

**ATC grants bail to Bushra
F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court in Islamabad extended the bail of Bushra Bibi, the wife of PTI founder, in two cases registered in connection with the Nov 26 protest on Monday. The case was heard by Judge Abul-Hasanat Zulqarnain of the ATC in Islamabad. Lawyers Ansar Kiyani and Shamsa Kiyani Advocate submitted a request for exemption from appearance on behalf of Bibi.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 90

Regd. No. 241

SHAWWAL 30 1446 -- TUESDAY, APRIL 29 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

CCI flays India's illegal steps after Pahalgam incident

No new canals will be built without mutual understanding from Council of Common Interests

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Common Interests (CCI) Monday strongly condemned the unilateral, illegal and irresponsible steps of India after the incident of Pahalgam. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chaired the 52nd meeting of Council of Common Interests at the Prime Minister House here. While representing the national aspirations, the CCI gave a message of unity and solidarity to the nation in the backdrop of the illegal Indian measures and in case of any kind of aggression by the hostile country.

The CCI stated that Pakistan was a peaceful and responsible country but fully knew how to defend itself. All the provincial chief ministers expressed unity and national solidarity in a unified voice against the illegal acts of India. The CCI fully welcomed the resolution in the Senate against the illegal and irresponsible steps of India.

"Pakistan has the right to protect its water interests in view of the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty and stoppage of its water," the council noted. The Council of Common Interests took decisions regarding the new canals. The Council of Common Interests endorsed the policy of the federal government as given below:

Federal government has decided that no new canals will be built without mutual understanding from CCI. It has been decided that the federal government will not move further until mutual understanding

is evolved among the provinces. It is engaging all provincial governments to chart out a long-term consensus roadmap for development of agriculture policy & 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 mutual understanding and concerns of any province shall be addressed through due diligence amongst all stakeholders. In view of the above, after deliberations, the Council decided that the provisional ECNEC approval dated 7 February, 2024 for construction of new canals and the IRSA water availability certificate issued in its meeting dated 17 January 2024 be returned. Planning Division and IRSA are directed to ensure consultation with all stakeholders, in the interest of national cohesion and to address any and all concerns until mutual understanding is reached.

The CCI Secretariat presented to

the meeting, its financial reports for the years 2021-2022, 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The council approved the CCI Secretariat Recruitment Rules. The Cabinet Division presented to the CCI the reports of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority for the years 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and State of Industry reports for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam and four provincial chief ministers attended the meeting.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said that a reaffirmed commitment was made to ensure equal water rights for all provinces.

During the meeting, he confirmed, the decision to construct new canals from the Indus River had been withdrawn. "It has been decided to resolve issues through mutual understanding," he added. Gandapur added that three of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's demands were approved to be included in the agenda for the next CCI meeting. He stated that a review of the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award will also be part of the next session's agenda. The chief minister further said that the agenda to recognise tobacco as a formal crop will be included in the next meeting as well. He termed the inclusion of these demands in the agenda as a major victory for KP people.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with Chief Ministers of four provinces, before 52nd meeting of Council of Common Interests.

40 injured in explosion at Nushki truck terminal

F.P. Report

NUSHKI: At least 40 people were injured when an explosion occurred in an oil-filled truck after a fire broke out near the truck terminal in Nushki district, Balochistan.

According to reports, a fire brigade vehicle also caught fire while attempting to extinguish the blaze. Rescue sources said that several individuals suffered burn injuries and are being shifted to hospitals for medical treatment. Hospital sources stated that after initial medical aid, the severely injured will be shifted to Quetta. According to a statement by the district administration, more than 40 people were injured in the explosion.

Additionally, four police officers, who were present to evacuate civilians from the site, also suffered burn injuries. Individuals near the oil tanker sustained burns over 70 to 80 percent of their bodies.

Meanwhile, a terrorist was killed and another blew himself up during a heavy exchange of fire with Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel in Quetta on Monday.

Both dead terrorists were affiliated with banned outfit Da'esh. The firing incident took place in Darakhshan area of Quetta, where the CTD personnel recovered a suicide jacket and large quantity of arms and ammunition from the possession of the dead terrorists. The shootout lasted for over an hour, CTD sources said that these hardened terrorists were planning a terrorist activity in the province but timely action by the CTD foiled their nefarious design.

Pakistan to safeguard its due share of water

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar Monday emphasized that Pakistan will take all appropriate steps to safeguard its due share of water, guaranteed by the Indus Waters Treaty.

He was chairing a high-level meeting on the Indus Waters Treaty in the light of India's move to hold the treaty in abeyance. The meeting was attended by the Ministers for Law & Justice and Water Resources, Attorney General, senior officials and technical experts.

He underscored that India's unilateral and illegal move to hold the treaty in abeyance contravened the established norms of interstate relations, international law, and the treaty's own provisions. He stressed that the treaty is critical to regional stability and its sanctity must be preserved. Noting that the waters of the Indus River System remain a lifeline for Pakistan's 240-million people, he deplored the Indian attempts to weaponize water.

Security forces kill 17 India-backed militants

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The security forces killed 17 India-backed militants on April 27-28, which were among 71 terrorists killed near the Pak-Afghan border, in a series of successful operations from April 25 to 27, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Monday.

It said, following the successful engagements by the security forces in North Waziristan District (NWD) from April 25-27, 2025, during which 54 khwarij were sent to hell; on night April 27-28, 2025 night, a deliberate sanitization operation was conducted in surrounding areas of Hassan Khel, NWD, along Pakistan-Afghanistan Border.

It said during the conduct of the operation, 17

more khwarij, who were operating on behest of their Indian masters, were hunted down and successfully neutralized. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed khwarij.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday paid tribute to the security forces for killing 17 Khawarij terrorists during an operation in Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan.

In separate statements, the president and the prime minister lauded the bravery of the security forces for eliminating 17 terrorists of Fitna-al-Khawarij. President Asif Ali Zardari reaffirmed to continuing security operations until the complete eradication of terrorism. "The successful operations by our security

forces against terrorists are commendable," the President said, vowing to uphold the unwavering commitment to the defense of the country and the elimination of terrorism.

PM Shehbaz Sharif pointed out "the killing of 71 Khawarij terrorists during the security operations in North Waziristan over the past three days clearly shows that our law enforcement agencies are fully determined and vigilant in their mission to eliminate terrorism".

"We will continue to thwart the nefarious designs of these terrorists (enemies of humanity), in the same resolute manner," he added. The prime minister expressed the determination to continue war against terrorism until the complete eradication of this menace from the country

Nine killed, 27 injured in South Waziristan blast

F.P. Report

WANA: A powerful explosion ripped through the Peace Committee office in Wana Bazaar on Monday, resulting in the deaths of nine people and injuries to 29 others. Several individuals were reported trapped under the rubble.

The blast was so intense that its sound was heard across a wide area, causing widespread fear and panic among local residents. In the immediate aftermath, civilians pulled out the dead and injured from the debris, while security forces swiftly cordoned off the site and launched a rescue operation, which remains ongoing.

Hospital sources at Wana Headquarters confirmed the identities of the deceased: Malik Khwaja Khan, Sahibzada, Sher Jan, Nawab Afghani, Aya Khan and Ismail Khan. Among the critically injured are Commander Saifur Rehman, Commander Tehsil, and Ataullah, who were shifted to Dera Ismail Khan for advanced medical care. Hospital authorities added that most of those with minor injuries were treated and discharged after receiving first aid.

Rescue teams continue intensive operations at the scene, searching through the wreckage. Security officials stated that while the nature of the explosion is still under investigation, the use of planted explosive material is suspected. The possibility of terrorism has not been ruled out. The bodies of the deceased have been handed over to their

families. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday condemned a terrorist attack in Wana, South Waziristan. The prime minister expressed his grief over loss of precious lives and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He also prayed for the bereaved families to bear the losses with fortitude. The prime minister said that enemies of humanity, inflicting harm on lives and properties, would have to face justice. He reiterated the resolve of government and security forces to completely eliminate terrorism from the country. He also prayed for the quick recovery of the injured.

Scope of digital wallets to be expanded across country

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the scope of digital wallets would be expanded across the country and the provinces would be integrated into the digital payment system through a coordinated framework.

Addressing a ceremony to acknowledge individuals showing outstanding performance in the success of the PM's Ramadan Relief Package, he said that modern payment methods enabled smooth transfer of funds and these payments were made transparently while maintaining the dignity of deserving individuals.

The prime minister said that funds were transferred efficiently and transparently through digital wallets, adding that 79% of the funds were disbursed digitally under the programme. He observed that the old payment system had many flaws which were rectified through the modern system,

PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister further opined that positive results emerged from the steps taken to modernize the system and hinted that the scope of digital wallets would be expanded nationwide as provinces would also be included in the digital payment system through an integrated framework.

Next year, he said, 100% utilization of funds through digital methods would be ensured. During the ceremony, Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme Amir Ahmed Ali gave a detailed briefing on the PM Ramadan Relief Package and digital wallets. On the occasion, the prime minister gave away honorary shields to officers from public and private institutions who played a significant role in implementing the PM Ramadan Relief Package.

Shehbaz lauds HEC Project Director for outstanding performance: Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif met with

Project Director of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Saima Naureen and appreciated her high performance in supervising the programme of modern training in the field of agriculture for Pakistani students in China.

During the call on the prime minister by Saima Naureen, the PM lauded her passion for public service and termed it an exemplary example for government officers. PM Shehbaz while acknowledging the efforts of the HEC Project Director underlined that her journey to China with the students and solving their problems amid personal supervision of all the arrangements for their stay in the Chinese university was commendable.

The prime minister noted that such officers busy in public service day and night were the ones who were truly entitled to promotion and privileges. "By the grace of Allah, the first batch of students has arrived in China for modern agriculture training," PM Shehbaz said.

Saif, meets British HC delegation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, met with a delegation from the British High Commission in Islamabad on Monday. The delegation included Head of Political Section, Zoe Weir, and Political Counsellor, Cornac.

During the meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on the overall political situation of the country and the state of peace and security in the region. They also addressed the situation that emerged following the recent incident in Pahalgam.

Barrister Dr. Saif briefed the delegation on the baseless allegations made by India against Pakistan and shed light on the nefarious designs of the Modi government. Discussions also covered the political landscape of Pakistan, including the illegal cases against Imran Khan and other detained leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The meeting further reviewed the incidents of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the effective measures taken by the provincial government to counter them. Barrister Dr. Saif informed the delegation that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has allocated billions of rupees to enhance the capabilities of the police and the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). Additionally, efforts have been intensified to accelerate development in the tribal districts.

He emphasized that under the leadership of the Chief Minister, the provincial government is giving special attention to the sectors of health, security, and education in the tribal areas.

The British delegation appreciated the public welfare initiatives and the counterterrorism efforts undertaken by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, assuring their full support and cooperation. At the conclusion of the meeting, Barrister Dr. Saif expressed his sincere thanks to the visiting delegation for their interest and commitment.

China urges India, Pakistan to exercise restraint

BEIJING (Reuters): China on Monday urged India and Pakistan to "exercise restraint" as the two countries reportedly exchanged fire at the Line of Control (LoC) for a fourth night in a row in the wake of a deadly attack in occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam.

"China hopes that the two sides will exercise restraint, meet each other halfway, properly handle relevant differences through dialogue and consultation and jointly maintain regional peace and stability," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said. "China welcomes all measures that will help cool down the situation," Jiakun told a regular press briefing.

Meanwhile, the US State Department has said that Washington is in touch with both Pakistan and India while urging them to work towards what it called a "responsible solution" as tensions have risen between the two South Asian neighbours following Pahalgam attack.

In public, the US government has expressed support for India after the attack but has not criticized Pakistan. India blamed Pakistan for the April 22 attack that killed over two dozen people. Pakistan rejects Indian allegations and called for a neutral probe. "This is an evolving situation and we are monitoring developments closely. We have been in touch with the governments of India and Pakistan at multiple levels," a US State Department spokesperson told Reuters in an emailed statement on Sunday. "The United States encourages all parties to

work together towards a responsible resolution," the spokesperson added.

The State Department spokesperson also said Washington "stands with India and strongly condemns the attack in Pahalgam," reiterating comments similar to recent ones made by President Donald Trump and Vice-President JD Vance. Michael Kugelman, a Washington-based South Asia analyst and writer for the Foreign Policy magazine, said given Washington's involvement and ongoing diplomatic efforts in Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's war in Gaza, the Trump administration is "dealing with a lot on its global plate" and may leave India and Pakistan on their own, at least in the early days of the tensions.

Hussain Haqqani, a former Pakistan ambassador to the US and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute think tank, also said that there seemed to be no US appetite to calm the situation at this moment. "India has a longstanding grievance about terrorism emanating or supported from across border. Pakistan has a longstanding belief that India wants to dismember it. Both work themselves into a frenzy every few years. This time there is no US interest in calming things down," Haqqani said.

After the attack, India and Pakistan unleashed a raft of measures against each other, with Pakistan closing its airspace to Indian airlines and India suspending the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty that regulates water-sharing from the Indus River and its tributaries.

Iran accuses Israel of seeking to disrupt N-talks with US

TEHRAN: Iran has accused Israel of "brazenly" trying to scupper negotiations as talks with the United States over Tehran's nuclear programme appear to be progressing. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was "dictating what [US] President [Donald] Trump can and cannot do in his diplomacy with Iran".

In response to a third round of US-Iran negotiations that appeared to gather momentum in Oman over the weekend, Netanyahu reiterated demands that Iran's nuclear programme be entirely dismantled. Araghchi had earlier indicated "cautious" optimism after Saturday's Omani-mediated talks with US Middle-East envoy Steve Witkoff.

The negotiations are aimed at ensuring Iran does not use its nuclear programme to develop weapons. In exchange,

Tehran would receive relief from international sanctions. A senior US official reported "further progress" had been made over the weekend, according to the Reuters news agency.

However, the talks have put Israel on alert. Netanyahu insisted late on Sunday that the only "good deal" to emerge from the talks would be one that removed "all of [Iran's nuclear] infrastructure". The Israeli leader, who has refused to rule out an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, said he had told Trump that any nuclear agreement reached with Iran should also prevent Tehran from developing ballistic missiles.

Trump, who has threatened military action against Iran several times, said in an interview published on Friday that he thought a deal would happen. He added that while Netanyahu might "go into a war", the US was "not getting dragged in".

However, he warned the US might "go in very willingly if we can't get a deal".

"If we don't make a deal, I'll be leading the pack," he said. Trump pushed for new Iran nuclear talks conducted under a "maximum pressure campaign" after returning to office in January. He unilaterally tore up a landmark nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, including the US, in 2018 during his first presidential term, after which Tehran went on to accelerate its enrichment of uranium to near weapons-grade quality.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the world's nuclear watchdog, expressed "serious concern" in a February report. In another sign that progress is being made in the ongoing negotiations, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said a technical team from the IAEA had arrived in Tehran for talks with nuclear experts. — Aljazeera

**4 women killed in mishap
F.P. Report**

MANSEHRA: At least four women died and six others injured when a jeep plunged into a ravine in Mansehra district, police informed on Monday. The incident took place in Kan Chajri area. The jeep was traveling from Sundi to Jabori when it met with the accident due to brake failure. Residents immediately launched a rescue operation, moving the injured and the deceased to a nearby hospital.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif awarding shields to the officers of public and private sector organizations in acknowledgement of their services for Ramzan Relief Package.

CM orders prioritizing public-centric road projects

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed authorities concerned to prioritize road development projects based on public needs and usage patterns.

Chairing a meeting of the Communication and Works (C&W) Department, here on Monday, she emphasized the importance of implementing by-laws to ensure that roadsides remain free from encroachments. The CM announced that under the Biggest-Ever Road Rehabilitation Program in Punjab's history, 12,000 kilometers of roads have been constructed and rehabilitated to significantly enhance connectivity and ease of communication across the province.

During the meeting, the chief minister reviewed the 18.5-kilometre Lahore Ring Road Southern

Loop project and instructed the departments concerned to submit a feasibility report for a proposed expressway connecting Layyah and Bhakkar Road to the motorway. She also discussed the Kharian-Rawalpindi Express Road project and directed the installation of uniform-style tuff tiles in cities and villages to enhance urban aesthetics.

The Secretary C&W Department provided a detailed briefing on the ongoing road projects across all divisions and districts of Punjab. He informed the Chief Minister that the construction, expansion, and rehabilitation of 460 roads are progressing at a rapid pace. The Secretary added that the construction of the road from Quaid-e-Azam Interchange to Wagah Border has been completed, with ancillary works such as drainage and

wall construction currently underway. Further updates included the approval of the Multan-Vehari dual carriageway project by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), with construction of an additional carriageway in progress.

The CM was also informed that all road construction and rehabilitation projects in Murree, as well as the Shakargarh Road under the Kartarpur Corridor Project, have been completed. Meanwhile, work on the Muridke-Narowal Road is actively underway.

CM Maryam Nawaz endorsed proposals to maintain a general road width of 12 feet and approved plans to construct and rehabilitate inter-district and inter-village roads in the upcoming financial year.

Haleem joins Lawyers protesting against controversial canals

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh on Monday participated in a sit-in protest organized by the legal fraternity in Malir, opposing the construction of controversial canal projects on the Indus River.

Joined by senior PTI leaders and numerous party workers, Haleem visited the protest site on Gulshan-e-Hadeed Link Road to show solidarity with the lawyers.

During the sit-in, Haleem praised the legal fraternity across Sindh for their unity and commitment to a critical provin-

cial issue.

He condemned recent police violence against the protesting lawyers, emphasizing their resilience and dedication to the cause.

The PTI Sindh president accused former President Asif Ali Zardari of compromising Sindh's water rights by signing the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Amended Act.

He highlighted that during PTI's tenure, a similar proposal was rejected by former President Dr Arif Alvi to protect Sindh's interests. He accused the Pakistan Peoples Party of exploiting Sindh's

resources for political gain and declared that the people of Sindh would no longer tolerate such actions.

He emphasized that the Council of Common Interests (CCI) meeting was a result of the lawyers' community struggle. Haleem insisted that the people of Sindh would not accept any deceptive agreements regarding water rights.

"There is only one demand from across Sindh: the controversial canal projects on the Indus River must be permanently scrapped," he insisted. The PTI Sindh chief warned that any attempt to deprive

Indus Water Treaty cannot be annulled unilaterally: Tessori

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, speaking at an event held in Istanbul, Turkey, stated that with Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir in command, India does not dare to cast an evil eye on Pakistan.

He mentioned that under the SIFC, investors are being provided with one-window facilities. The governor criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that Modi has forgotten 1965 and has challenged a

nation that was established in the name of the Kalma (Islamic declaration of faith). He further added that Pakistan is a responsible state, and the sacrifice of 80,000 lives in the war against terrorism is proof of that.

Tessori labeled India as a global terrorist and highlighted that the Canadian government and the American state had also indicated India's involvement in terrorism. He said that life is being made difficult for Muslims, Sikhs,

and minorities in India.

He commented on the Indus Waters Treaty, stating that it is an agreement between two countries, guaranteed by the World Bank, and cannot be annulled or amended through unilateral decision. He further added that Pakistan desires peace but is also capable of defeating its enemies.

Sindh Governor Prays at Imam Musa Kazim's Shrine: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori visited the revered

shrine of Imam Musa Kazim. During his visit, the governor offered prayers for the unity and prosperity of the Muslim community, the protection of the country, and inter-faith harmony.

The Governor of Sindh also distributed food among the pilgrims, continuing the tradition of sincerity and service. During a visit to the museum, he observed rare artifacts of Islamic history and showed special interest.

Sindh impounds 25,625 motorbikes

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh government has intensified its campaign against traffic violations, resulting in the impounding of 25,625 motorbikes and 278 vehicles, along with the arrest of 278 drivers, in order to enforce road safety and legality across the province.

Senior Sindh Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, informed that from April 16 to 28, a total of 99 FIRs were registered under Section 188, one case under Section 279 for reckless driving, and 21 cases under Section 341 on model roads. During this period, 13 unregistered Qinqi vehicles were seized, 27 LPG/CNG kits were confiscated, and 4,119 challans were issued.

Further, action against heavy and light transport vehicles led to the seizure of 416 vehicles. Registration cancellation was recommended for 25 vehicles, while 380 were conditionally released after undergoing technical improvements and renewing their fitness certificates.

Highlighting the broader objectives, Memon stressed that the initiative forms part of a comprehensive, ongoing reform agenda aimed at making roads safer and more law-abiding. He asserted that the crackdown is not a temporary measure but a sustained effort that will continue without discrimination.

He also pointed out that the government is actively targeting illegal rickshaws, unregistered vehicles, and unsafe CNG/LPG kits. Urging citizens' cooperation, the senior minister emphasized that lasting improvements in traffic management and public safety are not possible without the active participation of drivers, transporters, and the general public.

Section 144 imposed to ensure transparency in education officer exams

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To prevent cheating and the use of unfair means, and to ensure transparency during the written examinations scheduled for Wednesday, April 30, for vacant positions of SDEOs and ADs, Section 144 has been imposed around the examination centers.

According to KPPSC Secretary Zakaullah Khattak, written exams for 30 vacant posts of Sub-Divisional Education Officers and Assistant Directors in the Education Department will be conducted across the province's seven divisions — Peshawar, Mardan, Malakand, Hazara, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan — on Wednesday, April 30. Over 13,500

candidates are expected to appear for these exams.

A total of 57 examination centers or halls have been designated in government educational institutions located at the divisional headquarters of these regions; Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, Bannu, DI Khan, Swat and Kohat.

Following the directives of KPPSC Chairman Captain (Retired) Munir Azam, to maintain transparency and curb all forms of cheating during these Grade-17 examinations, provincial monitoring staff have been deployed. Moreover, Deputy Commissioners of the concerned districts have been instructed to enforce Section 144 around examination centers to prevent unauthorized individuals from entering or accessing

the centers.

Additionally, Assistant Commissioners have been directed to visit the examination centers within their jurisdictions to supervise the examination process and report any irregularities to the Public Service Commission.

In compliance with the Public Service Commission's request, Deputy Commissioners have issued orders under Section 144, banning all types of gatherings within 200 meters of the examination centers, prohibiting the operation of photocopying machines within 300 meters, restricting the use of mobile phones inside examination halls during the exams, and preventing entry of unauthorized persons into the examination halls.

FIA arrests three agents involved in visa fraud

LAHORE (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala Zone on Monday arrested three individuals involved in human trafficking and visa fraud, in a series of operations conducted across various regions.

A spokesperson for the FIA said that the arrested suspects have been identified as Tanveer Akhtar, Qaiser Nadeem and Akhtar Ali. These individuals were apprehended from different areas of Kamoke and Narowal. The suspects allegedly deceived citizens by offering them job opportunities abroad and

in the process, defrauded them of millions of rupees.

Tanveer Akhtar was arrested during a raid at Madani Hotel Kamoke, where FIA officials recovered three Pakistani passports from his possession.

However, he could not provide a satisfactory explanation regarding the passports. Akhtar had reportedly been charging citizens between 4 to 5 million rupees for promising them overseas employment opportunities.

In another operation, Qaiser Nadeem was arrested in Narowal. Nadeem had fraudulently obtained over 1.95 million rupees

from a citizen by promising to send them to Romania for a job.

Meanwhile, Akhtar Ali had collected over 5.4 million rupees from another individual, assuring them of a job in Cyprus.

However, the suspects failed to fulfill their promises of sending the victims abroad. The arrested individuals, after collecting large sums of money, went into hiding but were tracked down by the FIA.

Investigations are underway as the agency continues its efforts to curb human trafficking and visa fraud, added spokesperson.

Arora sworn in as chairman of Minority Advisory Council

LAHORE (APP): An oath-taking ceremony of the newly established Minority Advisory Council Punjab (MACP) was held on Monday in the Committee Room of the New Ministers' Block, marking a significant milestone for the government of Punjab in ensuring representation, protection and empowerment for minority communities.

The event was attended by leaders and representatives from the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and other minority communities, as well as government officials and dignitaries.

At the ceremony, Ramesh Singh Arora was sworn in as the Chairman of the MACP. Alongside him, Kamran Masih Bhatti was appointed Vice Chairman and Aqib Alam assumed the role of Convenor. The establishment of the Council was formally approved by the chief minister of Punjab and officially notified by the Department of Human Rights and Minorities Affairs. The council is set to serve a term of three years, though the government retains the right to dissolve it at any time. The oath was

administered by Secretary of Human Rights and Minority Affairs, Rai Ali Bahadur Qazi.

In his address, Chairman Ramesh Singh Arora expressed his honor in leading such a vital initiative and reaffirmed his commitment to working closely with the government of Punjab. He emphasized the Council's mission to promote inter-faith harmony, safeguard minority rights, and enhance the socio-economic and political empowerment of minority communities. Arora also highlighted that the MACP will act as a platform to address the challenges faced by religious minorities and ensure their voices are heard.

Further commenting on regional affairs, Arora spoke on the importance of national unity, in contrast to the divisive atmosphere in neighboring India. He stressed that all citizens of Pakistan, regardless of their religion, are integral to the nation. Addressing false accusations from the Indian government, Arora assured the audience that any conspiracy against Pakistan would

be met with a strong response.

On a positive note, he also announced to the Sikh community that there are no restrictions on their travel to Pakistan, citing the recent successful Baisakhi celebrations as an example of continued bilateral cooperation. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a special prayer was offered for the late Pope Francis.

Council Members Include: Suhail Akram, Shahid Javed Rehmat, Karamat Masih, Nadeem Masih, Ashiq Masih, Aneel Parvez, Suhail Anwar, Shakeel Chaman, Saleem Shakir, Waseem Raja, Mushtaq Yaqoob Sandhu, Shehzad Arif, Mushtaq Gul, Dr. Shahid Shoukat, Inder Yaas Masih, Waseem Masih, Adnan Shehzad, Sumbal Munir, Priyanka, Surkha Shakir, Zobia Nazir, Saneen, Kanji Ram, Sajjan Bhatia, Ratan Lal, Lala Akmal Bheel, Sardar Jaskaran Singh, Sardar Surjeet Singh, Sardar Palwinder Singh, Sardar Dilawar Singh, Mufti Syed Ashiq Hussain, and Maulana Shakeel ur Rehman Nasir.

134 properties sealed

LAHORE (APP): The district administration sealed 134 premises, registered 11 cases, and seized 24 truckloads of confiscated materials during a sweeping anti-encroachment operation across the city.

The aggressive crackdown targeted major thoroughfares and commercial areas, aiming to eliminate unauthorized occupations and restore public spaces to citizens.

In a landmark initiative led by Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza, the administration also removed over 400 illegal permanent and temporary structures and cleared more than 5,200 unauthorized banners, posters, and streamers that were contributing to urban congestion and visual pollution.

Metropolitan Officer Regulation Headquarters Kashif Jaleel personally inspected Township Market and led several frontline teams to ensure effective and sustained enforcement across various hotspots.

Officials confirmed that in addition to clearing illegally occupied spaces, the operation also targeted visual clutter that had been marring the city's appearance. The administration issued 11 notices and warnings for minor infringements while taking strict legal action against major offenders, including a private furniture outlet in Johar Town for unauthorized desecrating.

Speaking about the impact of the drive, Metropolitan Officer Kashif Jaleel stated.

LHC reserves verdict on accused's bail plea in Bukhari video case

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday reserved its decision on the bail petition of Ali Hassan Toor, accused of spreading a fake video of Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari on social media. LHC Chief Justice Aalia Neelum heard the petition, with Azma Bukhari's counsel, Ali Bukhari, appearing before the court.


Arguing against the bail,

Ali Bukhari stated that the accused was involved in making a fake video viral and was therefore not entitled to bail. He further contended that the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) investigation confirmed the accused's guilt.

At this stage, Deputy Attorney General Rafiqat Dogar submitted the FIA's technical report, asserting that Ali Hassan Toor not only commented on the controversial video but

also shared it — an act constituting a legal offense.

However, Chief Justice Aalia Neelum observed that although Ali Hassan Toor is mentioned in the case record, the uploaded video appears to be his own. She remarked that uploading a selfie video and mentioning someone are two different matters and that what exactly the accused said in the video would be determined during the trial.

**Notice of Tender**

1. Manager Procurement / Officer Commanding Plant and Equipment, HQ PD KPK NLC, Kacha Ghari Hayatabad Phase-III, Peshawar invites sealed application for pre-qualification of Workshop vender / suppliers for repairing of following plant/ equipment in Peshawar as per PPRA Rules: -

Ser	BA No	Make and Type	Model	Work Req
1.	E-612	Vib Road Roller	2008	Engine Assy, Hyd Pump, Vib Motor, Marching Motor and Strg pump req repair
2.	E-619	Tandem Road Roller	2008	Engine Assy and Hyd Pump req repair
3.	E-581	Loader Kawasaki 65Z	2007	Gear box, Strg unit, Hyd pump and Transmission req repair
4.	E-456	Dozer D85A21	1998	Engine Assy req overhauling
5.	E-587	TM Nissan	2007	Engine assy, Drum shaft Jack, Brake, Road spring, Elect Wiring req repair

2. The Workshop venders / contractors are required to submit their applications to Manager Procurement / Officer Commanding Plant and Equipment for issuance of tender documents along with their complete credentials as shown as per serial no. 6. The applications shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firm who have sufficient experience in relevant field and satisfy other special conditions required for the job and area. Tender will only be issued to the qualified Workshop vender / contractors. The tenders must be received in the office of accepting officer by **16 May 2025 at 1030 hours which will be opened on the same day at 1130 hours.**

3. Workshop venders / Contractors shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigations with Government Department in court of law and they are not black listed from NLC and any other Government Department and also nothing is outstanding against firm.

4. Tender from only tax filers, NTN/GST registered parties will be accepted. The accepting officer reserves the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tender will be dealt with as per Para 33 (i) (3) of PPRA Rules.

5. The interested parties can contact Manager Procurement / Officer Commanding Plant and Equipment, HQ PD KPK NLC Kacha Ghari Hayatabad Phase-III, Peshawar for further details 0830 to 1630 hours on all working days at office phone no. 091-5892474. This tender notice is also available at www.nlc.com.pk and www.ppra.org.pk

Ser No.	Name of Work Executed during last three years and in hand	Amount of Work (Rs)	Time Allowed in month	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	Percentage/P rogress of work in hand
---------	---	---------------------	-----------------------	----------------------	--------------------	--------------------------------------



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jahan inspecting work on Imran Khan Cricket Stadium.

Work completed on Imran Khan Cricket Stadium: Fakhar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jahan announced that construction work on the Imran Khan Cricket Stadium (formerly Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium) has been completed. Preparations for the upcoming exhibition match in Peshawar have been finalized and it is now up to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to decide the date for the match. In addition a

major stadium dedicated to cultural sports will soon be constructed in Peshawar equipped with all necessary facilities. Speaking to the media during his visit to the Imran Khan Cricket Stadium, the minister was accompanied by Director General Sports Tashfeen Haider, Assistant Director Finance Shah Faisal and Stadium Director Saleem Raza while XEN Riaz Bangash provided a detailed briefing about the stadium. Syed Fakhar Jahan stat-

ed that Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur will formally inaugurate the stadium during the exhibition match after which it will be open for hosting cricket matches. He emphasized that the ground is now ready from their side and efforts are being made to host Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches, domestic fixtures and to eventually bring international cricket back to Peshawar allowing cricket enthusiasts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to

watch their heroes live. The minister highlighted that there is immense cricketing talent in the province and the new stadium will provide players with greater opportunities to enhance their performance. In response to a question he clarified that the stadium was named Imran Khan Cricket Stadium based on a cabinet decision. He further stated that all enclosures within the stadium will be named after renowned cricketers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

KPBC to observe strike lawyer's killing in front of PHC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar (KPBC) has strongly condemned the murder of senior member of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) Bar, Mian Jamal Shah advocate and announced a boycott from court proceedings today (on Tuesday). The Bar Council has also expressed concern

over the firing incident outside the Peshawar High Court and has demanded that the government improve the security of courts. KPBC has announced a complete boycott of courts and no lawyer will appear before court. The Bar Council has demanded that the government take immediate action to arrest those involved in the mur-

der of Mian Jamal Shah and improve the security of courts. The Bar Council has expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Peshawar. The Bar Council has demanded that the government take all necessary measures to improve the security of courts, including the

Peshawar High Court and subordinate courts. KPBC has demanded that the government to arrest those involved in the murder of Mian Jamal Shah and take actions against murderers. The Bar Council has demanded that the government improve the security of courts and ensure the safety of lawyers and other stakeholders.

New Tourism Zones to be included in ADP 2025-26: Zahid

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Tourism, Culture, Archaeology, and Museums, Zahid Chanzab, has stated that he will to effectively harness the province's tourism potential, it is imperative to grant legal status and to declare new tourist zones under the Annual Development Program 2025-26. He emphasized that there are numerous locations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with tremendous potential for tourism development, which urgently need to be officially declared as tourist zones. He expressed these views during a special meeting at his office in Peshawar with the Secretary of the Department of Tourism and Culture Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, and the newly

appointed Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism (KPCTA), Habibullah Arif. Advisor Zahid Chanzab congratulated the new Director General on assuming office and expressed hope that his leadership skills would play a pivotal role in resolving the longstanding and complex issues faced by the Authority. On this occasion, the Secretary of Tourism and Culture, Dr. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, informed that all necessary docu-

mentation for granting legal status to new tourist sites has been completed, and these measures will be included in the upcoming Annual Development Program. He added that the benefits of these initiatives will soon reach the public, leading to not only the strengthening of the tourism sector but also a significant improvement in the province's economy. During the meeting, Director General of the Culture and Tourism Authority, Habibullah Arif, reaffirmed the institution's commitment to

playing an active role in the promotion of tourism and culture. He expressed his resolve to steer the Culture and Tourism Authority towards a new and effective direction. Concluding the meeting, Advisor Zahid Chanzab reiterated that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to taking practical steps for the promotion of tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage, aiming to elevate the province to an internationally recognized tourism destination.



Peace imperative for robust development in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The rugged mountains and lush green valleys of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are rich in culture, history, tourism and its untapped mines and mineral reservoirs if developed properly can bring an economic turnaround for province and the country. However, the dream of a financially prosperous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remains tightly linked to combating terrorism and a peaceful living to fully benefit from this God gifted potential. In recent years, all stakeholders in the province including political leaders, academia, intelligentsia and civil society have echoed a growing consensus that sustainable development cannot be achieved sans tolerance, harmony and lasting peace.

The successful security operations against inimical forces in restive areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including erstwhile Fata has made significant strides in stabilizing law and order situation. However, lasting peace is yet awaited and all stakeholders have to play a role for achieving this goal. "Economic growth and development are directly linked to peace and rejection of negativity and pessimism," says Professor Dr Jamil Khan, Director, Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies at University of Peshawar. "For KP, peace is also a gateway to tourism, investment, education and employment." Dr Jamil said fast-track rebuilding of all educational and health institutions and infrastructure damaged due to terrorist

activities in erstwhile Fata can turn things around and restore confidence of civil society in state institutions. As in many cases local people secretly cooperate with miscreants whatever the reasons, there is need to engage them for restoration of peace and develop the areas to alleviate sentiments of deprivation. The present government under the National Action Plan has embarked on number of measures to restore peace and compensate local people with development of these areas and providing them basic amenities like other settled areas. "The government, along-with relevant departments, is working tirelessly to rebuild and infrastructure, health and education facilities, tourism and roads infra-

structure in tribal region," stated Fayaz Ahmad, Director Coordination, National Highway Authority (NHA) KP. The construction of 47.5 kilometer four-lane expressway has been planned to connect Pakistan with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs). "It is a three-year project for which the Federal Government would provide US\$ 385.6 million with the KP government's share as US\$ 75 million. The loan agreement was signed with the World Bank for construction of KPEC," he said. Meanwhile, Engr Zahoor, Director Wapda North informed that construction work on Kurram-Tangi Dam in North Waziristan has been expedited and its Stage-I was near completion.

He also mentioned to completion of Gomal Zam dam in South Waziristan to produce 17.4 MW electricity and under construction Mohmand with a capacity of producing 800MW electricity. These are a few out of a series of development projects underway in KP and tribal areas to ameliorate the lot of people and once completed these projects would have positive impact on lives of local people. Therefore, to continue with this journey of development, the execution departments and agencies need peace and safety for the workers engaged on these and such other projects. But, if terrorist activities continue to hamper these projects and local people do not fully support the government initiatives, the dream of peace and development would diffi-

cult to be materialized. "Terrorism has unfortunately resurfaced in southern districts of KP especially in merged areas and it is a matter of concern," said Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, former IGP KP. "It not only hampers development but also discourages foreign investment." He however, saw intensified intelligence based operations in KP to counter terrorism as making positive impact on overall security and law and order situation in the region. Terming the recent visit of Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar to Afghanistan as a good omen, he said urged that decisive action of Afghan Govt against banned TTP and other terrorists' outfits on its soil was necessary for durable peace in the region.

There are number of other projects worth billions of rupees like construction of Institute of Petroleum Technology Karak, hospitals in Khyber, roads construction projects in Orakzai, North and South Waziristan and other districts. Ikhtair Wali, Prime Minister's coordinator for information and KP affairs also informed that soon after assuming the charge, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had visited North Waziristan where he announced construction of a medical college, Danish schools system and university. "Number of other projects by the federal government are also on cards for uplift of merged districts and empowerment of the local people," he said. "We are fully focused to

develop this region, educate youth and provide them jobs so they understand the reality and become the strongest shield against extremism and terrorism." He was confident that path to peace and development leads through a holistic approach of strengthening institutions, investing in education, addressing socio-economic disparities, and above all, ensuring peace by engaging local people and authorities. The experts believe that the message is clear that for a region full of promise and potential, peace is not just a desire but a necessity for robust development and this goal can only be achieved by implementing National Action Plan in letter and spirit and rooting out terrorism from the region.

Chief Secretary reviews progress on key development initiatives

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a weekly review meeting to assess the progress of tasks assigned to various departments, with a particular focus on high-impact development projects and governance reforms. The meeting provided a comprehensive update on the status of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects. It was informed that preparations are underway to organize a roadshow this week to promote the Thandiani Tourism Project. Updates were also shared regarding the Ghanool Integrated Tourism Zone project, Swat Motorway

Phase-II, Peshawar-Dera Ismail Khan Motorway, and Daraban Economic Zone initiatives. The Chief Secretary underscored the importance of ensuring full financial allocations for projects nearing completion. He directed the concerned departments to prioritize funding for high-impact projects to ensure their timely completion and to maximize public benefit. He further emphasized the critical role of the project tracking sheet and instructed the Planning and Development Department to maintain its regular updates to facilitate informed decision-making. The meeting also discussed digital governance initiatives. A trial exercise

for the e-office system is planned for this week, introducing functionalities such as e-summary processing, cabinet approvals, and diary and dispatch modules. These measures aim to enhance transparency, efficiency, and service delivery. Progress on the province's e-procurement portal, E-PADS, was also reviewed. It was reported that 175 tenders have been uploaded so far, and the technical bid opening process for the Northern Section of the Ring Road Missing Link Peshawar project has been successfully completed. Addressing urban management issues, particularly traffic congestion in Peshawar, the Chief

Secretary directed the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) to submit a comprehensive beautification plan for the provincial capital by June 30. The plan will encompass all key aspects of urban aesthetics and civic improvement. It was noted that work has already commenced on developing a model sector in Hayatabad, Peshawar. Highlighting the government's commitment to good governance, Shahab Ali Shah said these initiatives form part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's roadmap for transparency, efficiency, and improved service delivery, expressing confidence that their sustained implementation will significantly benefit the public.

Tordher chairs meeting to review issues facing industries

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting regarding the administrative and environmental matters regarding industries in Peshawar Division was held on Monday in the committee room of the Industries Department, chaired by Abdul Karim Tordher, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries. The meeting reviewed various issues facing industries and aligned administrative matters. It was attended by Secretary Industries Aamir Afaq, Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsood, Special Secretary Industries Muhammad Anwar Khan, CEO Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC) Adil Salahuddin, Director Environmental Protection Agency Jamshed Khan, SSP Peshawar, relevant WAPDA officials, adminis-

trative officers from districts Mohmand, Peshawar, and Khyber, office bearers of the Marble Association Warsak Road and other departmental representatives. Commissioner Peshawar Division highlighted concerns regarding environmental pollution and hazardous emissions from certain industries in Peshawar, as well as the damage to road infrastructure caused by the overloading of industrial transport vehicles. Various proposals were discussed to devise appropriate solutions to these issues. The meeting also deliberated on infrastructure development, land acquisition, outstanding dues, and connectivity roads related to the Mohmand Marble City project, with directions issued for timely and suitable resolutions. Additionally, instructions were given to organize a joint meeting within one week involving the Sarhad Chamber of

Commerce and Industry, Hayatabad Industrial Association and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to address serious violations of environmental regulations in the Hayatabad Economic Zone. It was decided that strict legal action would be taken against violators after the stipulated period. The meeting also discussed the relocation of industries from Warsak Road to the Mohmand Marble Economic Zone, envisioned to become a well-facilitated industrial hub. Discussions were held regarding the construction of the Machni Bridge to ease the transport of goods from industries along Warsak Road, with industrialists proposing a public-private partnership for the project. In this regard, the Special Assistant directed the convening of a stakeholders' meeting. Electricity issues faced by marble industries in

Mullagori were also discussed. The Special Assistant suggested that representatives of the Warsak Road Marble Industry explore ways to recycle industrial waste (Slurry) into reusable products, noting that a feasibility study already exists with KPEZDMC that could be utilized. He further highlighted that the establishment of the Industrial Park Peshawar, the first major industrial project in the Peshawar Valley since 1970, is 25% completed. Located at the junction of the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor, the park is poised to become a significant industrial center in the region. Special Assistant Abdul Karim Tordher emphasized that the provincial government is committed to providing maximum facilitation to industrialists and creating an enabling environment for business and investment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Directorate of Labour releases performance report for 2024-25

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Directorate of Labour Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has released its performance report for the financial year 2024-25, highlighting significant measures taken for the welfare and protection of the working class. According to the report, for the first time in KP the "Child Labour Survey 2024" has been successfully completed. Additionally, after an 18-year hiatus, Labour Day (1st May) was celebrated on an official level, with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, attending as the Chief Guest. The KP government has taken significant steps for the economic betterment of workers, including increase in minimum wage. The minimum wage has been raised from Rs. 32,000 to Rs. 36,000 per month, and a special campaign has been launched for its implementa-

tion in industrial and commercial establishments. Similarly, tripartite consultation process on the draft "Occupational Health and Safety Rules" has been completed and sent to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law Department. A District Labour and Weights & Measures Office has been established in South Waziristan Lower to provide services to locals. Although, a special campaign has been launched to ensure that workers are paid their wages through designated banks. The performance report further explained the process of online registration of factories, shops, and commercial establishments which is ongoing. However, the report reveals the development of the Labour Management Information System (LMIS) which is also in its final stages and which will ensure protection of workers data. According to the report, there are 1,329 industrial

establishments in KP employing 10 or more workers. 24 new factories were registered, and 338 new jobs were created during 2024-25. In 2024-25, the Labour Inspectors conducted a total of 31,600 inspections, resulting in legal actions in 5,557 cases. Similarly, 56,474 shops were inspected, with legal actions taken in 8,182 cases. The labour courts delivered judgments on 9,935 cases, imposing fines totaling Rs. 23.696 million. Halting child labour in the province, a total of 12,312 inspections were carried out, with 131 cases being filed in courts. 138 cases were decided by the courts, with a fine of Rs. 325,000 imposed. The Workers Education Wing conducted 360 training sessions during the year 2024-25, with a total of 7,548 participants. The training sessions included 152 Basic Workers' Education courses, with 3,184 partici-

pants while in human rights courses there were 140 participants. Additionally, Occupational Safety, Health, and Fire Fighting courses attended with 390 participants. However, seminars on Labour Laws attended with 351 participants. Meanwhile, sessions on Dengue and Covid-19, with 340 participants. 148 training sessions on the Trafficking in Persons Act 2018, with 3,143 participants. Under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Industrial Relations Act, 2010, the Directorate of Labour registered 14 new trade unions, bringing the total to 484, membership grew by 1,275 individuals, reaching 64,560. Additionally, 137 Collective Bargaining Agents (CBAs) were determined, with a membership of 37,862. 19 new associations were registered, bringing the total to 529, and 191 unions affiliated with federations.



In brief

Pir Baba Urs concluded F.P. Report

BUNER: The two days 45th Urs of famous saint Hazrat Pir Baba concluded by decoration with new Chadar on the grave. The Sajada Nasheen Makhdom Syed Husain Shah Bacha changed the old with new Chadar on the tomb. After this grand ceremony of Chadar Posh, collective prayers offered for the nation, the motherland and the general public. The ceremonies have come to a peaceful end with the distribution of the langar. The first day of the celebrations included lighting candles at Darbar Sharif and Jamia Masjid and a Naat and Sama gathering performed. The second day's celebrations were attended by a large number of Pir Baba Sahib's grandchildren, Sadat elders, Pir Baba's devotees and pilgrims from different areas of subcontinent. Naat reciters and speakers expressed their views on the life of Hazrat Pir Baba and the propagation of Islam and the reformation of the people. On this occasion, Syed Bahadar Shah, Syed Mubarak Shah, Syed Anwar Shah, Syed Kazim Shah, Syed Askar Shah appreciated the spirit of the elders and youth from outside districts and Buner who participated in the Urs and praised that in adverse conditions and the wheat harvesting season, a large number of people participated in the Urs of Hazrat Pir Baba.

Man dies of electrocution F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A 35-year-old man lost his life after receiving an electric shock here on Monday. Police said the victim identified as Adam Khan, a resident of Islamabad Rani was repairing an electric switch during rain-fall when he received electric shock. The Rescue 1122 Control Room immediately dispatched a medical team to the site which shifted him to the hospital, where doctors confirmed his death, stated Rescue 1122.

Rally held in Landi Kotal F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A rally was held in Landi Kotal on Monday in support of armed forces in the wake of Indian threat to attack Pakistan. The participants vowed that if Indians indulged in any adventurism under the guise of Pahalgar attack, they would stand shoulder by shoulder with the armed forces to defend the country. People from different walks of life attended the rally, which started from tehsil entrance, marched through the main bazaar and assembled at Bacha Khan Chowk. The marchers holding placards, raised anti-India and pro-freedom slogans. Speaking on the occasion Deputy Tehsil Chairman Haji Wali Muhammad, Malik Khalid Khan Afridi, President Anjuman-e-Tajeran, Landi Kotal Bazaar Yad Wazir Shinwari, General Secretary Khyber Club Kaleemullah Shinwari, local leader of Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PML-N) Sajid Ali Afridi, Haji Sher and others said that they were united to thwart Indian aggression and to give a tit for tat response. "The nation is ready to shed blood to reach a lesson to Indian forces", they remarked. They maintained that Pakistan was always a touch bearer to keep peace in the area but if war was forcibly imposed on it the Pak army was capable enough to give a befitting response.

Siraj slams govt over rising terrorism

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Former Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq on Monday criticized the federal and provincial governments for failing to curb terrorism and targeted killings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing a condolence gathering in Munda, after the killing of prominent local activist Haji Abdul Zaiq, who was gunned down by unknown attackers on Friday night, Siraj ul Haq said the government had lost the public's trust and should resign if it cannot ensure citizens' protection.

He blamed growing differences between Islamabad and Peshawar for the worsening law and order situation in the province, saying the province had been turned into "a living hell" for its people. "If the government cannot protect the citizens, it has no right to rule over them," he asserted, adding that if immediate steps were not taken to restore peace, the people would rise and hold the rulers accountable. Siraj urged security agencies to trace and eliminate terrorists, warning that the people would no longer tolerate continued violence and insecurity.

Meanwhile, chairman district development advisory committee (DDAC) Lower Dir, MPA Ubaidur Rehman, also visited the residence of martyred Subedar Abdul Zaiq, and met with his family members and children. He offered prayers for the elevation of the martyr's ranks and expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the bereaved family. Reaffirming his commitment to support them, he assured

the family that all possible assistance would be provided at every forum.

Ubaid also pledged to participate in public protests against the incident and to raise the voice for the martyr's family at every platform. He said the entire local community stands united with the grieving family and vowed that the martyr's sacrifice would not go in vain. Several other political figures were also present on the occasion.

Also on Monday, leaders and volunteers of Islami Qaumi Ittehad Aqwaam Jandol strongly condemned the targeted killing of the 72-year-old retired army Subedar Abdul Zaiq and expressed serious concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Jandol.

Addressing a protest demonstration at Mayar, they said that several prominent figures had been targeted in recent months, but police had so far failed to identify or arrest the culprits. The leaders demand immediate arrest of those involved in the killings.

SSC paper marking: The Malakand Board has launched centralized marking of Matric exam papers after ten years to ensure transparency. The BISE Malakand Deputy Controller Examination Naeemullah told local journalists at his office on Monday that CCTV cameras had been installed in the secrecy section, and experienced subject specialists were overseeing the process. He assured that results would be announced on time and urged teachers to support efforts against cheating. Strict measures have also been taken to prevent any unfair practices.

Ban imposed on fireworks, campfire in forests

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat has imposed ban on fireworks/ campfire, burning of grass by the farmers/ grazers, under Section 144 Cr. PC in the forest for three months, on Monday.

According to notification issued in this regard added that throwing of burning cigarette by smokers, cooking during picnic, lightning of the fire in any forest of the district with immediate effect for a period of 3 months.

Meanwhile, DC held the 1st Youth Women "Kuli Katcheri" for the young female on Monday at TMA Hall Kohat which was organized by the SRSP in collaboration with the GIZ. The aim of the said court was to provide a platform to young women where they could openly present their problems, suggestions and recommendations and play an active role in decision-making at the local level.

Officers of the district administration, women teachers, students of vari-

ous educational institutions, women volunteers, young women and women representatives of local organizations participated in the open court. On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the huge participation of women and said that this open court is a practical step towards raising the voice of women and solving their problems.

The participants highlighted the important issues like women's education, skill development, career counseling, sports facilities for women, positive activities, sports competitions, provision of transport to colleges and schools from remote areas, transparency and security in government jobs reserved for women, harassment of women teachers in private educational institutions and employment and skill opportunities for young women.

Drug rehab center inaugurated at prison: District & Sessions Judge Kohat Mst: Sofia Waqar along-with the Deputy Commissioner Kohat

Abdul Akram have under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's Program "Awami Agenda", inaugurated the Special Drug Rehabilitation Center, established in the District Jail Kohat for the rehabilitation of drug addicts jail inmates.

The inaugural ceremony besides others, was also attended by the SP City Farooq Zaman, Superintendent Jail Abdul Bari, authorities concerned and the Jail inmates.

Addressing on the occasion, the special guests Sessions Judge Kohat and Deputy Commissioner Kohat while terming the establishment of the said center in the Jail as an important and excellent initiative of the Government, said that this center will not only prove helpful in the rehabilitation of the mental and physical health of the prisoners but will also become a precursor to positive change in the society. Similarly, this center will have a positive impact on the inmates of the Jail, they said.

Patwaris demand replacement of AC, AAC

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Association of Patwaris and Qanon Goyan Mardan has expressed deep regret and anger over the irresponsible and inappropriate behavior of the Assistant Commissioner and Additional Assistant Commissioner towards the Patwaris and has demanded the replacement of both officers within three days and if they are not replaced, they have announced a strike in the entire district after three days.

In this regard, an emergency meeting of the District Association of Patwaris and Qanon Goyan was held under the chairmanship of District

President Sikandar Khan in which all the officials and Patwaris participated. The meeting strongly condemned the irresponsible and inappropriate behavior of Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai Junaid Khalid and Additional Assistant Commissioner Alamzeb Khan towards the Patwaris.

It was said that all the Patwaris have performed their duties regularly and honestly even in the polio campaign and yet the demand for answers from the Patwaris and the inappropriate behavior towards them by these officers are regrettable and beyond understanding and both the officers are unnecessarily harassing the Patwaris.

National outreach

training held at AWKUM: A training workshop was organized at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan under the National Outreach Program for Faculty, which was organized by the National Academy of Higher Education. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zahir Shah was the chief guest while Professor Dr. Salimullah, Professor Dr. Muhammad Tahir, Professor Dr. Sher Afzal, Dr. Zubair, Bannu University, Representative of Higher Education Islamabad Ghulam Goraya, Registrar Hassan Khan, Director CDC Dr. Shah Hussain and others were also present on the occasion.



KOHAT: District and Session Judge, Sofia Waqar inaugurating drug rehabilitation centre at district jail.

Cleanliness drives launched F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT/ KARAK: The cleanliness drives were inaugurated in Lakki Marwat and Karak districts to raise awareness among people about the importance of improved hygiene conditions and pollution-free environment.

In Lakki Marwat, District Education Officer Shaukat Ali Khan kicked off the campaign by collecting garbage along with students, scouts and teachers of public sector schools. The students wearing plastic gloves and facemasks and holding large shopping bags cleaned the blacktop road and disposed of garbage.

The campaign was launched by the education department with support of the boys scout association on the special instructions of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The DEO also led an awareness walk which started from Government Higher Secondary School Michenkhal and culminated at Michenkhal adda.

Principal Sharifullah Khan and District Scout Secretary Naimatullah Khan were also in attendance. Shaukat praised the spirit of the boy scouts and students and said that cleanliness is a part of our faith. He said that every citizen should keep his home and surrounding area clean and beautiful.

He asked the teachers to raise awareness about cleanliness and play an effective role in keeping the environment free from pollution. The tehsil municipal administrations also launched cleanliness drives in Lakki Marwat and Ghaznikhel towns.

TMO Lakki Kiramatullah Khan and Ghaznikhel TMO Almar Khan opened the drive by sweeping roads with brooms. Tehsil Officer Regulation Rafiullah Khan, Qaiser Hayat Khan, district khatieb Maulana Abdul Wahab, sanitary inspector Khalid Khan, Anwar Kamal Khan, and other officials were also present.

The municipal officers said on the occasion that the workers of civic bodies would clean clogged drains and remove garbage dumps during the cleanliness campaign. They asked the citizens to cooperate with municipal workers so as to make the drive a success.

On the special directives of Peshawar High Court Chief Justice S.M. Attique Shah, District and Sessions Judge Syed Yasir Shabeer inaugurated the week long cleanliness drive in Karak district.

Owners rejected housing scheme on Agri land

Shafi Ullah

MINGROA: Landowners in the Abuha area of Swat have strongly opposed the proposed establishment of a housing scheme on 1,500 kanals agricultural land in Malikdam Tehsil Barikoat. The landowners, who are primarily farmers, claim that the land is their sole source of livelihood and that the proposed scheme would deprive them of their rights.

At a press conference held at the Swat Press Club, representatives of the landowners, including Shaukat Ali, Attaulah Jan, and Muhammad Rafiullah, expressed their concerns and



rejected the scheme. They alleged that the decision to establish the housing scheme was taken without consulting the landowners and that it was a conspiracy by the land mafia and corrupt officials to loot their land.

The landowners demanded that the Deputy Commissioner Swat cancel the scheme and conduct an inquiry into the theft of the relevant file from the revenue department. They also called for action against the

officials involved in the alleged corruption.

"We reject the attempt to restart this fake and disapproved scheme," said Shaukat Ali. "We will not give up our land at any price. If our legitimate demands are not accepted, we will take to the streets with our children and protest in front of the offices of the Commissioner Malakand Division and Deputy Commissioner Swat."

Jirga join hands against Indian aggression

F.P. Report

WANA: In a powerful display of unity and patriotism, the Ahmadzai Wazir tribes, along with representatives from every of life held a grand jirga at Wana to voice their unwavering support for the Pakistani military in the face of Indian aggression, on Monday.

The gathering, convened alongside Inspector General Frontier Corps (IGFC) Mehr Umar Khan Niazi, was attended by Deputy Commissioner Lower South Waziristan Nasir Khan, senior police officers, Commandant Scouts Muhammad Tahir Khan, and other high-ranking officials. A large number of participants, including members of the Youth of Waziristan, journalists, religious scholars, and representatives of the Dotani, Suleman Khel, and Ahmadzai Wazir tribes, joined the jirga.

In a unanimous declaration, tribal elders and other speakers pledged to stand

shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistani Army, warning that if India continued its hostile designs, Pashtun tribes would not hesitate to take frontline positions. Speakers emphasized that Kashmir is the lifeline of Pakistan, warning that any adversary eyeing it maliciously would face fierce resistance.

Chief Malik Alauddin, addressing the jirga, stated that although the Ahmadzai Wazir, Suleman Khel, and Dotani tribes may have certain internal reservations, they remain united against India. He declared that the ultimate destination for the Pashtun tribes would be the Red Fort in Delhi, calling upon the government to provide a clear pathway for action. Other speakers, including Maulana Sultan, teacher Alamgir Khan, and Malik Musa Jan, echoed demands for enabling the tribes to actively confront Indian aggression.

Concluding the jirga, IGFC Mehr Umar Khan Niazi thanked the participants and stressed that

India, being a nation of idol-worshippers and cowards, lacks true belief. He reiterated that despite internal differences, the entire Pakistani nation stands united against India. He reminded the audience that Pakistan, as a nuclear power, desires peace but is fully prepared to respond decisively if war is imposed.

WWA held prize distribution ceremony: The Wana Welfare Association (WWA) hosted a grand ceremony at Musa Nika Public School today, distributing the annual Bobri Gul Scholarships to outstanding students.

The event began with a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by speeches underscoring education's critical role in regional progress. WAWA Education Committee Chairman, Mehran Gul, highlighted that 103 students from grades 5 to 7 are currently benefiting from the scholarship and paid tribute to community icons Bobri Gul and Hasan Khan.

UOB staff announces strike in favour of demands

F.P. Report

BANNU: The Academic Staff Association of Bannu, Admin Officers Association Class IV and Class III employees have announced a strike over non-payment of ad hoc relief allowance. The employees will hold a strike today and sit in front of the administration block.

In this regard, a protest meeting of employees was held at the IT Campus Bannu in which employees of various organizations of Jamia Bannu participated. Addressing the meeting, All Pakistan Academic Staff KP Southern Districts President Dr. Nasir Gul, BATSA Association General Secretary Dr. Dillfraz Khan,

Aftab Khan Salman Khan, BASA Association General Secretary Malik Amirullah Khan, Yousuf Khan, Class IV Association Tufail Khan, Adnan Khan, Admin Officers Association General Secretary Rehmatullah Khan said that all universities in the province were suffering from financial losses, including Bannu University.

Environmental awareness: The overlooked aspect of curriculum

Maria Halima

In Pakistan, fossil fuels are deeply embedded in our everyday lives. A significant portion of electricity is generated through thermal power plants that rely on coal, oil, and gas. Our transportation system is almost entirely dependent on petrol and diesel—whether it be cars, motorcycles, buses, or trucks. Industries operate using the same fuels, while households utilize gas for cooking and heating. In the agricultural sector, diesel fuels tube wells and tractors, positioning fossil fuels as a foundational element of our economy and livelihoods.

However, this dependence comes at a cost. The more fossil fuels we burn, the more carbon dioxide and other harmful gases are emitted into the atmosphere, leading to climate change. This emission is referred to as our carbon footprint—the amount of greenhouse gases we release

through daily activities. Unfortunately, awareness about this issue remains limited in Pakistan, largely because the average citizen is preoccupied with economic challenges. When individuals are struggling to cope with inflation and maintain their households, it becomes difficult to prioritize environmental concerns.

Beyond awareness, there are also tangible barriers that hinder the reduction of carbon emissions. Renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, remain unaffordable for the majority. Public transportation is often unreliable, compelling people to use personal vehicles, which further contributes to pollution. At the governmental level, the enforcement of eco-friendly policies is weak, and environmental topics receive insufficient attention in educational institutions and the media—resulting in a lack of public engagement on these issues.

Despite these challenges,

progress is possible. Promoting access to solar energy and improving public transport infrastructure can reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Schools and media can play a crucial role in raising awareness, emphasizing that even small, everyday actions can contribute to positive environmental change. Industries should be encouraged—or required—to adopt cleaner technologies. With joint efforts from the government, businesses, and citizens, Pakistan can move toward an environmentally sustainable future without compromising economic development.

Integrating such knowledge into our educational system is vital. It is not enough to merely adopt labels like "green schools" or "eco-friendly curricula"; we must take meaningful action on the ground. Currently, many educators are not familiar with the concept of climate change or the harmful environmental effects of fossil fuels. Few, if any, teach students about their

carbon footprint or how to become environmentally responsible individuals.

The threat of climate change and environmental degradation in Pakistan is increasing with each passing day. Yet, many people—including educators—remain unaware of the full scope of these issues. Despite clear signs such as rising temperatures, erratic weather patterns, floods, and droughts, public understanding of the root causes remains limited. The combustion of fossil fuels—especially coal, oil, and gas—is a primary contributor to this crisis, not only polluting our environment but also releasing toxins into our air and water, directly impacting public health.

Unfortunately, our educational system has not prioritized environmental awareness. While some schools have taken steps to implement green practices, these initiatives are often superficial rather than impactful. Topics like climate change, sustainability, and carbon reduction are

largely absent from mainstream curricula. As a result, students are deprived of the knowledge and tools needed to understand how their actions influence the environment or how they can contribute to meaningful solutions.

Moreover, there is a significant lack of practical training on environmental sustainability for both students and teachers. Educators often lack the resources or professional development necessary to teach environmental topics effectively. Many schools still follow outdated syllabi that fail to incorporate current environmental research or address the realities of the climate crisis. It is essential that our education system evolve to teach not only theoretical concepts like energy conservation and sustainable resource use, but also implement these practices practically within schools.

Pakistan needs a unified, nationwide effort to address these challenges. If we aim for

sustainable development, environmental education must become an integral part of our curriculum. We must empower both teachers and students with the knowledge and resources to make a difference.

Additionally, societal attitudes toward sustainability must shift. Awareness campaigns through media, community events, and school programs can reshape public perspectives and encourage tangible action toward a greener future. The government, NGOs, and educational institutions must collaborate to combat the climate crisis and nurture a generation that is environmentally conscious and capable of reducing its carbon footprint.

Ultimately, each of us must understand our individual carbon footprint and recognize its importance—not just as a personal responsibility, but as a national imperative. This is not only a matter of awareness, but a crucial step toward securing our collective future.



Ukrainians say they will not accept any surrender

KYIV (AP): A peace proposal by the Trump administration that includes recognizing Russian authority over Crimea shocked Ukrainian officials, who say they will not accept any formal surrender of the peninsula, even though they expect to concede the territory to the Kremlin, at least temporarily.

Giving up the land that was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014 is also politically and legally impossible, according to experts. It would require a change to the Ukrainian constitution and a nationwide vote, and it could be considered treason. Lawmakers and the public are firmly opposed to the idea. "It doesn't mean anything," said Oleksandr Merezhko, a lawmaker with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's party. "We will never recognize Crimea as part of Russia."

Unlike a territorial concession, a formal surrender would permanently relinquish Crimea and abandon the hope that Ukraine could regain it in the future. The Ukrainian public largely understands that land must be ceded as part of any armistice because there is no way to retake it militarily. Polls indicate a rising percentage of the population accepts such a trade-off. But much of the public messaging about land concessions has suggested that they are not necessarily permanent, as when Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko told the BBC recently that Ukraine may need to temporarily give up land as part of a peace deal.

Saying otherwise would effectively admit defeat - a deeply unpopular move, especially for Ukrainians living under Russian occupation who hope to be liberated and reunited with their

families one day. It also would call into question the sacrifices made by tens of thousands of Ukrainian service members who have been killed or wounded. US President Donald Trump underscored the Crimea proposal in an interview published in Time magazine: "Crimea will stay with Russia. Zelenskyy understands that, and everybody understands that it's been with them for a long time." Asked by reporters if Zelenskyy was ready to give up Crimea, Trump said, "Oh, I think so. Crimea was 12 years ago. That was President Obama that gave it up without a shot being fired."

His comments offered the latest example of the US leader pressuring Ukraine to make concessions to end the war while it remains under siege. Trump has also accused Zelenskyy of prolonging the war by resisting negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Crimea, a strategic peninsula along the Black Sea in southern Ukraine, was seized by Russia years before the full-scale invasion that began in 2022. The Russian takeover followed large protests that ousted former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who had refused to sign an association agreement with the European Union. In the lead-up to peace talks, Ukrainian officials told The Associated Press for months that they expect Crimea and other Ukrainian territory controlled by Russia to be among Kyiv's concessions in the event of any deal. But Zelenskyy has said on multiple occasions that formally surrendering the land has always been a red line.

Elements of Trump's peace proposal would see the US formally recogniz-

ing Crimea as Russian and de facto accepting Moscow's rule over occupied Ukrainian territories, according to a senior European official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic discussions. Whether the US formally recognizes Crimea as Russian is out of Zelenskyy's hands. But many obstacles prevent the Ukrainian president from doing so, even under immense pressure. He cannot unilaterally sign any such proposal, and he could be reprimanded by future governments for even attempting it, experts said. Ukraine began to accept that it would not regain its lost territories after the failure of the country's 2023 summer counteroffensive. From then on, the Ukrainian military concentrated on defending the territory it still held. In return for territorial concessions, Ukraine wants robust security guarantees that ideally would include NATO membership or concrete plans to arm and train its forces against any future Russian invasion with the pledged support of allies. One scenario envisions European boots on the ground, which Russia rejects. Zelenskyy has said negotiations over occupied Ukrainian territory will be drawn out and will not likely occur until a ceasefire is in place. In late March, he told reporters after a call with Trump that the US president "clearly understands that legally we will not recognize any territories."

He said giving up territory would be "the most difficult question" and "a big challenge for us." Formal recognition of Crimea would also amount to political suicide for Zelenskyy.

China lowers minimum amount for tax refunds for tourists

BEIJING (AP): China announced a lower threshold for tax refunds for foreign tourists among a series of policies to boost consumption as its economy comes under pressure during a trade war between Beijing and Washington.

Travelers can apply for a tax refund if they spend 200 yuan (about \$27) at the same store on the same day and meet other requirements starting, according to a joint statement by the Ministry of Commerce and other authorities. Previously, the minimum amount was 500 yuan (about \$69). The upper limit for their tax rebate in cash also has been doubled to 20,000 yuan (\$2,745).

The government will expand the coverage of tax refund shops and streamline the procedures. Officials encourage some regions to set up refund points for travelers to get rebates immediately after their purchases in areas highly concentrated with tourists, the statement said. China's Vice Minister of Commerce Sheng Qiuping told reporters in a news conference that inbound tourist consumption accounted for about 0.5% of China's gross domestic product in 2024, while figures in other major countries ranged between 1% and 3%. That indicated a great potential for growth, Sheng said. Last year, inbound tourists' spending hit \$94.2 billion, up 77.8%, he added.

China's economy expanded at a 5.4% annual pace in January-March, the government said earlier this month, supported by strong exports ahead of US President Donald Trump's rapid increases in tariffs on Chinese products. But analysts expected the world's second largest economy would slow significantly in the coming months as tariffs as high as 145% on US imports from China take effect. Beijing has hit back at the US with 125% tariffs on American exports, while also stressing its determination to keep its own markets open to trade and investment. China has stepped up efforts to spur more consumer spending and private sector investment over the past months, doubling down on subsidies for auto and appliance trade-ins and channeling more funding for housing and other cash-strapped industries.

More than 100 immigrants detained in Colorado

COLORADO (AP): More than 100 immigrants suspected of being in the United States illegally were taken into custody following a federal raid at an illegal after-hours nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado, authorities said.

Video posted online by the Drug Enforcement Administration showed agents announcing their presence outside the building and ordering patrons to leave with their hands up. Other videos showed dozens of people fleeing the building through its entrance after federal agents smashed a window. Later, dozens of suspects were shown in handcuffs standing on a sidewalk waiting to be transported. During his second stint as US president, Donald Trump's unprecedented campaign of immigration enforcement has pushed the limits of executive power, and he has clashed with federal judges trying to restrain him.

The crackdown has included detaining more than 1,000 international college students, some of whom have seen their legal status restored, at least temporarily. The policies have slowed immigration at the southern border to a relative trickle. In Colorado, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement took the club-going immigrants into custody, said Jonathan Pullen, special agent in charge of the DEA's Rocky Mountain Division. "Colorado Springs is waking up to a safer community today," he said. The city, Colorado's second largest, lies about 70 miles (113 kilometers) south of Denver.



SANAA: A Yemeni soldier inspecting the damage caused by US airstrikes in Yemen.

Vietnam War ended 50 years ago, but battle with Agent Orange continues

DA NANG, Vietnam (AP): The Vietnam War ended on April 30, 1975, when the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell to Communist forces. But millions of people still face daily battles with its chemical legacy.

Nguyen Thanh Hai, 34, is one of millions with disabilities linked to Agent Orange. Born with severe developmental challenges, it's a struggle for him to complete tasks others take for granted; buttoning the blue shirt he wears to a special school in Da Nang, practicing the alphabet, drawing shapes or forming simple sentences. Hai grew up in Da Nang, the site of a US air base where departing troops left behind huge amounts of Agent Orange that have lingered for decades, leeching into food and water supplies in areas like Hai's village and affecting generations of residents.

Across Vietnam, US forces sprayed 72 million liters (19 million gallons) of defoliants during the war to strip the enemy's cover. More than half was Agent Orange, a blend of herbicides. Agent Orange was laced with dioxin, a type of chemical linked to cancer, birth defects and lasting environmental damage. Today, 3 million people, including many children, still suffer serious health issues associated with exposure to it. Vietnam has spent decades cleaning up the toxic legacy of the war, in part funded by belated US assistance, but the work is far

from complete. Now, millions in Vietnam are worried that the US may abandon Agent Orange cleanup as President Donald Trump slashes foreign aid.

When the war ended, the US turned its back on Vietnam, eager to turn the page on a painful chapter in its history. But Vietnam was left with dozens of dioxin hotspots spread across 58 of its 63 provinces. Vietnam says the health impacts last generations, threatening the children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren of people exposed to the chemicals with health complications ranging from cancer to birth defects that affects the spine and nervous system. But the science about the human health impact - both to those exposed to Agent Orange and the generations that follow - remains unsettled. This is partly because when the two countries finally started working together in 2006, they focused on finding dioxin in the environment and clearing it instead of studying the still-contentious topic of its impact on human health, said Charles Bailey, co-author of the book "From Enemies to Partners: Vietnam, the US and Agent Orange." "The science of causality is still incomplete," said Bailey.

Vietnam identifies Agent Orange victims by checking family history, where they lived, and a list of health problems linked to the poison. And Hai's disabilities were very likely linked to the spraying of the defo-

liant, added Bailey. The 34-year-old dreams of becoming a soldier like his grandfather, was unable to leave home for years, waiting alone while his family went out to work. It was only five years ago that he began attending a special school. "I am happy here because I have many friends," he said. Other students at the school hope to become tailors or makers of incense sticks. The contamination also denuded Vietnam's natural defenses. Nearly half of its mangrove trees, which shield shores from strong storms, were destroyed. Much of its tropical forest was irrevocably damaged, while the herbicide also leached the soil of nutrients in some of Vietnam's most climate-vulnerable areas. In the decades after the war ended, the recovering country fenced off heavily contaminated sites like Da Nang airport and began providing support to impacted families.

But the US largely ignored growing evidence of health impacts - including on its own veterans - until the mid-2000s, when it and began funding cleanup in Vietnam. In 1991, the US recognized that certain diseases could be related to exposure to Agent Orange and made veterans who had them eligible for benefits. Since 1991, it has spent over \$155 million to aid people with disabilities in areas affected by Agent Orange or littered by unexploded bombs, according to the US State Department.

A stunning reversal of fortunes in Canada's historic election

TORONTO (BBC): At a rally in London, Ontario, the crowd booed as Mark Carney delivered his core campaign line about the existential threat Canada faces from its neighbour. "President Trump is trying to break us so that America could own us," the Liberal leader warned.

"Never," supporters shouted back. Many waved Canadian flags taped to ice hockey sticks. Similar levels of passion were also on display at the union hall where Pierre Poilievre greeted enthusiastic supporters in the Toronto area earlier in the week. The Conservative leader has drawn large crowds to rallies across the country, where "Bring it Home" is a call to arms: both to vote for a change of government and a nod to the wave of Canadian patriotism in the face of US tariff threats. In the final hours of a 36-day campaign, Donald Trump's shadow looms over everything. The winner of election is likely to be the party able to convince voters they have a plan for how to deal with the US president.

National polls suggest the Liberals have main-

tained a narrow lead entering last stretch. Still, Trump is not the only factor at play - he was only mentioned once in Poilievre's stump speech. The Conservative leader has focused more on voters disaffected by what he calls a "Lost Liberal decade", promising change from a government he blames for the housing shortage and a sluggish economy, and for mishandling social issues like crime and the fentanyl crisis. His pitch resonates with voters like Eric and Carri Gionet, from Barrie, Ontario. They have two daughters in their mid-20s and said they were attending their first ever political rally.

"We're pretty financially secure - but I worry about them," said Eric Gionet. While he and his wife could buy their first home while young, he said, "there's no prospect" their children will be able to do the same. "I'm excited to be here," said Carri Gionet. "I'm hopeful." Tapping into voter frustration has helped opposition parties sweep governments from power in democracies around the world. Canada seemed

almost certain to follow suit. Last year, the Conservatives held a 20-point lead in national polls over the governing Liberals for months. Poilievre's future as the country's next prime minister seemed baked in. Then a series of shockwaves came in quick succession at the start of 2025, upending the political landscape: Justin Trudeau's resignation, Carney's subsequent rise to Liberal leader and prime minister; and the return of Trump to the White House with the threats and tariffs that followed. By the time the election was called in mid-March, Carney's Liberals were polling neck-and-neck with the Conservatives, and by early April they had pulled slightly ahead, national surveys suggest.

It has been a stunning reversal of fortunes. Seemingly dead and buried, the Liberals now believe they could win a fourth successive election, and even a majority in Parliament. Carney is pitching himself as the man most ready to meet this critical moment - a steady central banker who helped shepherd Canada's

economy through the 2008 financial crisis and later, the UK through Brexit. For Conservative voter Gwendolyn Slover, 69, from Summerside in the province of Prince Edward Island, his appeal is "baffling". "Many people think Mark Carney is some kind of Messiah," she said. "It's the same party, he's one person. And he's not going to change anything." For Carney's supporters, they see a strong CV and a poise that has calmed their anxieties over Trump's threats of steep tariffs and repeated suggestions the country should become the 51st US state - though the president has been commenting less frequently on Canada during the campaign. "I'm very impressed by the stability and the serious thought process of Mark Carney," said Mike Brennan from Kitchener, Ontario, as he stood in line to meet the Liberal leader at a coffee shop in Cambridge, about an hour outside Toronto. Mr Brennan is a "lifelong Liberal" who did not initially plan to vote for the party in this election because of his dislike for Trudeau.

Philippines, US test air defences as China seizes reef

MANILA (AFP): Missiles fired off the coast of the northern Philippines as US and Filipino forces conducted their first integrated defence drills, hours after China said it had seized control of a reef claimed by Manila. The Philippines and China have been engaged in months of confrontations over the South China Sea, which Beijing claims nearly in its entirety despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

As many as 17,000 personnel are participating in the annual "Balikatan" exercises, which this year will simulate a "full-scale battle scenario" as the treaty allies seek to deter China's ambitions in the disputed waterway. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported that the country's coast guard had "implemented maritime control" over Tiexian Reef, also known as Sandy Cay, this month.

The tiny sandbank, part of the Spratly Islands, lies

near Thitu Island, also called Pag-asa and site of a Philippine military facility. The Philippine government has yet to formally respond to the claim. In coastal Zambales province, hours north of the capital Manila, AFP journalists watched as the US Marine Corp's new MADIS short-range air defence system knocked a pair of drones from the sky. The coastal defence exercise saw MADIS work in concert with the Philippines' SPYDER missile system, defending it from drone attack as it targeted simulated incoming cruise missiles.

"MADIS is short-range. SPYDER is more of a medium-range capability (and they) both engaged different threats," said Matthew Sladek, commander of the US 3rd Littoral Anti-Air Battalion. "The more we work together, that only ... enhances our collective lethality." Chinese warships have been spotted in waters near the Philippines since the

Balikatan exercises kicked off last week. The aircraft carrier Shandong on April 22 "was detected underway 2.23 nautical miles (about four kilometres) southwest" of the Philippines' far northern Babuyan Island, the navy reported.

The Philippine Navy said three other vessels had been spotted a day before about 60 kilometres from Zambales. US defence secretary Pete Hegseth last month told an audience in Manila that the United States was "doubling down" on its alliance with the country, noting the necessity of deterrence "considering the threats from the Communist Chinese". Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun has since slammed the Balikatan exercises as a blow to regional stability. Balikatan will continue with troops simulating defending against an enemy landing force along a stretch of southern Palawan island.

Zelensky says Ukraine not kicked out of Russia's Kursk

KYIV (AFP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine's army was still fighting in Russia's Kursk despite Moscow claiming the "liberation" of its western region, as Washington signalled a "critical week" ahead for negotiations.

Kyiv had hoped it could use land in the Kursk region as a bargaining chip in future peace talks with Russia, which has seized parts of eastern and southern Ukraine since launching its offensive in February 2022. "Our military continues to perform tasks in the Kursk and Belgorod regions -- we are maintaining our presence on Russian territory," he said in his evening address.

In a statement, he conceded that the situation remained difficult in many areas including Kursk. Russia said it had captured Gornal, the last settlement under Ukrainian control in its border Kursk region, where Kyiv launched a shock offensive in August 2024.

Yet hours later Ukraine's army dismissed Russia's claim as "propaganda tricks". Several Russian military bloggers who closely monitor the conflict also said fighting was still ongoing around the forests on the border between Russia and Ukraine. And a local Russian army commander in Kursk said the army was still conducting operations in the region, according to a state TV broadcast aired.

"The situation on the front lines and the actual activities of the Russian army prove that the current pressure on Russia to end this war is not enough," Zelensky said. He called for increased pressure on Russia to create more opportunities for "real diplomacy". Zelensky discussed a potential ceasefire with US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral at the Vatican. After their brief talk in St Peter's Basilica, Trump cast doubt over whether Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted an end to the

war, which has devastated swathes of eastern Ukraine and killed tens of thousands of people. The following night, Russia launched drone and missile attacks, killing four people in regions across eastern Ukraine and wounding more than a dozen. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stressed the importance of the coming week. "We're close, but we're not close enough" to a deal to halt the fighting, Rubio told broadcaster NBC. "I think this is going to be a very critical week." Germany's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said Ukraine should not agree to all territorial concessions to Russia reportedly set out in the deal proposed by Trump.

"Ukraine has, of course, known for some time that a sustainable, credible ceasefire or peace agreement may involve territorial concessions," he told broadcaster ARD. "But these will certainly not go... as far as they do in the latest proposal from the US president," Pistorius said.

Gaza ceasefire talks make some progress, Qatari PM says

DOHA (Reuters): Qatar's prime minister said that efforts to reach a new ceasefire in Gaza have made some progress but an agreement between Israel and Hamas to end the war remains elusive.

"We have seen a bit of progress compared to other meetings yet we need to find an answer for the ultimate question: how to end this war. That's the key point of the entire negotiations," said Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, who also serves as foreign minister. Mossad Director David Barnea traveled to Doha to meet Sheikh Mohammed amid efforts to reach a new ceasefire in Gaza, Axios reported last week. Sheikh

Mohammed didn't say which elements of the ceasefire talks had progressed in recent days, but said Hamas and Israel remained at odds over the ultimate goal of negotiations.

He said the militant group is willing to return all remaining Israeli hostages if Israel ends the war in Gaza. But Israel wants Hamas to release the remaining hostages without offering a clear vision on ending the war, he said. "When you don't have a common objective, a common goal between the parties, I believe the opportunities (to end the war) become very thin," Sheikh Mohammed said at a press conference in

Doha with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. Fidan said talks that Turkish officials have held with Hamas had shown the group would be more open to an agreement that goes beyond a ceasefire in Gaza and aims for a lasting solution to the crisis with Israel, including a two-state solution.

Later, a Turkish diplomatic source said Fidan had met with senior Hamas officials in Doha to discuss ceasefire negotiations and the humanitarian situation in Gaza. "The Hamas side stated they continued working for a lasting ceasefire. They conveyed information about the meetings held in the past days," the source said,

adding Fidan had repeated that Turkey would continue international and bilateral efforts for peace in Gaza. Israel resumed its offensive in Gaza on March 18 after a January ceasefire collapsed, saying it would keep up pressure on Hamas until it frees the remaining hostages still held in the enclave. Up to 24 of them are believed to still be alive. The Gaza war started after Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack which killed 1,200 people and saw 251 hostages taken to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. Since then, Israel's offensive on the enclave killed more than 51,400, according to local Palestinian health officials.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 031-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

White House unable to accomplish its goal

ALTHOUGH the US administration continues to brag about how the US economy is becoming stronger due to the policies it has introduced since it took office on Jan 20, it seems it is standing alone with only its shadow for company.

US President Donald Trump has the lowest 100-day job approval rating of any president of the United States in the past 80 years, amid broad fears of a looming recession, according to a new ABC News/Washington Post/Ipsos poll. Seventy-two percent of respondents said they think it's very or somewhat likely that his economic policies will cause a recession in the short term.

Seventy-three percent said the economy is in bad shape, 53 percent said it's gotten worse since Trump took office and 41 percent said their own finances have worsened.

On the administration's tariff policy, which is harming both the US economy and the US' relations with other countries, 64 percent said they disapprove.

In particular, 62 percent said prices, which as a candidate Trump pledged to curb, are rising; 71 percent said they see his tariffs as a negative factor in price inflation; and 67 percent said they disapprove of his handling of the recent turmoil in the stock market. The S&P 500 is down 8.7 percent since Trump took office.

Although the Democratic Party remains out of favor, which is the one silver lining for the administration, the White House is like the player on the pitch confused by the game, while for those watching all is clear.

The administration's tariff-centered economic policy is unsustainable, yet rather than admit that, it continues to brag about the "endless wins" it has produced. It backs up this claim by overstating the losses and anxieties it has caused other economies, as if their losses are the US' gains, and that their anxieties prove the correctness of its policy.

A vivid example is that US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said recently China's export-reliant economic model is "unsustainable" and harms both China and the rest of the world, implying that the US is actually doing China a favor by pressing it to shift away from the "export-led manufacturing growth" as Beijing wants.

"China needs to change. The country knows it needs to change. Everyone knows it needs to change. And we want to help it change — because we need rebalancing too," Bessent said in a speech at the Institute of International Finance in Washington on Wednesday. His message was that if Beijing accepts the medicine the US is offering it can have an "opportunity for a big deal" on trade with the US.

At the same time, the Treasury chief maintained that "America First does not mean America alone," a comment that comes after The Wall Street Journal reported the Trump administration is considering slashing tariffs on China to de-escalate tensions between the two largest global economies.

The reason why Bessent tried to rope in other countries in that way is because the US administration has been left alone by acting on its policy of might makes right and its belief that relations with other countries are a zero-sum game.

Beijing has no intention of taking the US bait. If the US administration wants a deal with Beijing it needs to remove all the additional tariffs it has imposed on China to pave the way for negotiations.

Beijing does not share Bessent's pessimism about the outlook for the Chinese economy. And rightly so. In the first quarter of this year, China's GDP grew by 5.4 percent year-on-year, better than market expectations. In particular, net exports contributed 38.9 percent to GDP growth in the first quarter, reaching the highest level since quarterly statistics were available in 2009, thanks to its efforts to diversify its trade partners and upgrade manufacturing.

That many economies are taking the initiative to strengthen their economic and trade ties with China also gives the lie to the latest incarnation of the "China collapse" theory that the China hawks never tire of peddling in the mistaken belief that if they say it often enough then it will somehow come true.

The tariff war was launched by the US, and it is the US that should put an end to it by opening the door for talks. China's position is consistent and clear: it will fight, if fight it must; but it is willing to talk if the US shows its sincerity. That means it should cease its attempted intimidation in favor of dialogue and negotiations based on equality, respect and mutual benefit.

Important Notice

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



How Gaza war has exposed fault lines among Israeli elites

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

A seemingly strange choice was made by a correspondent for Israel's Channel 12 this month, when he decided to publish a humiliating video of a relatively large number of Israeli soldiers coming under attack by a single Palestinian fighter. In the incident that was filmed last year, soldiers are seen stumbling down the stairs of a building in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza, amid chaotic scenes: some fall over each other, others hide behind a concrete wall and some even fire erratically, endangering their colleagues.

This raises the question: given the Israeli media's frequent adherence to strict, often unreasonable, military censorship, what motivated the decision to release such a damaging portrayal of its own soldiers?

The answer lies in the open war between the Israeli political institution, represented by the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on the one hand and the rest of the country on the other.

The "rest of the country" may seem to be an elusive concept, but it is not. Netanyahu is today at war with the military, the internal intelligence agency Shin Bet, the judiciary, much of the media and the majority of Israelis, who want him to agree a deal that ends the war and ensures the release of all Israeli captives.

This explains the unprecedented and open criticism by former top Israeli officials, who are accusing Netanyahu of being a danger not only to

the Israeli military and society, but also to the future of the country itself.

Ronen Bar, the chief of the Shin Bet, last week broke every protocol when he presented Israel's High Court of Justice with two documents, one of which was revealed to the public. According to Israeli media, in the unclassified affidavit, Bar stated that he was fired "because of his refusal to meet those expectations of loyalty," particularly "regarding investigations into the prime minister's aides" and for "his refusal to help Netanyahu avoid testifying in his criminal trial."

Bar's comments represent not only a fundamental shift in how Israel's power players treat extremely sensitive security matters, but they are also, essentially, a call for the overthrow of Netanyahu.

A former head of the Shin Bet, Nadav Argaman, has been equally vocal. He was the first to speak about Netanyahu's transgressions, suggesting clear coordination between the various elements of Israel's notorious and powerful intelligence agency. "If the prime minister acts unlawfully, I will say everything I know," he said last month.

The coordination runs deeper, with former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant — who, along with Netanyahu, is wanted by the International Criminal Court — going on his own rampage last week. Aside from a direct attack on Netanyahu, calling one of his Gaza policies a "moral disgrace," Gallant seemed to disparage the Israeli mil-

itary, revealing that it had last year faked pictures of an alleged Hamas tunnel in order to prevent a ceasefire agreement.

The Israeli government used this specific episode as its rationale for maintaining control over the Philadelphi Corridor in southern Gaza — a justification that emerged around the same time as the deeply embarrassing video of Israeli soldiers running in terror from a lone combatant was filmed. The layers of humiliation continue to accumulate.

While Gallant's actions may discredit the military and his own leadership, his primary aim appears to be impacting Netanyahu, who many Israelis view as prolonging the Gaza war for personal political gain.

Israel's actual war losses are another key point. One of Israel's historically best-kept secrets is its losses against Arab armies and resistance movements. Its casualties in the current war on Gaza are also supposed to be a well-kept secret, except they are not. Though the Israeli army has tried to minimize reports of its death toll since the start of the war on Oct. 7, 2023, it has faced many leaks, some initiated by the military itself. The aim? To put pressure on Netanyahu to end the war, especially in light of new information that at least half of Israel's military reserves are refusing to return to the battlefield.

Interestingly, it was Eyal Zamir, Netanyahu's hand-picked replacement for Herzi Halevi as the Israeli military's chief of staff,

who surprised everyone in a speech shortly after his appointment in February. Zamir revealed that 5,942 Israeli families had "joined the list of bereaved families" in 2024.

Zamir, who had already committed to 2025 being another "year of war," now seems less inclined to escalate the conflict beyond Israel's ability to sustain it.

The war between Israel's elites has never been so ugly, let alone open, as if both sides have reached the conclusion that their survival — and the survival of Israel itself — is dependent on them defeating the other camp.

After some reluctance and relatively careful choice of words, Gallant now appears to have joined the chorus of a powerful group of ex-officials who want to see Netanyahu out of power by any means necessary, including civil disobedience.

This internal conflict among Israel's political, military and intelligence elites marks a departure from its long-cultivated image. For decades, Israel presented itself as a beacon of democracy and civilization amid what it portrayed as its less-cultured neighbors. However, the Gaza genocide has shattered this false narrative.

Consequently, the current infighting among the very architects of this Israeli fantasy offers an unprecedented opportunity to uncover deeper truths — not only about the war in Gaza but also about Israel's history, from its establishment on the land of historic Palestine to the ongoing genocide nearly eight decades later.

Franco-British recognition could usher in a new era for Palestine

Chris Doyle

THIS should have happened decades ago. It may still not happen. It should be a plain and simple, uncontroversial decision. It is not. Yet the words of President Emmanuel Macron of France have triggered a scintilla of hope that a major power will join the 147 states to have recognized the state of Palestine. "We must move toward recognition and we will do so in the coming months," Macron said this month.

But France must not be an isolated actor in this. It cannot be a Macron-only declaration. Is it too much to think that others might join him? Above all, one power — the UK — should follow Macron's lead and give new force to a renewed Entente Cordiale.

Imagine a Franco-British recognition of Palestine. Symbolically, it would be huge. Marcon and Prime Minister Keir Starmer standing together — the leaders of the two major European colonial states, the ones that so brutally and imperially carved up the Middle East more than a century ago. The Sykes-Picot powers — with one, Britain, also being the author of the infamous Balfour Declaration — could start to remedy a small part of the damage that was perpetrated in cigar-filled rooms all those years ago.

It would leave the US as the only permanent member of the UN Security Council not to recognize

the state of Palestine. It would encourage the remaining European and other powers to join in. How long, for example, would Germany, Italy and the Netherlands want to be isolated? Could Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand follow suit? Momentum would be crucial.

The text of any recognition would matter. It should recognize Palestine on the 1967 lines with immediate effect. No doubt they would state that, if Palestine and Israel were to agree new borders, then this would be altered accordingly. One issue would be embassies. The Palestinian leadership would want an embassy in Jerusalem, just as Israel wants these states to shift their diplomatic presence from Tel Aviv to the city. Perhaps, given the situation, embassies will be set up temporarily in Ramallah while keeping consulates in Jerusalem. The long-term European political position has always been not to recognize any state's sovereignty over any part of the city.

None of this is to suggest at all that this would resolve the conflict or bring the genocide and system of apartheid to an end. Recognition should not even be the priority, which right now must be to end the complete siege of Gaza that was imposed more than 50 days ago and to bring an end to the bombing frenzy the Israeli

forces carry out every single day. Recognition will mean little if those processes are not terminated with immediate effect.

France says that recognition will be conditional on the release of hostages in Gaza and Hamas no longer being in charge of the Strip. But all this does is give Hamas additional motivation not to adhere to either demand, as it opposes a two-state solution. But while dealing with the ongoing emergency, the medium to long-term outlook still matters. This is why Macron's summit with Saudi Arabia in June is so important. The visit of French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot to Saudi Arabia last week brought this into sharp focus.

The pre-summit diplomacy and legwork is typically even more vital than the event itself.

If external parties are serious about a solution, then this reinforces their preferred option: the two-state solution. Apart from the US, pretty much every state has backed this template to resolve the conflict, but too many have so far only recognized one state — Israel.

Many Palestinians no longer see the two-state solution as viable given the massive illegal Israeli colonial settlement enterprise. So, recognition needs to not rule out any consideration of other long-term solutions, including a one-state

option, a federal or a binational state, but it would at least allow a state of Palestine to negotiate as a state and be respected as such.

Israel will expect further recognition of its statehood from regional powers. But it should have to end its occupation and accept a state of Palestine. That is the bare minimum, essentially the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002: a full withdrawal in return for a full peace.

Fresh recognitions of Palestine serve to strengthen international backing for the Palestinian right to self-determination and confirm that, as a people, they have national rights. It would end the nauseating disputes as to whether Palestine should be treated as a state in international bodies. Anti-Palestinian groups still argue, with no merit, that such agencies cannot have jurisdiction as Palestine is not a state.

Many might see France and Britain as hangers on from a bygone era. Yet such a joint move, right now, would show that these two powers still retain some weight in international affairs. They can shift trends in the right direction, not least when the US is more of an obstacle than a facilitator.

But if Europe wishes to be taken seriously, this should be a full Europe-wide recognition. The continent can show it is just as prepared to adapt its position on the Middle East as it is on Russia-Ukraine.

Consulting scandals and how to avoid them

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

IT was reported this month that Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund had suspended its involvement with the international consulting firm PwC. Last month, Britain's Financial Reporting Council fined the same company for reported audit failures. China has also recently imposed a hefty fine on it and temporarily suspended its operations because of similar failures.

PwC, which is one of the so-called big four accounting companies, has reportedly shut down its operations in more than a dozen countries to prevent any repeats of the scandals that have surrounded its work. This came on top of a major retrenchment in recent years because many clients dropped the firm due to alleged questionable practices.

This is just the tip of the iceberg and a correction is obviously needed. Major international consulting firms, such as the big four and the "MBB" management consultancies, have come under scrutiny in recent years by governments, the media and clients. Courts have settled lawsuits against those companies, awarding significant damages — at times hundreds of millions of dollars — to the plaintiffs.

In 2023, an Australian parliamentary committee investigated consulting contracts and found that government agencies were failing to comply with procurement rules or demonstrate value for taxpayer money from those contracts. It also found that there was a common practice of extensions of consulting contracts and cost overruns as a result. It accused the firms of an "aggressive corporate sales culture." The Australian government's contracts with the four firms in question averaged about \$1 billion annually, although the current government has reduced that to about \$600 million following these investigations.

Scandals also swirled around consultants during the COVID-19 crisis, including one related to the staggering expenses of more than £1 million (\$1.3 million) per day on private consultants for the UK's "test-and-trace" service and another about a firm advising both the US Food and Drug Administration and a pharmaceutical company it regulates. In France, there were accusations of fraud, tax evasion and shady political campaign work by a major consultancy firm.

Some of the consultants were accused of poor quality of advice, leaking confidential information and not disclosing their conflicts of interest. They were also accused of overcharging through the practice known as "land and expand," which means pressuring clients to extend contracts or expand their scope. One of the most serious charges involved using bribery to land and continue contracts. Another critique is that consulting firms have lost their professional ethos. In his 2013 investigative book "The Firm," Duff McDonald argued that consulting has veered far from its traditional ethical standards, which were dedicated to advising clients in the public interest, to become a business focused on maximizing profit for its partners, leading to a slippery slope of scandals. Disclosing conflicts of interest should be a given, but some consultants have not been transparent with their clients, such as advising both regulators and the companies they regulate without telling the regulators of this conflict.

including one related to the staggering expenses of more than £1 million (\$1.3 million) per day on private consultants for the UK's "test-and-trace" service and another about a firm advising both the US Food and Drug Administration and a pharmaceutical company it regulates. In France, there were accusations of fraud, tax evasion and shady political campaign work by a major consultancy firm.

Some of the consultants were accused of poor quality of advice, leaking confidential information and not disclosing their conflicts of interest. They were also accused of overcharging through the practice known as "land and expand," which means pressuring clients to extend contracts or expand their scope. One of the most serious charges involved using bribery to land and continue contracts. Another critique is that consulting firms have lost their professional ethos. In his 2013 investigative book "The Firm," Duff McDonald argued that consulting has veered far from its traditional ethical standards, which were dedicated to advising clients in the public interest, to become a business focused on maximizing profit for its partners, leading to a slippery slope of scandals. Disclosing conflicts of interest should be a given, but some consultants have not been transparent with their clients, such as advising both regulators and the companies they regulate without telling the regulators of this conflict.

Similarly, some consultants advise competing companies or rival states. Some of these ethical lapses and legal transgressions attributed to major companies are quite common throughout the consulting business, although the big firms are probably more prone to committing them for several reasons. Their operations are usually extended over many countries, making it difficult for senior management to exercise due diligence or prevent mistakes. Limited direct communications between senior-level staff at both ends, consultant and client, may lead to quality shortcuts and shortchanging clients in exchange for bribes or gifts.

Disclosing confidential information is also more likely with big firms because the supply chain is usually long and porous. In all these cases, the absence of an effective counterpart team at the client's end to oversee the work of the consulting team usually leads to substandard products. Consulting companies, especially the larger ones, are held to a higher standard of professionalism and ethics than other lines of work. This is a good starting point: major consultant companies should lead on reinforcing professional and ethical standards for their profession. If they do not address the current backlash by taking corrective steps, the flight of their clients will likely continue, likely to other, smaller consulting concerns, with whose leadership they can build a more direct and personal relationship.

In the final analysis, consulting companies are similar to other businesses in that they are only as good, efficient and honest as they have to be. If industry standards or regulations are not enforced, they will cut corners. And if the clients do not demand high-quality work, they probably will not get it. If clients do not closely supervise and meticulously review the consultants' work, the final product will suffer.

Government agencies and businesses will continue to need consulting services for many purposes. They are more cost-effective than developing in-house expertise in all areas, which is extremely difficult when it comes to new areas such as artificial intelligence or dealing with emerging financial threats or cyberattacks. They need to leverage the consulting firm's reputation, name and expertise to push forward any new policies.

Consultants are also needed to develop new projects and ideas while allowing management to take credit for them. Conversely, there is a need to shift the blame to the consultant in case the agency has to be restructured or downsized.

With that in mind, and if the consultancy business does not regulate itself, what should clients do to ensure that consultants adhere to agreements and deliver the desired product? How can clients protect themselves from shady practices? First, clear and detailed terms of reference must be agreed upfront, to help the consultant understand the client's needs and help the client measure compliance.

Second, the client should establish a counterpart team to guide the consultants and ensure they are on the right track. Third, clients should use nondisclosure agreements to protect confidential or sensitive information.

Fourth, clients should follow the news and avoid consultants known for shady practices. It would be useful to have a consultants' watchdog to report any infractions to the governments.

Fifth, governments need to strengthen their regulation of the consultancy business and hold those who breach the law accountable. Without these precautions, malpractice will continue in the race to maximize companies' profits and line the pockets of rogue consultants and unscrupulous officials.

Trump took the US economy to the brink of a crisis in just 100 days

DONALD Trump spent his first 100 days back in the Oval Office driving an economy that the world envied to the brink of crisis, risking America's reputation as a financial safe haven and fostering fear among voters who've lost confidence in his leadership.

Americans were desperate for relief from high grocery prices and bought into Trump's promise to make America affordable again in November 2024, partly out of nostalgia for the pre-pandemic economy of his first term.

But the president deliberately and single-handedly adopted policies that are almost certain to spike prices even more; that could lead to shortages; and that have CEOs and small businesses dealing with chaos and the possibility of a recession.

Trump is attempting the most fundamental overhaul of the US and global economies in generations, adamant that he can recreate a mythical late 19th-century golden age using "beautiful" tariffs to exert US economic might to crush trade rivals.

But a president who has played golf while workers' 401(k)s tanked has often looked indifferent to the growing concerns of Americans, from business titans to ordinary shoppers who are seeing the impact of his policies in real time over his first 100 days in office, which he will mark on Tuesday.

Trillions of dollars have been wiped off stock markets. Airlines are cutting flights; top firms are trashing their own annual forecasts; some retailers have given up selling China-made goods in the US because of the tariffs. The International Monetary Fund cut US growth forecasts; the Federal Reserve says some businesses have stopped hiring; the CEO of Walmart told Trump his policies will seize up the supply chain by summer.

In a warning sign of a possible slide to a recession, consumer sentiment has plummeted and was in April at its fourth-lowest level since 1952. CNN's Fear and Greed Index, a snapshot of emotion on the markets, has been registering "fear" or "extreme fear" for the last month.

Like much that Trump has done since returning to the Oval Office, his trade policy is legally and constitutionally questionable since he unilaterally declared a national emergency to unlock powers to wage tariff warfare.

He's now wielding vast and unaccountable authority to test his life-long theory that the United States, the world's richest nation, has long been ripped off by every other country. His aim is to force foreign

markets wide open for US products and to make manufacturers bring back factories and jobs to revive industrialized regions that have paid a heavy price for the globalization of trade. He insists that scores of nations are lining up to do US-friendly deals that will make Americans rich.

Millions of American jobs may depend on the outcome of his gamble.

Trump is putting into practice a core belief that is also at the center of his effort to dismantle the US-led Western political system that has prevailed and kept global peace for 80 years: That the United States — the mightiest world power — should not lead the world but should use its strength in one-on-one negotiations to coerce smaller nations into policies that benefit

The president's brittle temper and belief that he possesses a sharper economic mind than those whose job it is to protect employment and to fight inflation are also contributing to pushing the US economy to the brink. His attacks on Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, for instance, have tarnished America's brand as the rock of stability in the global economy. Trump has been demanding big interest-rate cuts even though many experts warn that this could hike inflation, which is already expected to rise because of his tariffs. Markets hated his interference — perhaps one reason why he's toned down, at least for now, his threats to fire the central bank chief. Trump is also escalating a dangerous showdown with China, launching full-on economic warfare with America's 21st-century superpower rival, which has enormous geopolitical implications far beyond trading conditions. "If you look at all of the years that I've been doing this, I've been right on things," Trump told Time Magazine in an interview last week marking his first 100 days. "You're going to have the wealthiest country we've ever had, and you're going to have an explosion upward in the not-too-distant future."

America and no one else. This principle, embedded in his "America first" approach, has already alienated many American allies — although that's a feature rather than a bug for a president who sees life as a win-lose proposition.

The president's brittle temper and belief that he possesses a sharper economic mind than those whose job it is to protect employment and to fight inflation are also contributing to pushing the US economy to the brink.

His attacks on Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, for instance, have tarnished America's brand as the rock of stability in the global economy. Trump has been demanding big interest-rate cuts even though many experts warn that this could hike inflation, which is already expected to rise because of his tariffs. Markets hated his interference — perhaps one reason why he's toned down, at least for now, his threats to fire the central bank chief.

Trump is also escalating a dangerous showdown with China, launching full-on economic warfare with America's 21st-century superpower rival, which has enormous geopolitical implications far beyond trading conditions.

"If you look at all of the years that I've been doing this, I've been right on things," Trump told Time Magazine in an interview last week marking his first 100 days. "You're going to have the wealthiest coun-

Stephen Collinson

try we've ever had, and you're going to have an explosion upward in the not-too-distant future."

What is so remarkable about the gathering storm is that it's not the product of business cycles, an outside economic shock, a terrorist attack, or an act of God like a pandemic or natural disaster. It's all authored by an American president knowingly adopting tariff policies that almost all informed economic observers predict will lead to higher prices and slowed economic activity.

It's not just what Trump is doing, but how he's doing it.

He has imposed, paused and adjusted arbitrary tariffs erratically, creating the kind of uncertainty that can cause recessions. He

claimed in his Time interview he'd already done 200 trade deals and that his team is talking with China, which is facing a 145% tariff that has effectively halted trade between the rivals. Beijing denies it's in contact with the US and is showing no sign of backing down to his intimidation.

Trump is making an extraordinary hazardous bet.

"This is one of the most important days, in my opinion, in American history. It's our declaration of economic independence," the president said, declaring "Liberation Day" in the White House Rose Garden on April 2. He gleefully ran down the list of tariff rates for dozens of nations on big poster. "We're going to be wealthy as a country because they've taken so much of our wealth away from us."

But within hours of reciprocal tariffs coming into force, Trump suddenly paused them for 90 days, apparently brought back to reality by alarming activity in the bond markets that suggested investors were abandoning their faith in the US economy. His officials, steeped in Trump's personality cult, nevertheless hailed his sudden reversal as proof of his genius and predicted a torrent of deals that would boost the economy. None of them have materialized so far.

The confusion and reversals have been traumatic for millions of Americans who hoped he'd bring economic relief, not a new round of pain for family budgets.

After winning a plurality of the popular vote in November, Trump's approval rating has plummeted to 41%, the worst of any president in his first 100 days in 70 years, according to a new CNN/SSRS poll. His approval on the economy — a key to his longtime political viability — is at its lowest-ever level at 39%. Only 35% approve of his approach to inflation, the same number who back Trump on tariffs.

relief, not a new round of pain for family budgets.

After winning a plurality of the popular vote in November, Trump's approval rating has plummeted to 41%, the worst of any president in his first 100 days in 70 years, according to a new CNN/SSRS poll. His approval on the economy — a key to his longtime political viability — is at its lowest-ever level at 39%. Only 35% approve of his approach to inflation, the same number who back Trump on tariffs.

The president's deteriorating political position is escalating pressure to produce outcomes that justify the massive shock and damage he's caused to the economy.

The administration, however, insists that an economic policy that seems to emerge from the

Even if Trump succeeds, his approach almost certainly means higher prices for Americans across the board — in defiance of the message voters sent last November.

Trump said in the Time interview, for instance, that he would regard it as a "total victory" if tariffs are at 20% or 30% or 50% on foreign imports next year. Such a scenario would mean American consumers would face far higher prices, effectively a massive tax increase. Trump insists that this will be offset by a massive tax reduction bill — but progress has been slow as GOP leaders try to work the plan through Congress.

And while he insists he has lowered prices for basic goods since taking office, that's mostly untrue.

Trump's vision of himself as a master impresario conducting the economy suggests that even rockier times will be ahead. He has suggested, for instance, that he would have sole responsibility for setting the prices of goods. "We are a department store, and we set the price," Trump told Time. "Now, some countries may come back and ask for an adjustment, and I'll consider that, but I'll basically be, with great knowledge, setting."

Such an arbitrary system, in which one person sets prices — let alone someone with as rudimentary grasp of economics as Trump — would be a recipe for mayhem and corruption, and would shatter the rules-based economic system that has made the US the world's greatest power.

"The United States was more than just a nation. It's a brand," billionaire investor Ken Griffin warned at the Semafor World Economy Summit last week.

"It was like an aspiration for most the world. And we're eroding that brand right now."

since he's made himself the personification of the tariff policy.

This is why it will be important to watch what happens next.

The administration is predicting that a flurry of trade deals from the likes of Japan, South Korea and the European Union will soon begin rolling out. Given that such agreements usually take years to negotiate and require ratification by foreign legislatures in democratic states, it's likely that what emerges will fall far short of the revolution in global trade that the administration is predicting. But Trump is likely to hail any deals as extraordinary breakthroughs. If they don't satisfy his goal of transforming global trade, they might calm markets and stabilize the president's political standing and restore his dealmaker's mythology.

Even if Trump succeeds, his approach almost certainly means higher prices for Americans across the board — in defiance of the message voters sent last November.

Trump said in the Time interview, for instance, that he would regard it as a "total victory" if tariffs are at 20% or 30% or 50% on foreign imports next year. Such a scenario would mean American consumers would face far higher prices, effectively a massive tax increase. Trump insists that this will be offset by a massive tax reduction bill — but progress has been slow as GOP leaders try to work the plan through Congress.

And while he insists he has lowered prices for basic goods since taking office, that's mostly untrue.

Trump's vision of himself as a master impresario conducting the economy suggests that even rockier times will be ahead. He has suggested, for instance, that he would have sole responsibility for setting the prices of goods. "We are a department store, and we set the price," Trump told Time. "Now, some countries may come back and ask for an adjustment, and I'll consider that, but I'll basically be, with great knowledge, setting."

Such an arbitrary system, in which one person sets prices — let alone someone with as rudimentary grasp of economics as Trump — would be a recipe for mayhem and corruption, and would shatter the rules-based economic system that has made the US the world's greatest power.

"The United States was more than just a nation. It's a brand," billionaire investor Ken Griffin warned at the Semafor World Economy Summit last week.

"It was like an aspiration for most the world. And we're eroding that brand right now."

— CNN

Dark-side economics loom on the horizon

Alan Bollard

are not calibrated for these huge changes. Consequently no one knows exactly what a 145 percent tax could do. But we do know that trade will reduce, inflation will increase and economic growth will be cut.

Who pays for these tariffs? The answer is that it will cost both trading partners, to a degree determined by the elasticities of supply and demand.

That means that for a cellphone assembled in China for which there are few substitutes, the US must bear most of the costs; for Chinese mineral exports that only have a market in the US, China will be more impacted.

The uncertainty generated by these tariffs will particularly hurt growth. That is because their magnitude is unique and because of the likelihood of unexpected sudden changes ahead.

In early April he announced an ad hoc regime of high tariffs on most of the world's production, especially focused on East Asia, announced on so-called Liberation Day. This resulted in anxiety and volatility in global equity, bond and foreign exchange markets, with considerable loss of value. US President Donald Trump then backtracked completely from the global fight, and decided instead to re-focus on a bilateral tariff war with China. China has partly reciprocated. At the time of writing, US tariffs are as high as 245 percent on some Chinese goods and China's on US imports are as high as 125 percent, together with export restrictions on certain technologies imposed by both sides.

Following domestic consumer outrage, the US administration has now made some exceptions for consumer electronics. As a discipline, economists may disagree about many things. But the vast majority agree that the US tariffs will stimulate domestic production within the US, but at the expense of increasing production costs and allocative inefficiency, thus reducing productivity and causing enduring price rises. The magnitude of these import taxes is massive. We are used to modelling the impact of tariffs increasing by say 10 percent. But economic models are not calibrated for these huge changes. Consequently no one knows exactly what a 145 percent tax could do. But we do know that trade will reduce, inflation will increase and economic growth will be cut. Who pays for these tariffs? The answer is that it will cost both trading partners, to a degree determined by the elasticities of supply and demand. That means that for a cellphone assembled in China for which there are few substitutes, the US must bear most of the costs; for Chinese mineral exports that only have a market in the US, China will be more impacted. The uncertainty generated by these tariffs will particularly hurt growth. That is because their magnitude is unique and because of the likelihood of unexpected sudden changes ahead.

focused on East Asia, announced on so-called Liberation Day. This resulted in anxiety and volatility in global equity, bond and foreign exchange markets, with considerable loss of value. US President Donald Trump then backtracked completely from the global fight, and decided instead to re-focus on a bilateral tariff war with China.

China has partly reciprocated. At the time of writing, US tariffs are as high as 245 percent on some Chinese goods and China's on US imports are as high as 125 percent, together with export restrictions on certain technologies imposed by both sides.

Following domestic consumer outrage, the US administration has now made some exceptions for consumer electronics.

As a discipline, economists may disagree about many things.

But the vast majority agree that the US tariffs will stimulate domestic production within the US, but at the expense of increasing production costs and allocative inefficiency, thus reducing productivity and causing enduring price rises.

The magnitude of these import taxes is massive. We are used to modelling the impact of tariffs increasing by say 10 percent.

But economic models

cate, executives are struggling to operate in this new environment, purchasing managers are rerouting supply chains. This probably means the end of the trade-driven East Asian growth model, and it also means a reshuffle of production facilities throughout Southeast Asia, with a re-casting of markets by China.

It is confusing to try to unpick the rationale that lies behind these tariff decisions.

A Western economy generally graduated from agriculture to manufacturing to services. For years the US has been losing manufacturing competitiveness and that has not surprised development economists. But this has been partially compensated by a thriving service sector in which most in the US work, with expertise in software, other intellectual property, branding, marketing, financial and business services, transport and tourism. US

service exports are in strong surplus with most countries and this has successfully driven the strong US economy.

In the past US-China trade recorded the highest inter-country flows ever, with both economies benefiting from the efficiencies this brought.

Now this has completely changed; trade will likely wind back into two separate trade blocs. The last time this happened was during the Cold War.

Other countries may show trade policy leadership, many are reconsidering expanding free trade agreements which would be helpful.

But at a time when we need economic leadership, better quality growth, and consensus on climate change policies, there is a risk that governments are re-focusing on power policies, and may be susceptible to unhelpful bilateral deals.

There is no certainty that today's tariffs will survive beyond the next few years.

But if they remain in place, the economic future looks bleak: we see a belligerent trade landscape with countries looking for "dark side economics" — tools to harm the other player. These are risky strategies and could end up being "lose-lose".

— China Daily

Big two need to move forward

Yu Miaojie

CHINA has established itself as the world's second-largest economy, with GDP in 2024 reaching approximately 134 trillion yuan (\$18.39 trillion). With nearly \$6 trillion in total imports and exports and foreign exchange reserves of \$3.2 trillion, China contributes around 30 percent to global economic growth.

It has set a 5 percent GDP growth target for 2025. Government expenditure is projected to reach 11.86 trillion yuan, with tax reductions and interest rate adjustments planned to stimulate market vitality.

In its medium to long-term strategy, China is transitioning from "high-speed growth" to "high-quality development". Research and development investment has reached 2.68 percent of GDP, exceeding the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average, with strategic focus on artificial intelligence, information

technology, new energy, advanced materials, life sciences, biotechnology, and transportation equipment manufacturing. Environmental sustainability has become a strategic priority, with China committed to peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

Despite facing trade restrictions from some countries, China remains committed to promoting economic multilateralism through platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative.

The claim that China imposes high tariffs on the US while the US maintains lower tariffs on Chinese goods — leading to trade deficits and manufacturing job losses — is fundamentally wrong. Manufacturing locations, after all, are decided on the basis of comparative advantages rather than tariff rates. Considering China's trade deficit with the US in services and China's industry subsidies that comply with World Trade

Organization rules, trade restrictions aimed at suppressing China's industrial advancement are neither reasonable nor acceptable.

Bilateral trade with the

China is implementing a comprehensive opening-up strategy characterized by greater scale, broader scope, and deeper institutional integration. The "greater scale" component focuses on export diversification, enhancing supply capabilities and competitive advantages to deliver high-quality, reasonably priced products globally. Simultaneously, China is substantially increasing imports to meet domestic consumption upgrades and supply chain improvements, utilizing platforms such as the China International Import Expo to diversify import sources and expand service trade in education, transportation and cross-border e-commerce. The "broader scope" element emphasizes developing digital and green trade. Finally, the "deeper integration" aspect promotes institutional openness. China is working closely with the WTO and other international organizations to advance reforms in trade rules, technical standards, and regulatory frameworks. China's vast market of over 1.4 billion people with a per capita GDP exceeding \$13,000 creates substantial import demand for agricultural products, energy, and industrial goods from the Global South countries. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China provides infrastructure development support to Global South countries without imposing conditional requirements, unlike Western aid models. Drawing from its successful experience in domestic infrastructure development, including high-speed rail networks, China offers valuable technical support and development models to these countries. Also, China's foreign direct investment creates employment opportunities in host countries. China's development model demonstrates an alternative path to the traditional Western approach.

US represents only about 10 percent of China's overall foreign trade volume. China's position is clear: if the US persists with trade confrontation, China has both the confidence and capacity to respond effectively.

China is implementing a

comprehensive opening-up strategy characterized by greater scale, broader scope, and deeper institutional inte-

gration. The "greater scale" component focuses on export diversification, enhancing supply capabilities and competitive advantages to deliver high-quality, reasonably priced products globally.

Simultaneously, China is substantially increasing

imports to meet domestic consumption upgrades and supply chain improvements, utilizing platforms such as

the China International Import Expo to diversify import sources and expand service trade in education, transportation and cross-border e-commerce. The "broader scope" element emphasizes developing digital and green trade. Finally, the "deeper integration"

aspect promotes institutional openness. China is working closely with the WTO and other international organizations to advance reforms in trade rules, tech-

anical standards, and regulatory frameworks.

China's vast market of over 1.4 billion people with a per capita GDP exceeding \$13,000 creates substantial import demand for agricultural products, energy, and industrial goods from the Global South countries.

Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China provides infrastructure development support to Global South countries without imposing conditional requirements, unlike Western aid models. Drawing from its successful experience in domestic infrastructure development, including high-speed rail networks, China offers valuable technical support and development models to these countries. Also, China's foreign direct investment creates employment opportunities in host countries.

China's development model demonstrates an alternative path to the traditional Western approach. This "new modernization model" aligns with the China-proposed Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative.

Taking China-Russia trade as an example, economic complementarity and comparative advantages can

drive mutually beneficial exchange, with countries supplying what their trading partners need most based on their respective strengths.

Strategic coordination at the political level is essential for stable international relations. Further promotion of trade and foreign direct investment requires accelerating certification processes and improving logistical bottlenecks.

Educational cooperation holds strategic value, as illustrated by joint degree programs between universities that enhance mutual understanding and cultivate business leaders familiar with international markets.

The US' core concern may be China's successful rise in industry value chains. But both nations would benefit more from cooperative strategies focused on expanding the overall economic pie rather than imposing restrictions.

There is no final success, nor fatal failure; what matters is the courage to continue moving forward.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan chairing a meeting with representatives of Furniture Manufacturers Association at Ministry of Industries and Production.

SCCI and police launch steps to set up services centre

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On proposal of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and direction of the IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, SCCI and police department have launched practical steps for establishment of a Police Services Centre at the chamber house.

According to details, SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan paid a visit to 'Police Sahulat Markaz' adjacent to Sharqi Police Station in Saddar Peshawar wherein he was briefed by police officials regarding the facilities at the centre.

SCCI secretary general Muqtasid Ahsan was also accompanied by the chamber president Fazal Moqeem Khan during the visit.

Moqeem inspected various sections of the Police

Sahulat Centre and held discussions with police officials and ordinary citizens, visiting the centre.

SCCI president Fazal Moqeem Khan presented a proposal of setting up a police services facility at the chamber house during the visit of the IGP KP Zulfiqar Hameed in the SCCI house.

IGP Zulfiqar Hameed on the spot issued instructions to CCPO Qasim Ali Khan and SSP Operation Peshawar Masood Ahmad Bangash to work on the SCCI proposal. Following the instructions, the police department begins working on the joint project.

Moqeem praised prompt services to people through the Police Sahulat centre.

He assured the SCCI will utilize all available resources to ensure timely

implementation of the proposed joint project.

The present SCCI leadership and cabinet are fully committed to provide all kinds of facilities and resolve business community issues through federal, provincial governments and relevant departments, Moqeem said.

He said the chamber has played a pivotal role in raising business community issues at government offices, parliament houses, and relevant forums and with relevant authorities.

No stone will remain unturned to resolve business community problems, Moqeem vowed. He asked the traders community to send proposals in writing to take up with relevant departments at federal and provincial level to resolve them amicably.

FFC announces results

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC) has announced its financial result for the first quarter of 2025 ended March 31, 2025 in its Board of Directors meeting held on Monday.

FFC undertook scheduled maintenance of the manufacturing facilities at Goth Machhi and Port Qasim during the period, while no shut down was carried out last year. Aggregate Urea production stood at 629 thousand tonnes while DAP output was recorded at 168 thousand tonnes. The fertilizer market remained oversupplied in first quarter, driven by weak farm economics and drought, resulting in lower fertilizer sales. FFC recorded Urea offtake of 538 thousand tonnes, down 26% year on year, compared to the industry's decline of 40%. The Company held only 16% of the sector's closing Urea inventory of ~825 thousand tonnes, reflecting strong marketing efforts, consequently Urea market share improved to 49% from 45% of last year. In the DAP segment, sales of manufactured and imported products stood at 88 thousand tonnes, dominating the DAP market leadership with a share of 63%.

Profitability of the merged entity stood at PKR 13.3 billion, compared to PKR 10.5 billion last year, reflecting a 27% increase. The Company also earned other income of PKR 7.4 billion which includes dividend of PKR 2.8 billion received from Askari Bank Limited. Earnings per share (EPS) of PKR 9.3 was recorded, up from PKR 8.3 per share from last year.

On a consolidated basis, FFC recorded a PAT of Rs. 17.6 billion, reflecting a 39% increase over the same period last year, primarily driven by strong performance from FFC's standalone operations, supplemented by contributions from subsidiaries and associated companies.

EPS of PKR 9.3 was recorded, up from PKR 8.3 per share from last year. Board of Directors is pleased to announce the first interim dividend of 70% (Rs 7.00 per share) for the period.

Ismail Qureshi, Chairman extended heartfelt appreciation to the entire SNGPL team - Board Members, Management, and Staff - for their invaluable contributions. Special gratitude was also conveyed to the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) for their continuous support and strategic guidance, which have been instrumental to the Company's success.

MD Amer Tufail, echoing these sentiments, underscored that the sustainability of SNGPL's remarkable performance is a testament to the synergistic efforts of the Board, the Ministry of Energy, and the dedication of the entire SNGPL family.

With a robust foundation and a clear strategic direction, SNGPL looks ahead with renewed confidence to continue delivering excellence and creating enduring value for its stakeholders.

year, SNGPL demonstrated exceptional resilience and operational excellence, achieving notable milestones across all facets of its business. Despite facing a challenging global environment marked by heightened geopolitical tensions and financial market volatility, the Company delivered outstanding results, reinforcing its strong foundation and future prospects.

The Board lauded the Management's commendable efforts, particularly in the area of UFG (Unaccounted for Gas) control, achieving lowest UFG in the past eighteen years, which is 4.93% and acknowledged the unwavering dedication and professionalism of the Company's workforce in meeting and exceeding the targets set by the Board.

In the esteemed presence of the Board of Directors,

LAHORE: The Board of Directors of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), in its meeting held in Lahore, recommended a final cash dividend of Rs7.50 per share (equivalent to 75%) for the year ended June 30, 2024.

During the meeting, the Board also approved the Annual Accounts for FY 2023-24, marking a historic achievement for the Company. SNGPL recorded its highest-ever profitability, with a remarkable profit before tax around Rs30 billion. Profit after tax stood at an impressive Rs19 billion, translating into Earnings Per Share (EPS) of Rs29.92 - a significant surge from the Rs10.6 billion profit after tax and EPS of Rs16.66 recorded in the corresponding period last year.

Throughout the fiscal

PSI #DadiKnowsBest campaign:

Bond Advertising wins at Effie Awards 2025



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Bond Advertising has been honored with an Award in the Non-Profit / Social Good category at the prestigious Effie Awards 2025 for its

impactful Dadi Knows Best Campaign for its client, Population Services International, Pakistan. (PSI)

The #DadiKnowsBest campaign boldly addressed the cultural stigma around family planning in Pakistan.

By featuring the beloved and trusted figure of a Dadi (grandmother) portrayed by the iconic Shameem Hilaly. The campaign successfully normalized conversations around contraception, empowered women to make

informed choices, and encouraged greater male involvement in reproductive health discussions.

Leveraging powerful digital storytelling, influencer collaborations, and the VIVA chatbot, a WhatsApp-based platform providing family planning resources - the campaign sparked intergenerational dialogue on a taboo subject, all while maintaining cultural sensitivity and avoiding backlash.

Through breaking generational barriers and reshaping societal narratives, Bond Advertising and PSI effectively advanced their mission of improving reproductive health outcomes across Pakistan.

Bond Advertising is a leading creative agency committed to driving change through culturally resonant, impactful storytelling. With a passion for social good and a track record of award-winning campaigns, Bond continues to push boundaries in communication and strategy.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,405 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 1,405.45 points, a negative change of 1.22 percent, closing at 114,063.90 points as compared to 115,469.35 points on last trading day.

A total of 423,938,288 shares were traded during the day as compared to 471,072,967 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs26.458 billion against Rs27.310 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 449 companies transacted their shares in the stock market. 93 of them recorded gains and 313 sustained losses,

whereas the share price of 43 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 23,705,546 shares at Rs9.30 per share, Power Cement with 21,585,733 shares at Rs13.29 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 18,309,847 shares at Rs1.26 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs326.25 per share closing at Rs3,608.54 whereas runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs260.00 rise in its share price to close at Rs23,161.00.

Sazgar Engineering

Works Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs50.25 per share price, closing at Rs1,309.74, whereas the runner-up Sapphire Textile Mills Limited with Rs47.20 decline in its per share price to Rs1,055.70.

Rupee sheds 09 paisas against US Dollar

The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 09 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.06 against the previous day's closing of Rs280.97.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs281.25 and Rs282.75,

respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 03 paisa to close at Rs319.01 against the last day's closing of Rs318.98, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.95, whereas an increase of 88 paisa was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs374.35 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs373.47.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 02 paisa each to close at Rs76.52 and Rs74.92 respectively.

Sumsum Group celebrates launch of Grand II Project in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a magnificent display of ambition and celebration, Sumsum Group hosted the splendid inauguration ceremony of its Grand II Project in Karachi, graced by luminaries from the business, political, and social spheres.

The evening was brought to life with vibrant performances of traditional folk dances and spirited stand-up comedy, enchanting the distinguished gathering.

Among the esteemed guests were Hassan Bakhshi, Chairman of ABAD; Khurram Jaffrani, CEO of AdPulse; and Johar Iqbal, President of DEF-CLAREA (Defence & Clifton Association of Real Estate Agents).

The Chairman Asif Sumsum, alongside Directors Murtaza Sumsum



and Mujtaba Sumsum, extended a heartfelt welcome to all attendees, eloquently recounting the Group's remarkable journey thus far and sharing an inspiring vision for the future.

Guests lavished praise upon the endeavours of Sumsum Group, voicing their firm belief that the Grand II Project would herald not only fresh success for the Group but also enduring benefits for the

wider community.

The ceremony stands as a glittering milestone in the Group's illustrious journey, symbolising the dawn of a new chapter in Karachi's vibrant business and social tapestry.

Lucky Investments awarded AM2 Asset Manager Rating by PACRA

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Lucky Investments Limited (Lucky Investments) has been awarded an initial Asset Manager Rating of "AM2" with a Positive Outlook by The Pakistan Credit Rating Agency Limited (PACRA). This significant milestone marks a strong start for the newly established Islamic asset management company, which aims to become the preferred choice for Shariah-compliant investment solutions in Pakistan-driven by a vision of sustainable growth, integrity, and innovation.

Commenting on this achievement, Mr. Mohammad Shoaib, CFA, CEO of Lucky Investments, stated, "We are grateful to Allah (SWT) for a rewarding start to our journey. This rating is a testament to our strong sponsor support, robust governance, and professional management. We remain committed to continuously raising our standards and deeply appreciate the trust and confidence our stakeholders and investors have placed in us."

The AM2 rating reflects the

solid foundation laid by the Company's sponsors, underpinned by a substantial capital injection and a sound governance framework. The direct involvement of sponsors on the Board and key Committees reinforces stakeholder confidence and supports strategic oversight.

PACRA's rating also acknowledges the depth and expertise of Lucky Investments' management team, which is widely recognized in the market for its proven track record. The Company's leadership is focused on building a resilient institutional framework that will underpin long-term performance and value creation.

The Positive Outlook assigned to the rating highlights the forward-looking initiatives already underway, with further upside potential as these efforts bear fruit. The management's approach reflects a strong commitment to professionalism, adherence to industry best practices, and a drive for innovation within the Islamic finance space.

Lucky Investments Limited is a subsidiary of YB Pakistan Limited, signifying

the YB Group's strategic entry into the Islamic capital markets.

As a full-fledged Islamic Asset Management Company, Lucky Investments marks the Group's first foray into the financial services sector.

This development comes at a pivotal time, as Pakistan transitions toward a Shariah-compliant financial system in accordance with the Federal Shariah Court's directive to eliminate interest-based finance by December 2027.

The YB Group is one of Pakistan's most diversified and respected business conglomerates, with a strong presence across key industries including cement, textiles, automobiles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, education, power generation, real estate, commodities trading, and smartphones.

Capitalizing on the rising demand for Islamic investment solutions, Lucky Investments made history by executing Pakistan's largest-ever mutual fund IPO-raising PKR 50 billion and breaking all previous subscription records.

The Company is led by co-

founder and CEO, Mohammad Shoaib, CFA-a veteran of Pakistan's Islamic asset management industry with over three decades of experience. He is widely regarded for his pioneering role in developing Pakistan's capital markets and advancing Islamic finance.

تلاش گمشده ڈگری

مجھ سے میری ڈاکٹر آف فزیو تھری ای اصل ڈگری کم ہو گئی ہے جس کا رجسٹریشن نمبر 2009/KMU/IMPR/03 اور تاریخ اجراء یکم ستمبر 2014ء ہے۔ جسے ملے براہ کرم اس پتہ پر رابطہ کریں۔

نازش فیض سینئر

فزیو تھری ایسٹ پیرا لیٹیک سنٹر پشاور، رابطہ نمبر 03199414949

Court Notice

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 244/1. Institution 8/11/ 2024. Date of hearing ,12/5/2025. Umer Hamed VS Hazrat Hamed. Notice to no.1. Hazrat Hamed s/o Said Hamed resident of Elai Hashimsar tehsel 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 12/5/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 14/1. Institution 17/1/ 2025. Date of hearing, 13/5/2025. Hayatullah VS Saeed Ullah etc. Notice to no. Mst Halema. 4.Mst Rukh Mena daughters of Hakim Gul. 5.Liaquatullah s/o Azizullah. 6.Mst Zahida d/o Sharhay Gul. 7.Mst Zoheba widow of Hakim Gul resident of Agaray Charnia tehsel Mandarn 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 13/5/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

**In brief****Rashford to miss Aston Villa season**

LONDON (AFP): Marcus Rashford is expected to miss the rest of Aston Villa's season due to a hamstring injury, according to reports on Monday. Rashford was left out of Unai Emery's squad for Saturday's 3-0 FA Cup semi-final defeat to Crystal Palace. The manager said after the match that the forward, who joined Villa on loan for the rest of the campaign from Manchester United in January, was likely to be out for "some weeks". After being knocked out of both the Champions League and FA Cup this month, Villa only have four Premier League matches to play this season as they switch their focus to the fight for a place in Europe next season. Rashford, 27, was sidelined by United manager Ruben Amorim but has been rejuvenated during his loan spell in Birmingham, scoring four times and providing six assists. But, with three years left on his deal at Old Trafford, his future is unclear. Rashford was last month recalled to the England squad by new manager Thomas Tuchel, starting matches against Albania and Latvia. England's next World Cup qualifier is away to Andorra on June 7, with a home friendly against Senegal three days later.

Int'l basketball camp concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): A special basketball training camp for young players was wrapped up successfully in Islamabad on Monday, giving athletes a chance to learn from top international coaches. According to a press release, the Federal Basketball Association (FBBa) organized the event with help from American coaches Luke Elie and Jacob Kim who taught modern techniques to improve fitness, teamwork and game strategies. The camp was held at Bahria University which provided high-quality facilities. FBBa General Secretary Ouj-e-Zahoor thanked the coaches for sharing their expertise and praised the players for their hard work. "This camp has helped our young athletes and local coaches learn advanced skills," he said. On the final day, friendly matches were played, and all participants received certificates. The Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) called the camp an important step in raising the sport's standards. "Such partnerships help our players grow and improve coaching methods nationwide," a spokesperson said. The event marks progress in Pakistan's efforts to develop basketball talent through international collaboration.

Akhtar's YouTube channel banned

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India has blocked Shoaib Akhtar's YouTube channel following the Pahalgam attack in Illegal Indian Occupied Kashmir (IIOK). In an apparent attempt to suppress freedom of speech, the Indian government has also blocked YouTube channels of former cricketers Basit Ali and Rashid Latif, along with Shoaib Akhtar. Shoaib Akhtar, the renowned Pakistani speedster, has a popular channel with over 3.5 million followers worldwide, where he shares his candid views on cricket and societal issues. In addition to blocking Akhtar's channel, India has shut down 16 Pakistani news channels that raised questions about the Pahalgam tragedy.



KARACHI: Dutch hockey legend Floris Jan Bovelander in a group photograph with hockey players during a special training clinic organized by the Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy (KJHA) at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Pakistan Sports Complex.

Taijul's 5 wickets trigger Zimbabwe collapse in 2nd Test

CHATTOGRAM (AFP): Bangladesh's left-arm spinner Taijul Islam registered his 16th five-wicket haul as Zimbabwe slumped to 227-9 at the end of the first day of the second Test in Chattogram on Monday.

Nick Welch and Sean Williams each scored fifties for the visitors but the day belonged to Bangladesh as they sought to level the two-match series after losing the opener.

Zimbabwe got off to a decent start after winning the toss and opting to bat but lost both openers in quick succession.

Debutant Tanzim Hasan Sakib made the first breakthrough, getting Brian Bennett caught behind off an outside edge.

Taijul struck with the second delivery of his spell, removing Ben Curran when the opener chopped one onto his stumps for 21 off 50 balls.

Welch and Williams steadied the innings but their dismissals triggered a collapse, with Taijul getting four wickets in the final session.

He dismissed Wessly Madhevere for 15 in the 79th over and then struck twice more quickly, send-

ing back Wellington Masakadza for six and Richard Ngarava for a first-ball duck.

Taijul claimed his fifth wicket with five overs remaining in the day, removing Welch for 54 to leave Zimbabwe reeling.

However, tailender Blessing Muzarabani held firm with Tafadzwa Tsiga to survive the rest of the day.

Taijul finished with 5-60, while his spin partner Nayeem Hasan chipped in with two wickets.

Bangladesh made three changes, recalling Anamul Haque and Nayeem Hasan, and handing right-

arm paceman Sakib his Test debut.

Anamul's return came after four centuries in domestic cricket.

Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Nahid Rana and Khaled Ahmed were dropped to make room for them.

Zimbabwe brought in debutant leg-spinner Vincent Masekesa and Tsiga, replacing Victor Nyauchi and Nyasha Mayavoo.

Brief scores: Zimbabwe: 227-9 in 60 overs (Sean Williams 67, Nick Welch 54; Taijul Islam 5-60, Nayeem Hasan 2-42).

Toss: Zimbabwe.

Boxer Usman Wazeer receives hero's welcome in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Pakistani boxer and Special Security Unit (SSU) Brand Ambassador Usman Wazeer was given a rousing welcome at Karachi International Airport following his stunning knockout victory over Indian opponent Eswaran at the World Siam Stadium in Bangkok, Thailand.

A large crowd, including SSU commandos as well as notable social and political figures, gathered at the airport to celebrate Wazeer's achievement. The national hero knocked out Eswaran within the first two minutes of the bout, adding another proud chapter to Pakistan's sporting history.

Speaking to the media upon his arrival, Usman Wazeer said, "I am proud to make my country's name shine. I am ready to make any sacrifice for Pakistan."

DIGP Security and Emergency Services Division Dr. Maqsood Ahmed praised the young boxer, calling him "a national asset and a true role model for our youth," and lauded his efforts in enhancing Pakistan's image on the global stage.

International basketball training camp

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Basketball Training and Coaching Camp, organized by the Federal Basketball Association (FBBa), successfully concluded in Islamabad.

According to Federal Basketball Association General Secretary Ouj-e-Zahoor, several young players participated enthusiastically in the camp, receiving modern training to enhance their skills and performance.

Renowned coaches Luke Elie and Jacob Kim, affiliated with the American organization, Coaches Team International (CTI), conducted various sessions at Bahria University.

They provided players with expert guidance on fitness, skills development, technique, combination play, attacking strategies and other key areas of the game.

Ouj-e-Zahoor expressed deep gratitude to American coaches Luke Elie and Jacob Kim for sharing their valuable experience, knowledge, and passion with the young athletes. Both players and local coaches gained significant insights during the training sessions.

He also thanked Bahria University for the support, which enabled the provision of international-standard facilities for the camp.

On the final day of the camp, friendly matches were organized among the players, and certificates were distributed to all participants in recognition of their dedication and achievements.

The Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has also welcomed the joint venture as part of its ongoing efforts to promote basketball nationwide. "This is yet another significant step towards elevating the standard of basketball in Pakistan," a PBBF spokesperson said.

"International partnerships like these are vital for our players' growth and the development of our coaching infrastructure."

Hockey legend Bovelander leads youth clinic in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dutch field hockey star Floris Jan Bovelander led a training clinic for young players in Islamabad on Monday, describing the experience as an opportunity to "share knowledge and strengthen connections through sport." The event, organised by the Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy (KJHA) with the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands and Pakistan Sports Board was held at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium as part of Dutch King's Day celebrations.

Bovelander, who played a key role in the Netherlands' 1990 World Cup triumph and is considered one of the finest drag flick specialists in hockey history, worked with players from KJHA and clubs in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The clinic focused on modern penalty corner techniques, game awareness and attacking strategies.

"Pakistan's hockey tradition is known around the world," Bovelander told media after the session. "Being here and seeing the passion of young players first-hand is very special. They have the energy and natural flair. With the right training and exposure, there is real potential to bring Pakistani hockey back to where it belongs."

"My message to the players was simple; keep learning, stay disciplined and enjoy the game. Talent is important but hard work and smart training are what take you to the top." The session drew dozens of aspiring players along with former Olympians, national team members, coaches, sports officials and diplomats.

Dutch Ambassador to Pakistan Henny de Vries, who also attended the session said: "Sports are a bridge. They help connect, collaborate and build something amazing together." While highlighting the role of sports as a unifying force, she said, "sports foster inclusion and more equitable societies. Being a powerful platform, they help inspire positive change across the world." Secretary Inter Provincial Coordination Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani on the occasion hoped Bovelander's visit would inspire more international collaborations in the future.

"This is not a one-off event. The government is trying to build relationships that will help open pathways for our young players, not just in hockey, but in life." He thanked Bovelander for conducting the clinic and said efforts would be made to hold such session in various sport disciplines. Olympian Khawaja Muhammad Junaid, who heads the KJHA, termed Bovelander's visit a "timely boost" for efforts to rejuvenate hockey in the country.

"We are trying to revive the spirit of excellence that once defined Pakistan hockey," Junaid said. "Having a player of Bovelander's calibre train our youngsters is a big step towards that goal," he added. He commended the collaboration with the Embassy of the Netherlands and Pakistan Sports Board. "We are grateful for the cooperation we received. Such initiatives show how sports can be used as a bridge between nations," Junaid said.

Bovelander, who has worked in various hockey development projects in South Asia, said he was encouraged by the talent he saw at the Islamabad clinic.

"There is a lot of raw ability here," he said. "What matters now is building the right structures, bettering coaching facilities and holding regular competitions so that the players can progress step by step," he maintained.

Bovelander will also meet top officials of Prime Minister Office and Pakistan Hockey Federation and share insights on grassroots development and infrastructure improvement. The Netherlands-based former Pakistan women's footballer Kayanat Bukhari is accompanying Bovelander during the visit, helping to promote women's participation in sports as part of broader people-to-people exchanges.

London mayor Sadiq Khan targets Olympic history for city



LONDON (AFP): London mayor Sadiq Khan wants the city to become the first four-time host of the Olympics and is backing a bid for the 2040 Games.

The ambition of Khan, who has been mayor since 2016, is for the British city to become the "sporting capital of the world".

He believes a successful bid for the 2029 World Athletics Championships could be a launchpad for a repeat of the 2012 London Olympics, which were deemed a huge success.

London and Paris have hosted the Summer Games three times while Los Angeles will host it for a third time in 2028.

Brisbane will stage the Games in 2032 while the 2036 Olympics could be heading to India or the Middle East, meaning the 2040 Games are seen as the most realistic target for a return to London.

"I would like to see London become the first city to host the Games four times," Khan said in an interview in the Times on Monday.

"And if we have the World Championships in 2029, it means in the lead-up there's energy, enthusiasm and investment in track and field, which means you will have the future Mo Farahs, the future Paula Radcliffes," he said referring to two high-profile former British runners.

Khan said he was impressed by the Paris Olympics but that London could make even greater use of its existing facilities.

"I was in Paris last summer and I saw the transformation of their city," Khan said. "But we could knock it out of the park in relation to the Olympics, using the assets we already have in the aquatics centre, the stadium, the velodrome."

"And we could have some events outside of London too. London could be a hub."

He added: "The reason why 2040 makes sense for London is because we could do it in a brilliant way but also very cheaply."

A report on Monday found the staging of six major sports events in London last year, including football's Champions League final, generated £230 million (\$308 million) for the city and attracted almost 500,000 sports fans.

The Times said the British government had yet to guarantee £45 million in financial support required to submit a formal expression of interest to World Athletics.

London last hosted the event in 2017.

Trump beats Murphy in epic last-16 tie at Crucible



SHEFFIELD (Agencies): World number one Judd Trump held off Shaun Murphy's fightback to win an epic last-16 tie and move into the quarter-finals of the World Championship.

Trump looked set for a routine victory when he led 12-6 but missed a red into the middle pocket and Murphy capitalised by reeling off four frames in a row.

However 2019 champion Trump held his nerve to take the 23rd frame for a 13-10 win and set up a match against either 2023 winner Luca Brecel or 2016 runner-up Ding Junhui in the quarter-final.

On Sunday, Trump made the two century breaks he needed to reach the 100-ton mark for the season, an achievement that earned him a

£100,000 bonus.

The 35-year-old could become the first player to top £2m in prize money in a single season if he wins the world title, the prize for which is £500,000.

Trump, speaking to BBC Two, said: "Shaun was in a world of his own for four or five frames and I was a little bit worried, but I had to back myself in that last frame."

"In the past I've been a bit hard on myself but I'm a lot stronger mentally and I've learned to appreciate the losses and use them as motivation."

"I'm a lot more confident this year, I'm hitting the ball a lot better. I probably have a bit more belief in myself and I feel a lot more calm."

On his chances of winning a second world title, he added: "Pretty

much every single day [you play] now you are looking to that next session every time. It's only going to get tougher, we're not even halfway there now. It was an extremely tough draw to be playing Shaun at this stage, with the form he was in."

Si holds off Woollaston to advance

In the other match in the afternoon session, China's Si Jiahui moved into the quarter-finals thanks to a 13-10 win over England's Ben Woollaston, who had eliminated fourth seed Mark Selby in the first round. Si reached the semi-finals two years ago, letting a 14-5 lead slip as he lost 17-15 to eventual winner Luca Brecel.

In the quarter-finals, Si will play either Ronnie O'Sullivan or Pang Junxu, with O'Sullivan holding a dominant 12-4 lead and only needing one more frame when that match resumes at 19:00 BST.

Woollaston, 44th in the world, felt he had missed a glorious opportunity after recovering from 9-7 behind to get it to 10-10, only to lose the last three frames. He said: "I was 9-7 down and I didn't know how. It was my own fault because there were so many frames I could've won and I should've been 10-6 up."

"From 10-10 he played the best he had in the match. He was then brilliant and some of his long pots were out of this world. It's frustrating as tactically I was all over him the whole match, but I couldn't convert my chances."

Tatum and Brown pace Celtics past Magic 107-98 to take a 3-1 series lead

ORLANDO (AP): Jayson Tatum had 37 points and 14 rebounds, Jaylen Brown added 21 points and 11 rebounds and the Boston Celtics took a 3-1 lead in their NBA playoff series with a 107-98 win over the Orlando Magic on Sunday night.

Kristaps Porzingis scored 19 points, including a dunk of his own missed layup that put Boston ahead for keeps with 3:58 left.

Paolo Banchero led Orlando with 31 points.

Game 5 of the best-of-7 first-round series will be played Tuesday night in Boston.

"This was a big win on the road in a tough, physical environment against a team that's been eager to take us out," Brown said. "It's not over. We've got to close it out because we don't want to come back here."

Derrick White finished with 18 points, seven rebounds and seven assists for the Celtics. Al Horford blocked five shots.

Franz Wagner had 24 points and seven assists for Orlando. Corey Joseph added 12 points, the highest scoring output for a Magic guard in the series.



The 7-foot-3 Porzingis, who played only 22 minutes due to foul trouble, helped Boston overcome shooting 9 for 31 from 3-point range with dominant inside play in the first half.

"I think he set the tone for us in the half-court game," Boston coach Joe Mazzulla said. "I thought he got us off to a great start offensively with his screening and his ability to get to the rim."

The Magic shot 8 for 29 from behind the arc.

A dunk by Porzingis

started an 18-3 run midway through the first half. A 3-pointer by Porzingis gave the Celtics a nine-point lead, matching the largest lead of the game, with 7:45 left in the second quarter.

The Magic never led after that, although a dunk by Wendell Carter Jr. tied the game at 91 with 4:18 remaining. The Celtics took over from there, winning for the first time in Orlando since October 2022. Tatum hit a 10-footer, three straight free

throws and a layup to quickly restore a seven-point Boston lead.

"Their experience showed," said Banchero, who shot 12 for 32 but scored 30-plus points for the sixth time in his 11 postseason games. "They weren't rattled at all. They were making big plays on both ends. They were really sharp over the last four minutes."

Boston guard Jrue Holiday sat out a second straight game with a strained right hamstring.



In brief

ANF arrests 7 smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting four operations across the country, recovered as many as 45.945 kilograms(kg) of drugs worth more than Rs 11.5 million and arrested seven suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Monday. He informed that 20 kg of Ice were recovered from a resident of Peshawar near IJP Road, Islamabad, tactfully hidden in the secret parts of a motorcycle. In another operation, 24 kg of hashish were recovered from three suspects, including two women, residents of Karachi and from another person resident of Swabi near Thallian Interchange, Islamabad. As much as 1 kg and 800 grams of hashish were recovered from a suspect resident of Chitral, at Qalandarabad, Abbotabad. During a joint operation by the Airport Security Force and the ANF at the Multan International Airport entrance gate, as many as 156 grams of narcotic pills were recovered from the accused resident of Dera Ghazi Khan. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act, and an investigation has been initiated.

Police arrest 13 outlaws

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Monday continued its operations against law breakers and arrested 13 accused including drug peddlers, liquor suppliers, illegal arm owners and a proclaimed offender. According to the police spokesman, the Gujjar Khan Police nabbed accused Shahzeb with 1.26 kg charas, while the Chaklala Police recovered 560 grams of the contraband item from accused Zeeshan. Similarly, the Pirwadhai and Waris Khan Police held accused Hamad-ur-Rehman and Allah Ditta respectively with 20 litres and 5 litres of liquor. Likewise, the Naseerabad Police also captured two accused Bilal and Waqar Afzal recovering 20 litres and 5 litres of liquor respectively from them. Meanwhile, Waris Khan, Wah Cantt, Chakri and Kallar Syedan Police held four accused including Arshad, Waseem, Hamad Jamil and Abdullah respectively with a 30-bore pistol each. The Jatli Police also caught two accused Ahmed Hafeez and Rashad recovering a 30-bore pistol each from them. The City Police also arrested a proclaimed offender, Azhar Mahmood, wanted in a cheque dishonour case.

Tree plantation drive organized

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) held a vibrant tree plantation drive at its Islamabad campus on Monday, with Rector Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif leading the event. A large number of faculty members, staff, and students enthusiastically participated, planting over 350 saplings across the designated areas as part of the university's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability. Following the plantation activity, the atmosphere turned festive with a series of recreational competitions, including tug of war and arm wrestling matches between faculty and students. Adding to the excitement, the Rector himself joined the competitions, encouraging greater camaraderie and spirit among participants. The day culminated with a campus-wide marathon, which saw overwhelming participation from all age groups.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors view the "A Moment in Time" painting exhibition, at the National Art Gallery, organized by ForArtSake and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). —APP Photo

Ayaz hails PM's proposal for neutral investigation of Pahalgam incident

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Monday hailed the proposal of Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for an impartial and transparent investigation into the Pahalgam incident.

Ayaz Sadiq also emphasized that the Indian government should respond positively to Pakistan's proposal for a neutral probe instead of indulging in baseless accusations and misinformation campaigns, said a news release issued here.

He also said that PM's offer is based on goodwill and a genuine desire to uncover the truth, demonstrating Pakistan's commitment to peace, transparency and justice.

He urged the Indian government to accept this offer rather than perpetuating false narratives and levelling false allegations against Pakistan.

"The offer for independent, transparent and impartial investigation aims to expose the real perpetrators

behind the Pahalgam tragedy in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir," he added. "Rather than engaging in the blame game and maligning Pakistan without evidence, India must cooperate to ensure that justice prevails", he said. Ayaz Sadiq also said that any misadventure by India, using the Pahalgam incident as a pretext, would be met with a strong and decisive response from Pakistan. He reiterated that Pakistan's armed forces are fully capable of defending the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity against any aggression.

"India's belligerent attitude and war hysteria risk endangering the peace and stability of the entire region," he warned. "Pakistan's valiant armed forces possess the capability to give a befitting and effective response to any form of Indian aggression and the entire Pakistani nation stands resolutely alongside its defenders."

He also condemned India's

attempts at "water aggression" by trying to manipulate the flow of rivers in violation of international agreements, asserting that such attempts will never succeed. "Pakistan will not allow any compromise on its fundamental national interests," NA Speaker affirmed. "The people of Pakistan, alongside the Parliament and all sectors of national life, remain steadfast in their commitment to defend the motherland."

Ayaz Sadiq has also said that Pakistan has been fighting war of terrorism and has lost more than ninety thousand lives with economic stagnation. He also reiterated Pakistan's unwavering resolve to maintain peace but asserted that any provocation would be firmly countered in defense of national dignity and sovereignty. Ayaz Sadiq also urged international community to take notice of belligerent Indian aggression and asked India for conducting an impartial inquiry into Pahalgam incident.

Pakistan to achieve \$4 billion in IT exports: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, said on Monday that Pakistan is expected to reach \$4 billion in IT exports during the current fiscal year (July 2024 to June 2025).

While briefing foreign media about the upcoming Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Digital Forum, scheduled for April 29-30, she said that Pakistan's IT exports were \$3.2 billion last year and are projected to grow by 27% to hit \$4 billion this year.

"We are working to speed up our efforts and aim to achieve the \$4 billion target within the current financial year," she added. She further said the Prime Minister had set an

ambitious goal of reaching \$25 billion in IT exports over the next four years.

The minister said the ministry is aiming for \$15 billion from direct IT export services and IT products, while targeting an additional \$10 billion in economic impact through the government's National Digitalisation Program.

Talking about the FDI Digital Forum, she shared that more than 400 delegates and 30 local and international investors are expected to participate. She also mentioned that around 10 ministers from different countries would attend the event.

"This is an opportunity for the world to see Pakistan as a new hub for technology and innovation," she said. She added

that the forum would include high-level meetings, policy discussions, and networking sessions to promote international cooperation in technology and digital investment. Shaza Fatima highlighted that the forum is an important step towards making Pakistan a regional center for technology.

"This event is not just a gathering; it shows Pakistan's commitment to joining the global digital economy," she stated. The forum is being organized in partnership with the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO), led by Saudi Arabia. Member countries of DCO, along with representatives from other nations, will attend, making it a truly global platform for digital investment discussions.

ICT admin launches crackdown, 34 beggars detained

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a citywide operation, the Islamabad's district administration has launched a major crackdown against professional beggars, rounding up 34 beggars from busy commercial areas and traffic signals.

The campaign aims to curb the rising presence of professional beggars and ensure immediate action with public support, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) here. He said the Islamabad's district administration has intensified its campaign against begging across the federal capital. In a series of operations carried out at different locations, authorities detained 34 beggars and moved them to police custody.

The operations focused on popular shopping centers and public areas, including F-10 Markaz, F-7, F-6, and I-8 Markaz. Action was also taken at Bahria Civic Center, Shalimar Police Station area, and Sector I-9.

In addition to marketplaces, teams also targeted various road signals, where beggars are often seen approaching com-

muters. Officials said the anti-begging drive is being conducted on a daily basis. The campaign is part of an effort to clear public spaces and intersections from organized begging networks that have been on the rise.

Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, called on residents to support the ongoing efforts by reporting the presence of professional beggars. He urged citizens not to encourage such activities by giving money and instead inform the administration immediately.

Memon assured that swift action would be taken on all credible information provided by the public. "Help us discourage professional beggars. Report them, and we will ensure prompt action," he said.

The district administration believes that cooperation from the public is crucial to the success of the campaign. Special teams have been formed to patrol busy areas and act on complaints swiftly, the spokesman added.

Officials also stated that not all beggars are individ-

uals in need. Many belong to organized groups that exploit children, women, and the elderly for financial gain. The authorities emphasized that a strong response is necessary to dismantle these networks and protect vulnerable individuals from being used for begging.

The Islamabad administration plans to continue the crackdown with regular operations and has asked citizens to be vigilant and proactive.

The district administration's helplines remain open for citizens to report beggars or suspicious activities. Officials reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining public order and ensuring that commercial areas, shopping centers, and road crossings remain free from unlawful begging practices.

Authorities also stressed the importance of long-term solutions. Efforts are underway to refer genuine cases of poverty and destitution to relevant welfare departments for assistance, ensuring that those truly in need receive support rather than punishment.

IRSA releases 122,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 122,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 127,100 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1430.59 feet which was 28.59 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 41,600 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1130.85 feet, which was 80.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 40,100 cusecs and 32,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 74,100, 46,900, 38,200 and 7,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 24,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 12,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Kamal reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to health equity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan reaffirmed its strong commitment to advancing health equity, achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and strengthening regional cooperation in healthcare during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Health Ministers' Forum.

Addressing the forum, Federal Minister for Health Mustafa Kamal emphasized that providing access to quality healthcare for all citizens remains a top priority for Pakistan, guided by principles of equity, social justice, and solidarity. He highlighted Pakistan's ongoing reforms aimed at strengthening Primary Health Care (PHC) systems to reduce preventable morbidity and mortality.

Kamal outlined the government's vision, shaped by the upcoming National Health and Population Policy (2025-2034), which seeks to address existing healthcare gaps and set strategic directions toward achieving UHC, in alignment with the Astana Declaration of 2018.

Calling for greater collaboration among SCO member states, the

Police academy upgradation project kicks off After 31 years: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): After 31 years, the upgradation project of the National Police Academy has been initiated. Construction and renovation work for new classrooms and residential blocks for trainee officers has been started.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the National Police Academy and inspected the construction work.

Interior Minister reviewed the newly constructed classrooms and residential block. He instructed the completion of the upgradation project within six months maintaining high-quality standards.

For the upgradation, the Interior Minister handed over a cheque worth 250 million rupees to the Commandant of the Academy on behalf of the National Police Foundation.

Moreover, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi

chaired a high-level meeting regarding the restructuring of the National Police Academy. He emphasized that all necessary arrangements for issuing master's degrees to trainee officers should be completed promptly, adding that establishing the National Police University is the ultimate goal.

He said that restructuring the National Police Academy is a priority, and as it plays a crucial role in improving the country's policing system. He stated that the goal is to elevate NPA to an international standard institution.

Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry, Secretary Interior, Commandant National Police Academy, DG FIA, Chairman CDA, IG Islamabad Police, and other concerned officers were present at the meeting.

Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry

stated that the academy should be capable of attracting officers from abroad for training, and courses on IT and cyber-crime should be made an essential part of the training programs according to modern requirements.

During the meeting, progress on the upgradation plan of the National Police Academy based on modern lines were reviewed. Commandant National Police Academy Muhammad Idrees Ahmad briefed the meeting on the master plan for restructuring the NPA.

It was informed that the phased implementation of the restructuring project of the National Police Academy has begun as per the Interior Minister's directives. Furthermore, the best police officers from all four provinces are being appointed as Course Commandants and Assistant Course Commandants.

NAP, RPCC join forces to ensure law and order

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer Babar Sarfaraz Alpa on Monday said that Regional Police Coordination Committees (RPCC) will help to ensure the safety of people's lives and property, maintain law and order, prevent terrorism, extremism, drug supply and smuggling.

Presiding over a meeting of RPCC to review the progress of the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP), he said that enhanced cooperation among institutions and people would yield fruitful results in sustaining law and order and preserving a culture of coherence.

The meeting aimed to promote effective coordination and security cooperation at the regional level, evaluate the performance of all police units at the regional level, provide operational guidance to various police departments, and bring uniformity in policing standards across the province.

The RPCC will ensure coordinated efforts for improvement in the areas of special and general policing. A comprehensive pro-

posal about the prevailing law and order situation, limitations in institutional coordination, and better security arrangements was also discussed.

City Police Officer Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani, Regional Officer Counter Terrorism Department Naseebullah Khan, Regional Officer Special Branch Zunira Azfar, Regional Officer Punjab Highway Patrol Muhammad Bin Ashraf, SSP Safe City Abdul Wahab, Regional Officer SPU Col (Retd) Shahid, SSP RIB Atta-ur-Rehman, Regional Officer Crime Control Department Benish Fatima, Battalion Commander Punjab Constabulary Rawat Hafiz Atta-ur-Rehman, SSP Internal Accountability Branch Ghulam Mustafa, SP Legal Abdul Farooq, SP VVIP Security Special Branch Rawalpindi Asif Masood, Regional Officer Right Management Police Madam Shahida and other relevant officers attended the meeting, while DP Awatock Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan, DPO Chakwal Lt. (retd) Ahmed Mohiuddin, DPO Jhelum

Tariq Aziz Sandhu, DPO Murree Asif Amin Awan and CTO Murree Mughees Ahmed Hashmi participated through video link.

IT has been decided that institutions like Police departments (Operations, Investigation, Special Branch, CTD), district administration, prosecution department, and community representatives would be included as observers in the committees and would be responsible for holding regular monthly meetings.

At the same imperative meetings could also be called in emergencies. The RPCC will monitor the implementation of extremism, hate speech, monitoring of madrassas, and other security issues in light of the NAP. In addition, specific sub-committees may also be formed, which will include intelligence, counter-terrorism, drug and smuggling control, community policing, and other important topics. Regular monitoring of the performance of regional committees, digital documentation, and a reporting system to higher authorities (IGP, Home Department) was also finalised.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is busy arranging and displaying mosquito nets to attract the customers along Lehtar Road. —APP Photo

3 people killed in landslide

FAZIABAD (Pajhwok): Three people were killed and a fourth injured in a landslide incident in Badakhshan on Monday. Information and Culture Department head Hekmatullah Mohammadi told Pajhwok Afghan News the early morning incident took place in Patab village in Yawan district. He said: "Three workers, Naqibullah, Shamsullah, and Samiullah, died and another person, Syed Omar, was injured in the incident and he is receiving treatment".

199 prisoners exchanged

KABUL (Pajhwok): Tehran has handed over 199 Afghan prisoners to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in exchange for two Iranian nationals. The Epoch Times reported the prisoner exchange took place at the Milak border crossing between the two sides. It said 199 Afghan prisoners, who had been held in prisons in Tehran, Sistan and Baluchestan and Isfahan provinces, were handed over to Afghan officials in northern Sistan-Baluchestan.

36m afs health centres inaugurated

L A S H K A R G A H (Pajhwok): Six health centres have been set up at a cost of 36 million afghanis in southern Helmand province, an official announced on Monday.

Funded by the Afghan Health Institute (AHI), three health centres were established at a cost of 18 million afghanis in Sangin district, Public Health Director Maulvi Fazli Ahmad Shafi told the inaugural ceremony.

He said the remaining three centres were built in Kajaki district, with each facility costing six million afghanis.

"The health centres will mainly focus on maternal

and child health, as well as the treatment of malnourished children. They will help address many of the longstanding health challenges faced by residents in these areas," Shafi hoped.

He noted a total of 15 such health facilities were planned across different districts of Helmand. So far, six have been completed and inaugurated, while work on the remaining is ongoing.

Meanwhile, residents of both districts voiced satisfaction with the establishment of the new health centres.

Abdul Qayyum, a resident of the Charkhakan

area of Sangin, said: "Our area is large and densely populated. One health centre cannot meet the needs of everyone. We request additional health centres be built."

Asadullah, hailing from the Haji Khel area of Kajaki district, said: "Previously, we faced many challenges. The maternal and child health centre inaugurated today will help resolve some of our major problems."

The inauguration of these six health centres comes as residents of remote parts of Helmand continue to face significant difficulties accessing healthcare services.

100,000 Afghans deported in 26 days: IOM

KABUL (Pajhwok): Nearly 100,000 Afghan returning refugees have been recorded in just past 26 days and more resources are needed to assist them, the International Organizations for Migration (IOM) said on Monday.

The deadline set for the deportation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan expired on March 31. Now, Afghan families in large numbers are being forcibly deported from Pakistan daily.

In its X handle, IOM wrote that it has registered 100,000 Afghan deportees from Pakistan from April 4.

It said their teams and other humanitarian aid agencies are working to provide emergency assistance and essential services to returning Afghans.

"Needs are increasing rapidly and more resources are urgently needed": the report added.

Previously, IOM called for immediate provision of additional financial assistance to manage the needs of returning refugees.

50,000 returnees listed for employment

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Local officials in eastern Nangarhar province say Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan are being registered for vocational training and employment at the Torkham crossing, with nearly 50,000 individuals documented so far.

Based on their skills and qualifications, these individuals will later be offered vocational training, small business opportunities and jobs in government offices.

Labour and Social Affairs Director Maulvi Faridullah Haqqani told Pajhwok Afghan News an employment committee, operating in the framework of the High Commission of Refugees, had launched operations at the Torkham crossing.

He said the committee had started registering returnees to facilitate their access to employment and vocational training opportunities.

So far, the committee has registered 49,049 individuals, including 24,466 women.

Of the total, nearly 16,000 are skilled workers, around 30,000 labourers and the rest have religious or modern educational backgrounds.

Maulvi Faridullah Haqqani assured based on the collected data, vocational training, small business initiatives and employment in government departments would be arranged for the returnees.

Last week, UNHCR Representative Arafat Jamal visited Torkham. He said since the beginning of April, nearly 120,000 Afghan refugees had returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

The deadline set by Pakistan for the expulsion of Afghan refugees ended on March 31. Reports indicate over 100,000 Afghans have since been forcibly deported from the neighbouring country.

UN pledges continued aid to Afghan returnees

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations on Monday promised continued assistance to Afghan returnees in clean water, healthcare and other areas.

In a statement, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MoRRD) said Minister Mullah Mohammad Younus Akhundzada met UN Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva.

At the meeting, the diplomat said the UN would continue providing assistance to Afghan returnees in areas such as clean water supply, healthcare and other sectors.

The acting minister said: "We appreciate ongoing cooperation from UNAMA, which has provided us support at challenging times.



Work on constructing clean water supply networks in townships for returning refugees will begin as soon as possible."

Akhundzada urged Otunbayeva to pay attention

to the execution of fundamental and public-interest projects in addition to humanitarian aid.

All UNAMA activities be coordinated with the ministry to ensure responsi-

bilities were properly discharged and all citizens gained access to balanced development, he suggested.

At the end of the meeting, both sides emphasised on continued cooperation.

Plans underway to send Afghan workers abroad: Abdul Mateen

KABUL (TOLONews): Abdul Mateen Maulawizada, the head of Afghanistan's National Workers' Union, stated that currently, due to the sharp rise in unemployment, about 1.5 million workers in the country are without jobs.

In an effort to reduce unemployment, agreements will be made with several countries to send Afghan workers abroad, and measures will be taken to facilitate the issuance of work visas, he said.

Maulawizada described the rise in unemployment as a serious challenge and said that joint efforts have begun with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and ILO to increase Afghan

workers' participation in the private sector and to create facilities for issuing work visas.

Speaking to TOLONews, the head of the National Workers' Union said: "A program will be developed based on the needs of countries requiring workers. Workers' skills will be assessed, and they will be sent accordingly."

He further mentioned that negotiations are nearing finalization with countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia. Under these agreements, a large number of skilled and professional Afghan workers are expected to be sent abroad in the near future.

Mullahwizada added:

"Currently, workers travel to some countries under very harsh conditions. Instead, an official process should be established where they are provided with work visas, allowing them to travel legally."

Meanwhile, several workers have called on the caretaker government to create employment opportunities inside the country.

Mohammad Jan, a worker from Ghazni, told TOLONews: "We have been waiting along the roadside for almost two months hoping for work. Around 200 workers gather here daily, but there is no work, and they barely earn 100 afghani per day."

Noroz Ali, another

worker from Ghazni, said: "Currently, there are no projects or active institutions. The few agricultural jobs available offer very low income. There are no sustainable opportunities that could improve people's livelihoods."

Previously, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs announced that to address unemployment, countries like Qatar had facilitated legal pathways for Afghan workers. Once the draft agreements are approved, many Afghan workers will have the opportunity to work abroad. The Ministry also reported that last year, over 114,000 work permits were issued to Afghans and foreigners.

Balkh industrialists want import of similar goods banned

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Industrialists in northern Balkh province have asked the government to ban the imports of goods locally produced in order to save their business from collapse. The industrialists held a meeting "Consultation Meeting with Small and Medium Traders/Entrepreneurs" in Mazar-i-Sharif, in which more than 200 traders and industrialists from various sectors participated.

Industrialists attending the meeting, organized by the Trade Liaison Office, described the import of goods similar to domestic products and high electricity prices as major obstacles to their work and called on the government to take serious measures in this regard.

The head of a shoe and footwear factory in Balkh, Nematullah Oryakhel, said that his business had declined compared to the past because goods similar to his products were being imported from abroad despite being of poor quality and the imports had ruined their business.

He said the imports of similar and low quality goods were banned, many young people would be provided with job opportu-



nities and the country's economy and industry would also grow.

Abdul Manan, head of another factory, also said that domestic products were of better quality than imported goods, but the fact that they were sold at a lower price had caused problems for their business.

In the past, he recalled, locally produced goods were exported to some countries, but now their exports had been stopped and their businesses were also facing collapse.

Abdul Manan urged the government to ban imported goods similar to domestic products and to solve the

problem of electricity shortages in factories.

Meanwhile, head of the liaison office, Sayedur Rahman Niazi, said that the meeting was held to listen to the problems and suggestions of traders and industrialists and find solutions to their problems. He said that about 220 small and medium-sized business industrialists from various sectors participated in the meeting, including 80 women.

Meanwhile, head of the Balkh Chamber of Industries and Mines, Imamuddin Sanayeezada, said that such consultative meetings contributed to the growth of the industry and the economic

development of the country.

According to his information, there are currently 1,700 small, medium and large factories operating in Balkh. On the other hand, the deputy head of the Balkh Department of Industry and Commerce, Nasir Ahmad Niazi, assured the traders and industrialists of his support.

He said: "The Balkh Department of Industry and Commerce is committed to solving the problems of traders and industrialists, maintaining security and defending their rights, and has always tried to find solutions to their problems in a timely manner."

Officials talk economic cooperation, refugees

KABUL (Pajhwok): An Afghan delegation visiting Iran has discussed economic cooperation and resolving problems of Afghan refugees with Iranian officials.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Mawlawi Sadri Azam Osmani led a delegation to Iran to participate in the 7th International Exhibition of Iran's Export Capabilities (Iran Expo), which kicked off on Monday.

A statement from the ministry said the Afghan delegation discussed economic cooperation and resolving problems of Afghan refugees with Mohammad Reza Bahrami, the head of South Asian Affairs at the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Osmani said: "The Islamic Emirate is trying to pave the way for the dignified return of refugees with the cooperation of Iran."

The statement said that during the meeting, the two sides also discussed agro-industrial cooperation, investment in agricultural



products, and strengthening the private sector.

Bahrami expressed satisfaction with the current situation between the two countries and said that he

had also consulted with the acting Minister of Refugees of Afghanistan, Maulvi Abdul Kabir, on the legalization and repatriation of refugees.

110-year-old feud in Paktia resolved



PAKTIA (TOLONews): In Sayed Karam district of Paktia province, a 110-year-old feud between two families has been resolved through mediation by tribal elders and local officials, leading to reconciliation.

Tribal elders said that some disputes between families and tribes still exist in the province and should be resolved peacefully.

Nasir Ahmad Tayeb, the director of borders, tribes, and ethnic affairs of Paktia, told TOLONews: "We are attending a ceremony for the resolution of a 110 or 120-year-old feud. Tribal elders, local officials, members of the dispute resolution committee, and even provincial-level representatives have come together, and this enmity has been turned into friendship."

The members of the reconciled families expressed

happiness over the decision and called on others to resolve their disputes through tribal councils (jirgas).

Dawood, a resident of Sayed Karam district, said: "I urge everyone to put an end to their enmities."

Mohammad Ayoub, another resident of Sayed Karam, said: "Tribal elders, district officials, and anyone holding a position should work together to resolve such issues permanently."

Sayed al-Rahman, a tribal elder in Paktia, regarding the disputes, said: "We must be given full authority to advance and resolve such negotiations."

Officials said that 75 cases of disputes and feuds have been registered in Paktia, out of which 13 are currently in the process of resolution, and efforts are ongoing to address the remaining conflicts as well.

UNSC grants Muttaqi travel exemption for Qatar trip

KABUL (Pajhwok): The UN Security Council's Sanctions Committee has granted a one-week travel exemption to Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi.

In a statement, the powerful UN body said the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1988 (2011) approved a travel ban exemption for Muttaqi (TAI.026) regarding his visit to Doha from 27 April to 4 May for meetings with government officials.

On 21 March 2025, the Security Council Committee had approved a travel ban exemption for Muttaqi regarding his visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 23 March to 10 April to perform Umrah.

Muttaqi is scheduled to travel to Doha, the capital of Qatar, where he will hold talks with officials of that country on bilateral relations.

Samanganis decry drinking, irrigation water shortage

AIBAK (Pajhwok): Residents in northern Samangan province have voiced concern over the shortage of clean drinking water and irrigation supplies, urging government to take serious measures in this regard.

However, officials assure that efforts are underway to address the issue.

Samangan is an agricultural province where most residents rely on farming for their livelihoods.

In recent years, to counter agricultural water shortages, residents have increasingly resorted to digging deep solar-powered wells independently.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) said last year no one was permitted to dig deep wells without legal authorisation.

Several residents expressed concerns over the lack of access to clean drinking water.

They called on the caretaker government to prevent unauthorised digging of deep wells to avoid exacerbating the water crisis in future.

Qari Abdul Basir Hakimi, a community elder in the province, told Pajhwok Afghan News that residents have been suffering from water shortages for years.

He said: "In key areas of Aibak city, the provincial capital — such as New Town, Marklak, Dejhaki, Tapa Mullah Qurban and others, where tens of thousands of people reside — inhabitants still obtain drinking water through rudimentary means, using rollers, animals, or tankers. In some areas, company-

supplied water is sold at very high prices, which many cannot afford."

He noted that repeated requests have been made to local authorities to establish a large water reservoir in Khuram Sarbagh district, which could supply water to several key areas of Aibak city.

Tash Murad, a farmer from Hazrat Sultan district, reported that his private well — used for both drinking and farming — had dried up, forcing him to abandon cultivation.

He now fetches drinking water from distant locations using animals. He said: "The only hope for my family and me was our land. The rivers have dried up, the streams have vanished, and there is no water left for farming. If this situation is not

resolved, we will be compelled to sell our land and migrate."

Similarly, Mohammad Musa Haidari, a resident of Hazrat Sultan district, said that dozens of villages, including Asiyabad and Sarqah Afghanistan, were facing serious difficulties accessing safe drinking and irrigation water.

He explained that during winter, some residents rely on river water — which is unsafe — while in summer, they suffer a severe water crisis.

He also noted that deep wells in parts of the district are often ineffective unless drilled to several hundred metres.

Environmental experts warn that if the water crisis is not properly managed, the province could face severe challenges in

the coming years, including famine, mass migration, and environmental degradation.

Mehrabuddin Munib, an environmental expert, said the main causes of the current crisis include the lack of a proper water supply system, insufficient water reservoirs, climate change, recurring droughts, population growth, and the uncontrolled digging of deep wells.

According to Munib, if these issues are not addressed, Samangan would witness a sharp decline in groundwater levels, the collapse of agriculture, land subsidence, environmental destruction, water shortages for future generations, and widespread migration.

He recommended that local authorities expand

water supply networks from available resources, ensure that deep wells are dug under technical supervision, and build both small and large water reservoirs.

Additionally, he stressed the need to raise public awareness regarding the importance of water resources, regulate the use of underground water, and prevent unauthorised well-digging to curb the crisis.

Meanwhile, local officials in Samangan reported that four solar-powered deep wells were being constructed in Hazrat Sultan district to irrigate farmland and address residents' water needs.

Najibullah Khurram, a representative of the Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Department, told the inaugural ceremony of a

development project that the total cost of the four wells was 27,000 US dollars.

Once operational, they will irrigate around 200 hectares of farmland and improve water access for hundreds of residents.

These projects are being implemented with financial support from Afghan Aid.

On the other hand, Mufti Fazlur Rahman Usmani Samangani, spokesperson for the Samangan governor, told Pajhwok that the local administration was committed to improving water access and would spare no effort in implementing related projects.

He noted that last year, a privately funded water retention dam worth 27 million afghanis was built, addressing flood threats to several villages and helping

irrigate hundreds of acres of farmland.

He added that five other small irrigation projects, worth over five million afghanis, have been completed, and 15 additional water projects, worth 220 million afghanis, have been surveyed, with work expected to commence soon.

Additionally, some Samangan residents had previously urged the Acting Minister of Energy and Water to construct a major dam to resolve the drinking and irrigation water issues faced by thousands.

At the time, Acting Minister of Energy and Water Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor stated during a visit to Khuram Sarbagh district that efforts were ongoing to begin construction on the dam.

40 more killed in fresh Israeli strikes on Gaza

GAZA CITY (AFP): Gaza's civil defense agency said Israeli strikes on Monday killed at least 40 people across the Palestinian territory, which has been under an Israeli aid blockade for more than 50 days.

Israel resumed its military campaign in the Gaza Strip on March 18. A ceasefire agreement that had largely halted the fighting for two months before that collapsed over disagreements between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas, whose 2023 attack triggered the war. Civil defense official Mohammed Al-Mughayyir told AFP that 40 people had been killed since dawn on Monday.

They included eight people who were killed in an Israeli strike on the Abu Mahadi family home in Jabalia, in the north of the territory. "They were sleeping in their homes, feeling safe, when missiles hit..." this scene makes the body shiver," said Abdul Majeed Abu Mahadi, 67, who added that his brother was killed in the attack.

"If a person looked at this scene, they would have seen children, women and elderly men cut into pieces, it makes the heart ache, but what can we do?" The civil defense agency reported that another 10 people were killed in an Israeli strike on the Al-Ghamari family home in the Al-Sudaniya area northwest of Gaza City. A strike on the Al-Agha family home killed eight others in an area of Khan Yunis in the south, it added. Fourteen others were killed in four separate strikes across the territory, the civil defense said, including one that hit a tent sheltering displaced people in the Al-Shafii camp, west of Khan Yunis. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said on Monday that at least 2,222 people have been killed since Israel resumed strikes, bringing the overall death toll since the war broke out to 52,314. The Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 resulted in

Israel using aid blockage as 'weapon of war' Palestinian official tells ICJ

THE HAGUE (AFP): A top Palestinian official told the United Nations top court on Monday that Israel was blocking humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza as a "weapon of war." Kicking off a week of hearings at the International Court of Justice about Israel's obligations to United Nations aid agencies, Ammar Hijazi told judges: "Starvation is here. Humanitarian aid is being used as a weapon of war." The ICJ is holding a week of hearings over Israel's obligations to the UN, including aid agencies, in war-ravaged Gaza before delivering a non-binding "advisory opinion."

Dozens of countries and organizations will address the 15-judge panel in a marathon set of hearings. Israel is not participating in the hearings but its ally the United States will take part on Wednesday. "All UN-supported bakeries in Gaza have been forced to shut their doors. Nine of every ten Palestinians have no access to safe drinking water," said Hijazi.

"Storage facilities of the UN and other international agencies are empty," Israel strictly controls all inflows of international aid vital for the 2.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. It halted aid deliveries to Gaza on March 2, days before the collapse of a ceasefire that had significantly reduced hostilities after 15 months of war. The UN estimates 500,000 Palestinians have been displaced since the two-month ceasefire ended in mid-March. The UN has asked the ICJ to rule "with the utmost urgency" on the case but will likely take several months to reach its opinion. Judges will consider Israel's legal obligations toward the UN and its agencies, international organizations or third-party states to "ensure and facilitate the unhindered provision of urgently needed supplies essential to the survival of the Palestinian civilian population." Although the ICJ's advisory opinions are not legally binding, the court believes they "carry great legal weight and moral authority."

the deaths of 1,218 people on the Israeli side, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Militants also abducted 251 people, 58 of whom are still being held in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead. Israel says its renewed military campaign aims to force Hamas to free the remaining captives.

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities issued stop-work orders for several Palestinian structures being built in Al-Jib town, north of occupied East Jerusalem. On Monday, authorities stormed Al-Jib and notified residents to halt construction on three homes and caravans for raising livestock, according to the Wafa news agency. The stop-work order is a decree that often triggers a demolition order.

The majority of village territory, located 9 km north of Jerusalem, falls

within Area C where the Palestinian Authority is in charge of educational and health services, while Israel remains responsible for security and construction. Israel restricts Palestinians from expanding in Area C, and inside Jerusalem, it rarely grants building permits to residents of the city. Al-Jib is surrounded by several Israeli settlements, the biggest of which is Giv'at Ze'ev.

The Palestinain Authority-affiliated Wall and Settlement Resistance Commission reported in March that Israeli authorities carried out 58 demolition operations in the occupied West Bank, affecting 87 structures. These included 39 inhabited homes, six uninhabited houses, and 26 agricultural properties in the cities of Nablus, Tulkarm, Jerusalem, and Salfit.

68 killed in US strikes on Yemen

SANAA (AFP): Houthi media outlets in Yemen on Monday said that US strikes hit a migrant detention centre in the movement's stronghold of Saada, killing at least 68 people. The United States military has hammered the Houthis with near-daily strikes since March 15 in an operation dubbed "Rough Rider", seeking to end the threat they pose to vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

The Houthis launched strikes targeting Israel and Western vessels in the Red Sea, in what they describe as solidarity with the Palestinians, since Hamas conducted an unprecedented attack on Israel in October 2023. On Sunday, the US said it had hit more than 800 targets in Yemen since mid-March, killing hundreds of Houthi rebels, including members of the group's leadership.

Just hours later, Houthi media said the latest barrage by US forces had hit a migrant detention centre. "The civil defence has announced that 68 African migrants were killed and 47 others wounded in the US attack targeting a centre for illegal migrants in the city of Saada," the Houthis' Al-

Masirah TV said. AFP could not independently confirm the veracity of Al-Masirah's claim that the strikes had hit a migrant detention centre, or the toll. AFP has contacted the US military for comment.

According to a statement cited by Al-Masirah from the Houthi administration's interior ministry, the centre housed "115 migrants, all from Africa". The broadcaster showed footage of bodies stuck under the rubble and of rescuers working to help the casualties. Each year, tens of thousands of migrants brave the Eastern Route from the Horn of Africa, seeking to escape conflict, natural disasters and poor economic prospects by sailing across the Red Sea towards the oil-rich Gulf.

Many hope for employment as labourers or domestic workers in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries, though they face a perilous journey through war-torn Yemen. The UN migration agency (IOM) said it was closely monitoring the situation following the latest strike, but said the facility in question was not being managed by their personnel. "It is imperative that all efforts are made to

avoid harm to civilians and to protect those most vulnerable in these challenging circumstances," the IOM said in a statement.

The Houthis began targeting shipping in late 2023, preventing ships from passing through the Suez Canal — a vital route that normally carries about 12 per cent of global trade — forcing many companies into a costly detour around the tip of southern Africa. In a statement that provided its most detailed accounting of the operation so far, the US military command responsible for the Middle East said: "Since the start of Operation Rough Rider, USCENTCOM has struck over 800 targets.

"These strikes have killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders. The strikes have destroyed multiple command-and-control facilities, air defence systems, advanced weapons manufacturing facilities, and advanced weapons storage locations," Centcom (US Central Command) said. Despite the strikes, the Houthis, who control large swaths of Yemen, have continued to claim attacks against both US vessels and Israel.

Russia declares 72-hour ceasefire in Ukraine

MOSCOW (AFP): Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered a surprise three-day ceasefire from May 8-10, coinciding with Moscow's World War II Victory Day commemorations, the Kremlin said on Monday.

Moscow said it expected Kyiv to issue a similar order, and that it stood ready to respond to any violations of the possible halt in fighting. Putin made a similar order to stop combat over Easter — a truce that both sides accused the other of violating hundreds of times, but did lead to a temporary reduction in fighting.

"The Russian side is declaring a ceasefire during the 80th anniversary of Victory Day, from midnight on May 7-8 to midnight on May 10-11. All combat operations will be suspended during this period," the Kremlin said in a statement. "Russia believes that the Ukrainian side should follow this example. In the event of violations of the truce by the Ukrainian side, the Russian armed forces will give an adequate and effective response," it added.

Putin last month rejected a US proposal for a full and unconditional 30-day ceasefire that had been accepted by Ukraine. Kyiv and its European backers accused Putin of announcing the 30-

hour Easter truce as a PR exercise and said he had little desire for peace. Since launching its Ukraine offensive in February 2022, Russia has seized large parts of four Ukrainian regions and claimed them as its own, in addition to Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Putin's order of a ceasefire comes at the beginning of what the United States indicated would be a crucial week for the chances of a ceasefire that could determine how long Washington keeps trying to broker a deal. After a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at Pope Francis's funeral on Saturday, Donald Trump questioned whether the Russian leader was serious about peace.

"There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days. It makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war, he's just tapping me along," Trump had said on Truth Social. Russian missiles have killed dozens of civilians over the last month in large-scale strikes on Zelensky's home city of Kyryvi Rig, the northeastern city of Sumy and the capital Kyiv.

Russia had earlier on Monday said it was ready to negotiate directly with

Ukraine, but that recognition of its claims over five Ukrainian regions including Crimea were "imperative" to resolving the conflict. Ukraine has denounced the annexations as an illegal land grab and says it will never recognise them, while European officials have warned that accepting Moscow's demands set a dangerous precedent that could lead to future Russian aggression.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with Brazilian newspaper O Globo published Monday that "we remain open to negotiations." "But the ball is not in our court. So far, Kyiv has not demonstrated its ability to negotiate," he said, adding Moscow's position on the conflict was "well-known".

"International recognition of Russia's ownership of Crimea, Sevastopol, the Donetsk People's Republic, the Lugansk People's Republic, the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions is imperative," he said, using the Kremlin's names for the Ukrainian regions. Zelensky said last Friday that Ukraine would "not legally recognise any temporarily occupied territories", and has previously called the demilitarisation demand "incomprehensible".



GAZA: Palestinians pray by the bodies of members of the Abou Mahadi family, killed in Israeli strikes on the family home in Beit Lahia.

NK confirms soldiers sent to Russia

SEOUL (AP): North Korea confirmed for the first time that it sent troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine, saying the deployment was meant to help Russia regain its Kursk region that Ukrainian forces seized in a surprise incursion last year.

US, South Korean and Ukraine intelligence officials have said North Korea dispatched about 10,000-12,000 troops to Russia last fall in its first participation in a major armed conflict since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. But North Korea hadn't confirmed or denied its reported troop deployments to Russia. The North Korean announcement came two days after Russia said its troops have fully reclaimed the Kursk region. Ukrainian officials denied the claim.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un decided to send combat troops to Russia under a mutual defense treaty signed by him and Russian President Vladimir Putin in June 2024, the North's Central Military Commission said in a statement carried by state media. The treaty - considered the two countries' biggest defense agreement since the end of the Cold War - requires both nations to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. The statement cited Kim as saying the deployment was meant to "annihilate and wipe out the Ukrainian neo-Nazi occupiers and liberate the Kursk area in cooperation with the Russian armed forces."

"They who fought for justice are all heroes and representatives of the honor of the motherland," Kim said. Kim said that a monument will soon be erected in Pyongyang to mark North Korea's battle feats and that flowers will be laid before the tombstones of the fallen soldiers. Kim said the government must take steps to preferentially treat and take care of the families of the soldiers who took part in the war.

Blackout hits Spain, France and Portugal

MADRID, PARIS (AFP): A massive blackout hit Spain, Portugal and part of southern France on Monday, grid operators said, leaving millions of people affected. The cause for the outage was not immediately reported.

Spain's railway operator Adif said that the power cut halted trains across the entire country, while airports operator Aena said "several incidents" occurred in Spanish airports. Mobile phone networks went down. AFP reporters in Madrid and Barcelona saw many inhabitants coming out into the streets, holding their smartphones up to try to connect to a network.

Many people had to use the radio instead of the inaccessible internet to get news on the situation. Many traffic lights had ceased to function, forcing vehicles to slow down to avoid collisions, while metros and trains were halted. Spain's national road authority DGT urged motorists to stop using the roads.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was on his way to the headquarters of the state electricity network operator Red Electrica to be briefed on the emergency, his office said. Portugal's REN operator said in a statement to AFP that the entire Iberian Peninsula was affected by the blackout, as well as part of France, adding that the outage occurred at 11:33am.

SBP releases half year report FY25

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's macroeconomic conditions improved further in H1-FY25, according to the State of Pakistan's Economy, Half Year Report FY25, released today by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The report noted that headline inflation fell sharply, the current account balance turned into a surplus, and the fiscal deficit was contained to the lowest level since FY05.

The calibrated monetary policy stance, fiscal consolidation, benign global commodity prices together with approval of IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program mainly underpinned these favorable outcomes, the report said. The upgrade of the country's credit rating by international agencies was mentioned as recognition of the improving macroeconomic environment.

The report highlighted that inflationary pressures have receded notably, as headline inflation reached a multi-decade low of 0.7 percent by March 2025. This steep disinflation was attributed to a confluence of factors, including tight monetary policy stance and fiscal consolidation that kept the domestic demand in check, improved supply conditions, respite in energy price adjustments, and subdued international commodity prices. As a result of cooling inflationary pressures and improving inflation outlook, the SBP reduced the policy rate by 1000 basis points from June 2024 - February 2025. The report further noted that the consequent ease in financial conditions, coupled with a slight uptick in economic activity and ADR-related lending, contributed to a substantial growth in private sector credit during H1-FY25.

The moderation in real GDP growth was attributed to lower production of important kharif crops and contraction in industrial activity during H1-FY25. A broad-based decline in Kharif crops was seen to be caused by falling area under cultivation and lower yields. The report pointed to the key role of agriculture policy uncertainty, last year's low crop prices, unfavorable weather conditions, and lower use of certified seeds and other inputs for this lackluster performance.

It also mentioned that lower contraction in industry during H1-FY25 compared to the previous year was supported by small scale manufacturing, utilities and slaughtering, whereas mining & quarrying, construction and large scale manufacturing contributed negatively. Moreover, the report observed that the services sector performed relatively better in H1-FY25, compared to the same period last

year. According to the report, a steady increase in exports and workers' remittances during H1-FY25 outweighed a notable increase in imports, leading to a surplus in the current account balance. These developments, together with the disbursement of the first tranche under the IMF's EFF and a slight pick-up in private inflows, were noted to have strengthened SBP's FX reserves.

The report also includes a special chapter titled 'Pakistan's Low Competitiveness: A Case for Investing in Productivity'. The analysis underscores that weak growth in labor productivity and total factor productivity has adversely affected the country's economic competitiveness over time, which has contributed to the frequent boom-bust cycles. The chapter finds that Pakistan's performance over time across most drivers of productivity and underlying structural factors has been notably weak, when compared to peer economies. Therefore, emphasis is placed on addressing the macroeconomic and structural constraints to productivity growth. Different box items in various chapters of the report highlight the structural issues in the economy, with relevant recommendations in the light of cross-country experiences.

The report notes a significant improvement in the outlook for inflation and external sector. In view of steeper-than-anticipated disinflation, combined with an adequately tight monetary policy stance, continued fiscal consolidation and an ease in global commodity prices, the SBP projects average inflation for FY25 to fall in the range of 5.5 - 7.5 percent. Similarly, the current account balance is now projected to be in the range of -0.5 to 0.5 percent of GDP. The report expects the strong momentum in workers' remittances and exports to continue outpacing the increase in imports. This is expected to cushion against lower financial inflows and help strengthen external buffers. The SBP's projection for real GDP growth remains unchanged in the range of 2.5 - 3.5 percent. However, downside risks in the form of additional fiscal consolidation and less than expected wheat harvests were highlighted.

The report also details risks to the medium-term outlook, largely stemming from global trade disruptions and related commodity price volatility in light of the reciprocal tariffs, changing geo-political situation, adjustments in administered energy prices, response of domestic aggregate demand to various fiscal measures, and spillover of movements in international currencies on the local currency.

Imam's disappearance: PHC asks police to submit report

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Atique Shah has issued notice to the police in enforced disappearance of Imam-e-Masjid from outside Mardan Jail, on Monday.

PHC has issued a notice to the police, seeking a report on the disappearance of the Imam named Hazrat Umar. The court has directed the Imam's father, who is the petitioner, to appear before the court via video link on the next hearing instead of physically attending.

The petitioner's father stated that his son, a religious scholar (Alam) and Imam of a Masjid, was taken away from outside Mardan Jail after being acquitted in some cases. The petitioner also informed the court that his 17-year-old son was also enforced disappear from a

madrasa in Sara Dari.

The Additional Attorney General informed the court that reports from federal and provincial agencies had been received, stating that the missing person was not in their custody. PHC expressed concern over the lack of progress in the case and directed the police to submit a report on the matter. The court has sought a report from the relevant SHO and investigation officer, and has adjourned the hearing.

PHC grants protective bail to lawmaker: PHC has granted protective bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Member National Assembly, Shahid Khattak, in cases registered against him. The court has directed him to appear before the relevant courts by 20th May.

The court, comprising Justices Waqar Ahmad and Farah Jamshaid, granted pro-

TECTIVE bail to Shahid Khattak, restraining the authorities from arresting him. The petitioner's counsel, Bashir Wazir Advocate, informed the court that Shahid Khattak is a Member National Assembly from Karak and has cases registered against him.

The counsel stated that Shahid Khattak had obtained protective bail until May 6th in some cases. The federal government submitted a response, stating that two cases were registered against Shahid Khattak. However, the government only provided details of two FIRs. The court was informed that warrants had been issued in two cases registered in Islamabad. The court directed the federal government and Islamabad police to provide details of all cases registered against Shahid Khattak, including those in Punjab.

India signs \$7.4b deal to buy 26 Rafale fighter jets

NEW DELHI (AFP): India signed a deal with France on Monday to buy 26 Rafale fighter aircraft worth \$7.4 for its navy, the Indian defence ministry said in a statement. India will buy 22 single-seater and four twin-seater fighters, made by France's Dassault Aviation (AM.PA), the ministry said, in a deal that would boost the Asian country's defence ties with its second-largest arms sup-

plier. "The delivery of these aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India," the ministry said, adding that the deal is expected to generate thousands of jobs and revenue for a large number of businesses. The purchase was approved earlier this month by India's security cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, Reuters reported. The Indian Air Force currently operates 36 Rafale fighters, while the navy's aircraft fleet mainly comprises Russian MiG-29 jets. India is seeking to modernise its military, reduce dependence on Russian-origin equipment, and boost domestic weapons production to supply forces deployed along two contentious borders with Pakistan and China.