting domestic production and fostering new investment opportunities aimed at boosting employment.

Mohammad Basheer Seerat, head of the department, said the government is prioritizing support for local factories and seeking to reduce reliance on imported goods.

He emphasized that efforts are underway to create an investor-friendly environment that supports national production and expands economic opportunities for Afghan citizens.

WFP reaches 11.8m in Afghanistan

KABUL (Amu TV): The World Food Programme says it reached nearly 12 million people across Afghanistan in 2024, delivering emergency food, nutrition, and livelihoods assistance to a quarter of the population, even as funding gaps and rising food insecurity continue to threaten fragile progress.

In its annual report, released Thursday, WFP said its operations targeted the most food-insecure regions using early warning and famine prevention tools, directing

resources to communities hardest hit by drought, conflict, and economic decline.

Despite the scale of the effort, WFP warned that \$1.6 billion was needed in 2024 to meet food assistance needs, but only \$615 million had been received — less than 40 percent of the required funding. The gap forced difficult decisions and program reductions in several provinces.

According to the report, 9.1 million people received emergency food rations; 1.3 million children, half of

them girls, were fed through school meal programs in eight provinces; and 4.8 million children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women and girls received nutritional support.

Also, over 113,000 Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan were provided with food or cash assistance and 3.2 million people with disabilities accessed tailored aid, including food, vouchers, and capacity-building programs.

WFP also emphasized its efforts to build long-term

resilience. More than 430,000 people participated in “food for assets” projects — such as constructing 295 irrigation canals and improving 36,530 hectares of agricultural land — receiving both food and \$16 million in cash transfers in return. Livelihood programs reached over 115,000 people, nearly half of them women, with vocational training, startup kits, and cash assistance. Another 12,230 smallholder farmers benefited from support to access local markets.

Afghan migrants — chained, beaten and tortured

SAR-I-PUL CITY (Pajhwok): Illegal migration, often driven by economic hardship and soaring unemployment, has become a perilous escape route for many Afghans.

What begins as a hopeful journey towards a better life frequently spirals into a dark, treacherous ordeal — one that ends in deception, torture, mutilation, even death.

In this report, four men from the village of Baghlali, on the outskirts of Sar-i-Pul City, share with Pajhwok Afghan News their harrowing journey.

Fuelled by dreams and desperation, their attempt to reach Turkey through Iran culminated in the frozen border mountain passes strewn with mutilated bodies and broken limbs.

Dreams gone awry
Mohammad Yasin Azimi, 25, is one of these men. Hoping to alleviate

his family’s financial woes, he set out for Turkey four months ago with three relatives — Abdul Karim Bashardost, Ismael and Shawali.

Smugglers in Iran demanded \$4,000 per person, promising to deliver them safely across the the Turkish border.

Staring at his maimed hands and feet, Azimi recounts: “The smugglers sent a car to pick us. On the way to Maku, a town on the Turkey border, we changed routes and vehicles several times. When we reached the border, they handed us over to Kurdish bandits instead of taking us across.”

Studied up to 10th grade at school, Azimi says they were held hostage for 15 days in the snow-covered mountains, enduring relentless torture at the hands of the bandits.

“They beat us day and night with sticks, belts, and

thick cables—even when we couldn’t stand. Our feet froze in the unbearable cold. We eventually escaped and were hospitalized in Iran for 40 days. I underwent two operations there, and three more after returning to Afghanistan. All five toes of my right foot were amputated, and the front part of my left foot was removed.”

Azimi explained since the smugglers couldn’t complete the journey and collect their fees, they sold the migrants to bandits for \$4,000 each. The bandits then demanded \$6,000 from each hostage, seeking a profit of \$2,000 per person.

Now permanently disabled and the father of a child, Azimi is unable to work. His surgeries, costing around 200,000 afghanis, were paid for by friends living abroad.

Abdul Karim Bashardost, 36, a father of six, had

spent nearly 15 years abroad —10 in Turkey and four in Iran. But this journey, he says, was unlike any other.

“The bandits were merciless. We had no food or water in the freezing cold. Every time we asked for something, they beat us. They placed heavy rocks on our stomachs. Two of my friends lost their toes. I still can’t apply pressure on my toenails, and my back constantly aches,” he recalls.

He adds: “If we had money to start a small business at home, we wouldn’t have taken this risk.”

Ismael, 25, who studied up to the fourth grade and is also a father, lost the toes of one foot during the ordeal.

“I entered Iran legally and worked there for a month, but because of the falling value of the Iranian rial, I decided to try to go to Turkey illegally. From the moment we were cap-

tured by bandits, it became a nightmare. They beat me so badly that my head split open. My toes froze and had to be amputated.”

His message is loud and clear: “To anyone thinking of illegal migration — don’t do it. It’s far too dangerous. I will never try it again.”

Shawali, 38, and a father of five, describes an equally harrowing journey.

“They packed us into a seven-seater that plied dirt roads for over an hour. Suddenly, the car stopped and there was shouting. When I peeked out, a bandit hit me in the head and locked me up inside. They bound our hands, feet and necks with chains. Every night, we were forced to walk barefoot across mountains for hours to avoid detection.”

Food was scarce — a single tomato a day — and beatings were a routine. “Once, they cut my ear.

Another night, they threatened to shoot one of us. We threw ourselves over him, shouting: ‘If you kill him, kill us all, we can’t return home without one another.’

He described their escape with trembling emotion.

“One night, they left us outside while they went to a shelter. I told my friends: ‘This is our only chance. If we don’t escape tonight, we never will.’ They were afraid, but we decided to try. One of my friends broke his neck chain with a rock. We ran into the darkness. They chased us on motorcycles, but we reached a village mosque by dawn. The villagers sheltered us and called the Iranian police, who took us to safety.”

This is not a story of just four men — thousands of young Afghans are fleeing poverty and joblessness but end up in a waking nightmare. What is meant

to be a new beginning often ends in a graveyard of dreams.

Experts say economic hardship, unemployment and lack of awareness about the dangers of illegal migration are key drivers of such decisions.

In response, the leadership of the Islamic Emirate has issued a six-point decree aimed at combating human trafficking.

The Ministry of Interior is tasked with identifying and arresting traffickers and referring them to military courts.

Human trafficking hubs are to be dismantled, with the Ministry of Defence securing borders and the Intelligence Directorate supporting investigations.

According to the decree, traffickers face tough prison sentences — one year for a first offence, two years for a second, and three years for a third. Samiullah Ibrahim, Samsamullah Ibrahim,

spokesman for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, told Pajhwok around 40,000 people received vocational training last year to help them join the workforce.

Additionally, 114,000 work permits were issued to citizens and foreign nationals in 2024.

He said the ministry was working to explore legal employment opportunities abroad, particularly in the Gulf region. Talks are underway with Qatar, Oman, the UAE and others to facilitate this.

Ibrahimi stressed the ministry remained committed to the promises held out at the National Labour Conference last year.

He believes by fulfilling these commitments, Afghanistan could generate more jobs, reduce poverty and offer its youth safer and more dignified alternatives to illegal migration.

Federal govt decides no new canals without mutual understanding in CCI

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided that no new canals will be built without mutual understanding from Council of Common Interests (CCI). It has been decided that government of Pakistan will not move further until consensus is reached among all provinces.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif informed about the decision of the federal government during a meeting with a delegation of Pakistan People's Party led by its Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here on Thursday. The government is engaging all provincial governments to chart out a long-term consensus roadmap for development of agriculture policy and water management infrastructure across Pakistan.

Water rights of all provinces are

enshrined in the Water Apportionment Accord-1991 and Water Policy-2018; with the consensus of all stakeholders. To allay the concerns of all provinces and to ensure Pakistan's food and ecological security, a committee is being formed with representation from the federation and all provinces. The committee will propose solutions to Pakistan's

long term agriculture needs and water use of all provinces in line with the two consensus documents. Water is one of the most precious commodities and the makers of the Constitution recognized this, mandating all water disputes to be resolved amicably through consensus and concerns of any province shall be addressed through due diligence amongst all stakeholders. A meeting of the Council of Common Interests shall be convened on 2nd May 2025,

wherein, the PPP and PML-N representatives shall endorse above mentioned federal government policy and any such proposals will be sent back to relevant agency in order to develop consensus.

Meanwhile, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, led a PPP delegation in a meeting with Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif and his team in Islamabad. After the meeting, both the PPP Chairman and the Prime Minister informed the media about the decisions made.

Bilawal stated that after detailed discussions between the two delegations, an important decision was reached that no canal will be constructed without total consensus among the provinces. The decisions from this meeting will be ratified in the Council of Common Interests meeting on May 2, where it will be confirmed that no canal will be constructed.

He added that three provinces had raised objections to the Kalabagh Dam, and today, a joint decision has been made that no canals will be built without mutual agreement. He also condemned India's statements regarding the Indus Waters Treaty, asserting that Pakistan will raise the Indus issue at the public level and give a strong response to India's decisions.



ISLAMABAD: Protestors trying to go to Indian embassy during a protest against Indian government decision against Indus Water Treaty.

PTI leadership addresses internal rifts

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the face of ongoing political and legal challenges, leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have publicly addressed internal party dynamics and reaffirmed their commitment to party unity and democratic principles.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur acknowledged the presence of differing opinions within PTI ranks, describing them as a natural aspect of democratic engagement. "Differences of opinion in the party are the beauty of democracy," Gandapur stated, emphasizing that such discourse strengthens the party's ideological foundation.

He reiterated that all members, regardless of position, are first and foremost workers dedicated to the party's mission. Gandapur also affirmed readiness to mobilize for protests when called upon by the party leadership, indicating a continued commitment to PTI's political activism.

Opposition Leader Omar Ayub expressed concerns over the legal proceedings involving PTI founder Imran Khan. Ayub highlighted that Khan, along with other detained PTI leaders, are political prisoners. He criticized the delay in scheduling contempt of court petitions filed against Adiala Jail authorities for denying access to Khan, despite court orders. Ayub emphasized the importance of upholding constitutional rights and due process, stating that the denial of legal consultations hampers the party's ability to effectively address ongoing legal challenges.

These statements come amidst a backdrop of political unrest and legal battles faced by PTI. The party continues to navigate internal discussions while confronting external pressures, including the incarceration of its founder and challenges to its political activities. PTI leaders maintain that open dialogue and adherence to democratic values are central to the party's resilience and unity during this period.

Rare grey wolf killed by locals

E.P. Report

BAHAWALPUR: Locals allegedly killed a rare Indian grey wolf in the desert of Cholistan near Derawar Fort, about 70kms from here. Bahawalpur division Wildlife Deputy Director Muhammad Usman Bokhari confirmed that an Indian grey wolf, a rare species, was spotted by some locals, who allegedly chased and killed the animal near Derawar Fort.

He claimed that one of the alleged killers has been arrested. He was identified as Makhan, son of Khadim, a resident of Azeemwala toba (pond) in the limits of Derawar police station in Yazman tehsil of Bahawalpur district. He said Makhan was in police custody for further legal action, while the search for his fleeing accomplices was on.

He said a case under the Punjab Protected Areas' Act was instituted against the suspects who allegedly killed the rare animal. According to some local wildlife experts, the Indian grey wolf is an endangered species facing an extinction threat.

Israeli strikes across Gaza kill 28 people

GAZA (AP): Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 28 people, mostly women and children, the territory's Health Ministry said Thursday. Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas and renewed its air and ground war over a month ago. It has sealed off Gaza's 2 million Palestinians from all food and other imports since the beginning of March to pressure Hamas to release hostages.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining 59 captives, 24 of whom are believed to be alive, in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal. Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251 hostages. Most have since been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Israel's offensive has killed over 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Meanwhile, twice a week, Mohamed Attiya's wheelchair rattles over Gaza's scarred roads so he can visit the machine that is keeping him alive. The 54-year-old makes the journey from a temporary shelter west of Gaza City to Shifa Hospital in the city's north. There, he receives dialysis for the kidney failure he was diagnosed with nearly 15 years ago. But the treatment, limited by the war's destruction and lack of supplies, is not enough to remove all the waste products from his blood. "It just brings you back from death," the father of six said.

Many others like him have not made it. They are some of Gaza's quieter deaths from the war, with no explosion, no debris. But the toll is striking: Over 400 patients,

representing around 40 percent of all dialysis cases in the territory, have died during the 18-month conflict because of lack of proper treatment, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. That includes 11 patients who have died since the beginning of March, when Israel sealed the territory's 2 million Palestinians off from all imports, including food, medical supplies and fuel. Israeli officials say the aim is to pressure Hamas to release more hostages after Israel ended their ceasefire.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of coordinating aid, declined to comment on the current blockade. It has said in the past that all medical aid is approved for entry when the crossings are open, and that around 45,400 tons of medical equipment have entered Gaza since the start of the war. Attiya said he needs at least three dialysis sessions every week, at least four hours each time. Now, his two sessions last two or three hours at most. Israel's blockade, and its numerous evacuation orders across much of the territory, have challenged his ability to reach regular care.

He has been displaced at least six times since fleeing his home near the northern town of Beit Hanoun in the first weeks of the war. He first stayed in Rafah in the south, then the central city of Deir Al-Balah. When the latest ceasefire took effect in January, he moved again to another school in western Gaza City. Until recently, Attiya walked to the hospital for dialysis. But he says the limited treatment, and soaring prices for the mineral water he should be drinking, have left him in a wheelchair. His family wheels him through a Gaza that many find difficult to recognize. Much of the territory has been destroyed. "There is no transportation. Streets are damaged," Attiya said. "Life is difficult and expensive." He said he now has hallucinations because of the high levels of toxins in his blood.

Hamas condemns Abbas's remarks on Gaza captives

WEST BANK: Hamas has condemned remarks made by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, who urged the Palestinian group ruling Gaza to release Israeli captives and lay down arms.

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim said on Thursday that Abbas's remarks made a day earlier were "insulting".

"Abbas repeatedly and suspiciously lays the blame for the crimes of the occupation and its ongoing aggression on our people," he said. Abbas on Wednesday urged Hamas to free all captives, saying keeping them provided Israel with "excuses" to attack Gaza. "Hamas has given the criminal occupation excuses to commit its crimes in the Gaza Strip, the most prominent being the holding of hostages," Abbas said at a meeting in Ramallah, the PA's seat in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

"I'm the one paying the price, our people are paying the price, not Israel. My brother, just hand them over." "Every day there are deaths," Abbas said. "You sons of dogs, hand over what you have and get us

out of this" ordeal, he added, levelling a harsh Arabic epithet at Hamas. There have been deep political and ideological divisions between Abbas's Fatah party and Hamas for nearly 20 years.

Abbas and the PA have often accused Hamas of undermining Palestinian unity, while Hamas has criticised the former for collaborating with Israel and cracking down on West Bank dissent. The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement, which split from Abbas's Fatah in the 2000s, issued a statement on Telegram on Wednesday condemning Abbas's remarks.

"We strongly condemn the offensive statements made by President Abbas during the Central Council meeting regarding the resistance and our people's resistance fighters, disregarding the sacrifices and struggle of our people and ignoring the suffering and ongoing sacrifices of the prisoners," read the statement.

"We condemn the PA leadership's continued pursuit of this discourse, which criminalizes the resistance and absolves the occupa-

tion of its ongoing crimes against our people for decades, especially the genocidal war against Gaza, the annexation and Judaization of the West Bank and Jerusalem, and the severe suffering endured by our valiant prisoners."

The movement also called on Abbas to issue an apology for his remarks. "We call on the President of the Palestinian Authority to apologize for this offensive speech and reverse all steps that reinforce division and align with Zionist will. We call on him to return to the embrace of the people and their choices and to cease pursuing the absurd path of surrender and compromise."

Since Israel's campaign in Gaza resumed on March 18, at least 1,928 people have been killed in Gaza, bringing the total death toll since the war erupted to at least 51,305, according to the enclave's Ministry of Health. Talks on a new ceasefire have so far been fruitless, and a Hamas delegation is in Cairo for renewed negotiations with Egyptian and Qatari mediators. — Aljazeera

Three killed in Kalat explosion

E.P. Report

KALAT: At least three people were killed and five others injured in an explosion in the Amiri area of Kalat district in Balochistan, Levies officials said on Thursday.

They said a vehicle was completely destroyed in the blast. Levies sources said two women are also among the dead.

Faryal hails CCI meeting on canals plans

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Ms. Faryal Talpur, described the suspension of work on the canals and the call for a CCI meeting as a victory for national unity, constitutional supremacy, and the people of Sindh.

In a statement, Faryal Talpur said that today marks a victory for Pakistan's federal unity, the supremacy of the Constitution, and the rights of farmers. She stated that the principled leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the peaceful protest of the people of Sindh have demonstrated that when the stance is just and the intention sincere, the government is compelled to heed the voice of the people.

She said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement to halt work on the new canals and the decision to convene a CCI meeting on May 2 is a prudent move. The Prime Minister's position is a positive step toward strengthening democratic traditions, upholding provincial autonomy, and empowering constitutional institutions.

Faryal Talpur said that fair and transparent distribution of resources among all citizens is essential for the strength of the federal structure. She reiterated that they have always maintained there would be no compromise on Sindh's right to water, and, Alhamdulillah, their stance has been acknowledged today.

She said that the Pakistan Peoples Party has consistently emphasized inter-provincial equality, equitable distribution of water, and decision-making within the constitutional framework. The PPP is a representative party of farmers, laborers, women, and marginalized communities, and it will always defend the rights of the people through constitutional means. She expressed her gratitude to all political forces, civil society, and the people who stood with the Pakistan Peoples Party on this important national issue.

Meanwhile, Central Information Secretary of Pakistan PPP, Shazia Marri, has strongly condemned the recent Pahalgam incident and India's aggressive response, calling it baseless and irresponsible. "Instead of conducting a proper investigation, India has once again resorted to blaming Pakistan without any credible evidence.

PHC suspends PESCO recruitment advertisement

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has suspended the advertisement for recruitment in Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) and restrained the organization from proceeding with the hiring process. The court has also issued notices to the Ministry of Energy and other parties, seeking their responses within 14 days, on Thursday.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Fazal Subhan passed the order while hearing a petition filed by Waqar Khan and others. The court granted an interim injunction, restraining PESCO from proceeding with the recruitment process based on the new advertisement.

The counsel Khalid Rehman advocate, informed the court that PESCO had issued an advertisement for recruitment in 2022, and the petitioners had gone through the entire process, including written tests and interviews.

The federal government imposed a ban on recruitment, citing financial con-

straints, despite the petitioners having cleared the initial stages of the selection process. The petitioners were among those who had applied for various positions, including Commercial Assistant (Grade 15) and L2 (Grade 14), with approximately 4,000 positions available. PESCO had sought permission from the Ministry of Energy to proceed with the recruitment, but instead of approving the existing process, the ministry directed PESCO to cancel the process and issue a new advertisement, the lawyer argued.

The counsel argued that the new advertisement is unlawful, as the petitioners had already gone through the selection process and were entitled to be appointed based on their merit. PHC issued notices to WAPDA, PESCO, and other parties, seeking their responses to the petition within 14 days.

Court adjourns hearing on LG members extension plea: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Fazal Subhan adjourned the hearing of a petition seeking a three-

year extension for local government representatives after being informed that negotiations were ongoing between the government and the local government members, on Thursday.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate informed the court that the local government representatives, including mayors and tehsil chairmen, had been elected three years ago but had not yet been given full powers. The lawyer argued that the provincial government had amended laws in 2022, reducing the powers of local government representatives and withholding funds. The petitioners sought a three-year extension for the local government representatives, citing the delay in granting them full powers and funds.

Additional Advocate General Inam Ullah Yousafzai raised an objection regarding the maintainability of the petition, but the petitioners' counsel referred to a previous statement made by the Advocate General indicating that negotiations were ongoing. PHC adjourned the hearing, due to the ongoing negotiations between the parties.

Trump urges Putin to stop after deadly Kyiv strikes

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Donald Trump turned his criticism on Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday after Russia pounded Kyiv with missiles and drones overnight, saying "Vladimir, STOP!" "I am not happy with the Russian strikes on KYIV. Not necessary, and very bad timing," Trump wrote in a social media post a day after saying Ukraine's leader was hampering peace talks on ending Russia's war in Ukraine.

The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment. When asked about the Russian strikes on Kyiv at a briefing earlier on Thursday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia was continuing to hit "military and military-adjacent targets."

Trump's rare rebuke of Putin followed his criticism of Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday for saying Ukraine would not recognise Russia's occupation of Crimea - a longtime Kyiv stance. "This statement is very harmful to the Peace Negotiations with Russia," Trump said in a social media post. Trump, who argued with Zelenskyy in a disastrous Oval Office meeting in March, said Crimea was lost years ago "and is not even a point of discussion."

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared an "Easter truce" for 30 hours over the weekend, slightly extending his unilateral, monthlong ceasefire on Ukrainian energy infrastructure which expired last Friday. Long-distance attacks between Russia and Ukraine came to a halt during that period, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy proposed extending the truce

for at least 30 days.

Putin rejected the offer, saying Zelenskyy wasn't serious about a ceasefire, which mirrored Zelenskyy's view of Putin. "There were no air raid alerts on Easter, and some sectors of the front line remained quiet. This proves it is possible - it's possible when Russia chooses to reduce the killing," said Zelenskyy in an evening address on Monday.

Ukraine has consistently maintained that as the aggressor in the war, Russia is also the party supremely equipped to end it. Russia did not honour its own Easter ceasefire on the ground, Zelenskyy said. "There have already been 67 Russian assaults against our positions," he wrote on social media on Sunday evening. "In practice, across all main front-line directions, Russia has failed to uphold its own promise of ceasefire."

But given the successful suspension of long-range attacks, Zelenskyy said, "Ukraine proposes to cease any strikes using long-range drones and missiles on civilian infrastructure for a period of at least 30 days, with the possibility of extension." "The fighting has resumed," Putin told journalists on Monday. "We have always had a positive attitude towards the ceasefire, that is why we came up with such an initiative," he said. "A statement was published according to which our proposal was considered a game with fates, with people's lives... We see now that the Kyiv regime is trying to seize the initiative and talk about expansion."

Putin accused Ukrainian forces of 4,900 ceasefire "violations", including "90 attempts to strike"

unmanned aerial vehicles, thus revealing that Russia was deploying them during its declared truce. Anastasia Blyshchyk, spokesperson for Ukraine's 66th Separate Mechanised Brigade defending the eastern town of Lyman, said Russia didn't stop artillery attacks during its self-imposed truce, and moreover used it to reposition its forces to advantage.

"We saw how they pulled their infantry to the front line along with their weapons - these were RPGs and machine guns. We saw that over 120 Russian occupiers during this time of the so-called Easter truce dispersed in plantings, in forest belts, in destroyed buildings and dugouts. And as soon as the... so-called Easter truce ended, the Russians launched a massive infantry offensive," Blyshchyk told Ukraine public broadcaster Suspilne.

Company commander Denys Perch told Suspilne that Russian forces used the truce to clear pontoons and other crossings on the river separating Lyman from Russian positions of damaged vehicles in preparation for future offensives. "This pause was necessary for them to perform certain actions that we usually prevent them from doing," he said.

Viktor Tregubov, spokesman for the Khortytsia group of forces in the east, told the United News telethon, Ukraine's wartime pool of television channels, that Russian forces carried out "manoeuvres under the nose, which at the same time looked like assaults, but came as if under a white flag. It seemed that they were really trying to provoke visual violations of fire.