

## Earthquake jolts Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Strong earthquake tremors were felt across various areas of Karachi on Monday afternoon, with a magnitude of 4.7 recorded on the Richter scale. The earthquake occurred at a depth of 19 kilometers, with the epicenter located 75 kilometers north of Karachi. While there have been no immediate reports of significant damage or casualties, residents of Karachi reported feeling the tremors.



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## Gandapur holds key meeting with Imran Khan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Barrister Saif met party founder Imran Khan at Adiala Jail on Wednesday.

The meeting lasted approximately two and a half hours in the conference room. Sources reveal that Barrister Saif arrived at Adiala Jail in Ali Amin Gandapur's vehicle. However, Bushra Bibi was not part of the discussions.

Following the meeting, Ali Amin Gandapur departed from Adiala Jail. According to sources, Azam Swati visited the jail yesterday with a special message, a meeting arranged by Gandapur. Swati had been trying to meet Khan for several days and was finally granted permission.

During the meeting, Swati reportedly discussed the possibility of negotiations with the establishment. While Imran Khan did not agree, his wife, Bushra Bibi, reportedly showed willingness. Today's meeting between Gandapur and Khan is said to be a continuation of Swati's discussions.

## Balochistan govt vows to thwart anti-state elements

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan government spokesman Shahid Rind assured that anti-state elements aiming to disrupt the province's development will not succeed.

Speaking at a news conference alongside other officials here today, Rind emphasized the government's readiness to engage with all stakeholders, highlighting ongoing dialogue with Sardar Akhtar Mengal concerning the Mastung sit-in.

Rind addressed security concerns, noting that internet and cellular services in Quetta have been suspended due to threats. The decision follows violent incidents during a protest by the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, where demonstrators reportedly set fire to police vehicles and vandalized public property. DIG CTD Aitzaz Goraya pointed out that the committee is not officially recognized and accused it of spreading propaganda on social media platforms against state institutions.

## Quetta records first death from Congo virus

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Quetta has recorded its first death from Congo virus this year, as an 18-year-old patient succumbed to the disease. The young man, a resident of Pishin, passed away at Fatima Jinnah General and Chest Hospital in Quetta.

He was admitted to the hospital on March 29 in critical condition and placed in the isolation ward after Congo virus was confirmed in his diagnosis. This marks the first Congo virus-related death in Quetta in 2025. It is pertinent to mention here that the National Institute of Health (NIH) issued advisories for the prevention and control of CCHF.

## BNP-M warns of long march to Quetta amid sit-in at Lakpas

F.P. Report

MASTUNG: Balochistan National Party (BNP-M) chief Akhtar Mengal on Wednesday warned of staging a long march towards Quetta as his party's sit-in protest at Lakpas entered its fifth consecutive day.

His statement came as BNP talks with the provincial government have so far failed to make any headway, with participants still denied entry into Quetta. The sit-in led by Akhtar Mengal and other party leaders was announced from Wadh to Quetta last month to demand the release of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC)

leaders and activists, including Dr

Mahrang Baloch. Addressing the sit-in participants on Wednesday, Mengal said last night "powerless" delegation of the provincial government came to hold talks with the them. "If the women are not released by tomorrow, the containers will be removed from the road," he warned, adding that women along with their children will also march to Quetta.

He said Sindh government has released BYC leader Sammi Deen Baloch but "powerless" Balochistan government "is looking somewhere else". A day earlier, Sindh govern-

ment removed the name of BYC leader Sammi Deen Baloch from detention order under section 3 of the Sindh Maintenance of Public Order (3 MPO) with "immediate effect".

In a separate post, Mengal wrote that there has been a widespread internet "blackout" across Balochistan. "Since late last night, all cellular networks and home WiFi in Balochistan have been shut down," he wrote. "The sole purpose of this blackout is to silence the voices of the oppressed." He later said that senior PTI members, who were on their way to join the sit-in, were stopped from reaching their destination.

## President diagnosed with Covid-19

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Personal physician of President Asif Ali Zardari, Dr. Asim Hussain on Wednesday confirmed that the president had tested positive for COVID-19, adding that his health condition was steadily improving.

In a statement issued by the President House Press Wing, Dr. Asim said that a dedicated team of medical experts was closely monitoring his condition, and providing necessary medical care. Dr. Asim Hussain further stated that due to the nature of the illness, the president had been advised to remain in isolation.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed good wishes for early and complete recovery of President Asif Ali Zardari. The premier



prayed to Allah Almighty for complete recovery of the president. He said the nation should also pray for the health of Asif Ali Zardari and directed the authorities concerned to provide the best health facilities to the president.

Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that President Asif Ali Zardari's condition is improving. In a post on X providing an update on the health of the President, Sindh's senior minister

denied speculations about his shifting to Dubai, stating that these reports were inaccurate.

Zardari had been shifted from Nawabshah to a private hospital in Karachi late Monday night, where he underwent medical tests. First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari reached from Larkana to Karachi and reached to hospital from airport and met her ailing father, President Zardari.

Aseefa Bhutto also inquired hospital doctors about health of her father. "She has been with the President at the Clifton private hospital, sources said. President Zardari being treated at the hospital under supervision of his personal physician, Dr. Asim Hussain. Hospital sources said that the president is suffering from fever owing to infection.

## KP CM takes Net Hydel Profit issue with PM

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has formally taken up the issue of the province's outstanding of Net Hydel Profit (NHP) with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister highlighted the constitutional provisions regarding the NHP, referring to Article 161(2) of the Constitution, which mandates that revenues generated from hydropower plants should be allocated to the entitled provinces.

The letter underscores that the Council of Common Interests (CCI) is responsible for determining the rate of NHP. In 1991, the CCI approved the Qazi Committee Methodology (KCM), which led to the first payment of Rs. 6 billion to the then-North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) in 1992. This methodology was subsequently endorsed by the National Finance Commission (NFC) and the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 1997. In 2016, the federal government introduced an interim arrangement, later ratified by the CCI, which set the net hydropower profit rate at Rs. 1.10 per kilowatt-hour, with an annual 5% indexation.

Under this framework, payments were made to Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but inconsistencies in these payments have led to accumulated dues of Rs. 75 billion for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The letter further states that in 2018, the provincial government pressed for full implementation of the KCM formula, prompting the formation of a committee under the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

In December 2019, the committee verified that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was owed Rs. 128 billion in net hydropower profits

for the financial year 2016-17, a finding later endorsed by the CCI. To address the broader issue of provincial hydropower payments, another committee (Out of the Box Committee) was subsequently formed, which sought input from all stakeholders.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has already submitted its recommendations to the Planning Commission in response. Emphasizing the province's financial crunch, the Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to convene a meeting of the out-of-the-box committee at the earliest to ensure a fair resolution in line with constitutional provisions and CCI decisions. He expressed confidence that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would play a leadership role in securing the constitutional and legal rights of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister (CM) Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has said that the Derajat festival not only highlights regional culture, art and heritage but also promotes inter-district harmony.

He expressed these views while talking to workers, local dignitaries and others who visited his residence to greet him on Eid-ul-Fitr. He said that Derajat festival, held almost every year, includes a variety of exciting events. This year, the festival will also feature a special family festival for women and children, starting from Chand Raat and continuing until April 6.

During this time, various events such as a Mina Bazaar, art exhibitions, food and arts stalls, a magic show, children's games, Rabab performances, Jhoomer dance, musical performances, Taekwondo competitions, cooking contests, makeup contests, fireworks, and many other activities will take place.



D I KHAN: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur offering dua during Eid prayers.



LAHORE: Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## COAS visits Wana, D I Khan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Wana in South Waziristan and Chehkan in Dera Ismail Khan to spend Eid-ul-Fitr with the officers and troops employed on the Western Border.

COAS Asim Munir, offered Eid prayers, and prayed for the enduring stability and prosperity of Pakistan, said a news release by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued here. During his interaction, COAS Asim Munir extended warm Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the troops, lauding their unwavering dedication and exemplary service to the nation.

"Your commitment and resilience not only secure our homeland but also exemplify your profound love for Pakistan," he stated. He appreciated the performance of the Armed Forces and LEAs alongside the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who have always braved against the menace of terrorism. In acknowledging the formations' tireless efforts, the COAS Asim Munir attributed their achievements to the sacrifices of our martyrs and those who are committed towards the greater cause of peace and stability. Upon his arrival, the COAS was warmly received by the Corps Commander Peshawar.

## Deadline for Afghan refugees expires

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The deadline for Afghan refugees staying in Pakistan expired on March 31 and the process of the repatriation of Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders and illegal refugees begin from April 1.

Food and healthcare arrangements have been made for Afghans returning to home. The authorities warned of strict punitive action against those staying in the country after the deadline. Pakistan's Ministry of Interior had asked Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, staying in Pakistan, to leave the country by March 31.

The Afghan nationals will be deported from April 1st (today), the ministry said in an earlier statement. "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Program (IFRP) is being implemented since November 1, 2023. In continuation of the government's decision to repatriate all illegal foreigners, national leadership has now decided to also repatriate ACC holders," the interior ministry said in an earlier official handout. "All illegal foreigners and ACC holders are advised to leave the country voluntarily before March 31, 2025; thereafter, deportation will commence from April 1, 2025," the statement added. The interior ministry said that sufficient time had already been granted for their dignified return. "It is emphasised that no one will be maltreated during the repatriation process and arrangements for food and healthcare for returning foreigners have also been put in place."

## CM Bugti updates PM on Balochistan situation

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Wednesday and briefed him on the situation in his province.

The chief minister also extended Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the premier. The two leaders held detailed discussions on economic, social and law and order situation in Balochistan. The ongoing development projects, started by the federal government in Balochistan, also came under discussion in the meeting.

The premier emphasised providing all possible support for development of Balochistan. He reaffirmed that development of Balochistan was among top priorities of the federal government and all possible steps would be taken in that regard.

Meanwhile, the Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and briefed him on national security and ongoing developments in the country. He also extended Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to the prime minister and discussed the security measures. He also briefed the prime minister on progress of repatriation process of Afghan nationals.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction with the law and order situation, especially during Eid days. The matters related to the interior ministry also came under discussion, during the meeting.

**PM to meet businessmen today:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will take distinguished businessmen on Thursday to take them into confidence over the proposed power sector reforms. Former caretaker minister for industries and commerce Gohar Ejaz will lead the businessmen delegation. Major cut is expected in power tariffs during the prime minister's meeting with businessmen, sources said.

A breakthrough is also likely over

exports and other economic issues in the meeting. The meeting has been scheduled at 2:00 PM at the Prime Minister's Secretariat, sources added. It is to be mentioned here that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently allowed the government to reduce electricity tariffs by Rs1 per kilowatt-hour for all consumers.

The relief will be financed through revenue collected via a levy imposed on captive power plants using natural gas, the IMF said in a statement. The move is part of a broader relief package the government is working on for electricity users. According to official sources, the reduction could lessen the financial burden on consumers by up to Rs100 billion.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with the Member of Bosnia & Herzegovina Presidency, H.E. Dr. Denis Becirovic and conveyed his heartfelt Eid-ul-Fitr greetings to him, as well as to the people of Bosnia & Herzegovina and prayed for their peace, progress and prosperity. The warm sentiments were reciprocated by the Bosnian leader.

During the conversation, the Prime Minister underscored the significance attached by Pakistan to its deep-rooted, historic and fraternal relations with Bosnia & Herzegovina. The Prime Minister expressed Pakistan's solidarity and steadfast support for Bosnia & Herzegovina. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening these bilateral ties, particularly in the areas of trade, culture, and people-to-people exchanges.

In this regard, both leaders agreed to maintain regular dialogue and cooperation between the two sides. The Prime Minister reiterated his invitation to the Bosnian Member of Presidency to undertake an official visit to Pakistan. While accepting the invitation, the Bosnian leader also extended an invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Bosnia.

## Saif plays discriminatory treatment with KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that, following the directives of Imran Khan, the PTI leadership has spent Eid with the families of martyred workers and imprisoned party members.

He said that Imran Khan is a great leader who, despite being incarcerated himself, remains deeply concerned about his party workers. A true leader, he said, does not worry about himself but rather about his people, unlike Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari, who prioritize their person-

al interests. This, he added, is the fundamental difference between genuine and fake leaders.

Barrister Dr. Saif further stated that Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari have historically abandoned their workers in difficult times, whereas Imran Khan has stood as a shield for his supporters during hardships. The entire nation admires Imran Khan's unwavering commitment to his people.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued from his office, Barrister Dr. Saif said that if the federal government is serious about addressing terrorism, it must strengthen Khyber Pakhtunkhwa economically by releasing the province's due payments, including outstand-

ing dues from hydroelectric power and terrorism-related funds. He lamented that despite repeated reminders, the province is still being denied its rightful share.

He further pointed out that while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is battling terrorism, its financial resources are being withheld, even though terrorism is a national issue, not just a provincial one. Additionally, he criticized the non-disbursement of funds for the newly merged tribal districts after the FATA merger. He called for an end to the discriminatory treatment with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stressing that terrorism is a grave issue that should not be politicized.

## Trump tells Cabinet, others that Musk will leave soon

WASHINGTON (Reuters, AFP): US President Donald Trump has told members of his Cabinet and other close contacts that his billionaire ally Elon Musk will soon step back from his government role, Politico reported on Wednesday, citing three people close to Trump.

Trump has tasked the Tesla and SpaceX CEO to lead efforts to cut government funding and dismantle various US agencies as a special government employee. Politico reported that both Trump and Musk decided in recent days that Musk will soon return to his businesses. Representatives for the White House and the

Musk-led task force could not be immediately reached to confirm the report.

Meanwhile, shares of Tesla rebounded Wednesday following the report Musk would soon retreat from his work for Trump's administration, a role that has weighed on his electric car brand. Shares jumped 3.8 percent shortly after midday following a Politico report that Musk would soon leave or sharply reduce his work for Trump. Shares had fallen more than six percent earlier Wednesday following weak first-quarter auto sales.

US government must

**keep funding legal aid for migrant children, judge rules:** A federal judge has ordered the United States government to temporarily restart funding for legal aid to migrant children traveling alone, saying it makes the immigration system fairer.

The order by US District Judge Araceli Martinez-Olguin of San Francisco prevents tens of thousands of unaccompanied children from losing their lawyers. It comes after President Donald Trump's administration cancelled a contract with a nonprofit that helps them get legal representation.





# Eid-ul-Fitr reflections: Sharjeel calls for unity and development in Pakistan

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, offered Eid-ul-Fitr prayers today at his residence, Rawal House, in Tando Jam, Hyderabad. Later, while speaking to the media, he extended Eid greetings to the Islamic world, including Pakistan, and emphasized the need to foster understanding, unity, and work towards the country's development.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that our religion teaches us the values of unity and solidarity. He emphasized that we should set aside all political and ideological differences and come together for the country's development. He added that enemy nations seek to weaken Pakistan, but it is our collective responsibility to unite and safeguard our homeland.

He paid tribute to the citizens and security personnel martyred in the recent terrorist incidents and expressed his heartfelt sympathy to their families. He stated that enemy nations seek to create chaos in Pakistan, but through unity, we can collectively thwart their intentions.

Speaking about traffic accidents, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that traffic control is the responsibility of the police. However, dumper and heavy vehicle drivers must exercise greater caution to prevent the loss of precious lives. He noted that despite the availability of pedestrian bridges, many people do not use them, which is a dangerous practice. He urged the public to strictly follow traffic rules to avoid any untoward incidents.

He added that the process of issuing driving licenses will be further tightened to ensure that vehicles do not end up in

the hands of untrained drivers. The Sindh government has increased the number of Motor Vehicle Inspection (MVI) centers from two to 24 to improve the transport system, with more centers being established under public-private partnerships. He emphasized that MVI rules will be strictly enforced after Eid.

He criticized those who politicize traffic accidents, stating that this is a civil issue and should not be used for political point-scoring. He added that individuals who have faced political failures in the past are now exploiting these incidents to revive their political standing, which he called a highly regrettable act.

Sharjeel Inam Memon clarified that no new canal has been approved. He stated that the PPP and the Sindh government have always been, and will continue to be, opposed to the construction of any canal on the Indus River. He

reaffirmed their clear and unequivocal stance against all such projects, including the Kalabagh Dam, which involve unnecessary construction on the Indus River.

He urged the federal government to have Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif personally announce that no new canal will be constructed on the Indus River.

In response to a question, he stated that while there should be no injustice under the PECA Act, the law is essential to curb false news and misinformation. He assured that the Pakistan Peoples Party firmly believes in press freedom and will not allow any journalist to face difficulties.

He extended Eid greetings to the former Prime Minister and founder of PTI and expressed his hope that upon his release, he would engage in positive politics and contribute to the country's development.



KARACHI: Muslims offering Eid-ul-Fitr prayers in provincial capital on 31 March. —INP Photo

## Governor prays for Zardari's recovery

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has expressed concern over the health of President Asif Ali Zardari.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he conveyed his prayers and best wishes for the president's swift recovery.

He emphasized his hope for President Asif Ali Zardari's well-being and extended heartfelt wishes for his early recuperation.

## Man shot dead on resistance

KARACHI (PPI): A man was shot dead when he put up resistance to robbers, a woman hanged herself and four people got injured over altercation in various locations of Karachi.

Tragically, Amir Sultan, aged 35, was fatally shot during a robbery attempt in Defence, Phase 01. His body was transported to JPMC, and authorities are investigating the incident.

The hanging body of 17-year-old Muskan was discovered in Machar Colony in Maripur police precinct. The dead body was shifted to Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination. The area police has started investigation to find if there was any foul play behind the apparent suicide.

In the early hours, Arbab, a 25-year-old, was shot and injured over a personal dispute at Pathan Colony near Malang Hotel. He was swiftly transported to ASH for medical care.

Meanwhile, in Surjani Town, Syed Inam Ali, reportedly between 75 and 80 years old, suffered gunshot injuries at his home due to a family dispute. He was also taken to ASH for treatment.

In Korangi, 27-year-old Seema sustained injuries from a shooting incident near Korangi Coast Guard Chowrangi. She was transferred to JPMC for medical attention.

Other incidents included the stabbing of Harya, aged 50, during a personal altercation near Quetta Bus Adda. The police are actively pursuing leads and have initiated investigations to uncover the circumstances surrounding these incidents.

# Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman's Criticism of the Government

KARACHI (PPI): The leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, expressed deep concern over the situation in Gaza and Palestine while speaking to media representatives during a traditional Eid gathering at Idara Noor-e-Haq.

He stated that Israel's bombing has robbed Palestinian children of their Eid celebrations, and both the government and the opposition are seeking to please America.

Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman further commented that the leaders of the Muslim Ummah lack courage and dignity. He announced the continuation of the boycott of products benefiting Israel.

He mentioned that after Eid, a vigorous campaign would be launched against the law and order situation, electricity bills, and the sugar and flour mafias. Jamaat-e-Islami will organize rallies in all provinces.

On the first day of Eid-

ul-Fitr, Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, along with Monem Zafar Khan, met with Dr. Aafia's sister, Dr. Fouzia, to extend Eid greetings. Dr. Fouzia expressed regret over the government's lack of action for Dr. Aafia's release.

Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman said that the current government is a continuation of previous governments, striving for American approval. Jamaat-e-Islami will continue efforts for Dr. Aafia's release.

# Opposition by PML-Q on new canal project in Sindh

KARACHI (PPI): The Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) has rejected the plan to construct six new canals from the Indus River and demanded an immediate meeting of the Council of Common Interests on the matter.

In a statement here today, Sindh President Muhammad Tariq Hassan, General Secretary Sarai Niaz Hussain Khaskheli, and Provincial Information Secretary Muhammad

Sadiq Sheikh stated in their declaration that decisions should be made keeping in mind the interests of the people of Sindh. They emphasized that the federal and provincial governments should consult each other before proceeding with the canal project.

The PML-Q leaders said that the people of Sindh are protesting against this project and that their party will represent the people's concerns at every level. They

claimed that the governance style does not align with public aspirations in this regard.

The leaders insisted that the government should clear up public confusion and ensure that the people of Sindh are not deceived in any way. PML-Q announced that under the leadership of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, they will continue to fight for public rights and play a pivotal role in ending the new canal project.

# Patients are receiving free medical care at LGH: Zafar

LAHORE (APP): Medical Officer of Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI), Professor Dr. Al-Fareed

Zafar, has announced that, under the directives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, patients are receiving free and high-quality medical care at General Hospital.

He also lauded healthcare professionals who chose to celebrate Eid with patients, recognizing their dedication to service.

Dr. Al-Fareed Zafar expressed these views interacting with doctors and patients during his visit to various wards of General Hospital after performing Umrah on Wednesday. He was accompanied by MS Professor Faryad Hussain, Additional Director of Emergency Dr. Laila

Shafiq, Dr. Abdul Aziz, and other administrative officials.

Dr. Zafar emphasized that, in line with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, patients are being provided with quality medical services without any consultation fee. He also highlighted the role of philanthropists in arranging special Eid meals for patients and their attendants. "With the guidance of Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique, we aim to transform LGH into a model hospital," he stated.

Commending the efforts of hospital staff, Dr. Zafar acknowledged that doctors, nurses, and paramedics continued their duties throughout Ramadan to serve those in need. He extended special

congratulations to healthcare professionals who sacrificed their personal celebrations to care for patients on Eid. Additionally, he announced certificates of appreciation for employees who have consistently served on Eid duty for the past ten years.

Earlier, Dr. Zafar reviewed hospital arrangements and praised faculty members and administrative staff for ensuring exemplary patient care.

He later visited patients, extended Eid greetings, inquired about their well-being, and distributed Eid gifts. He also appreciated the efforts made by the hospital's administration in maintaining efficient healthcare services during the Eid holidays.



LAHORE: People sitting on the grass and enjoying food with family members at the zoo during Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations in the city. —APP Photo

## Owners bound to run their theatres as per their undertaking: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari has said that owners of theatres are bound to run their theaters as per their undertaking.

According to official sources here on Wednesday, the minister said that owners, who would violate their undertaking, would have to face disciplinary action.

Azma Bukhari said that stage actors and actresses must play their role in making theaters the family entertainment points. Owners of theatres must provide quality recreation to people, she added. The minister said that no one was allowed to run a theatre without a licence and added that all deputy commissioners and district administration must stay in touch with representatives of the Punjab Art Council.

The minister said that no one would be allowed to spread vulgarity in the name of theatres. She said that she would pay surprise visits to different theatres across the district.

## Three injured in Lahore firing

LAHORE (APP): Three persons were injured in a firing incident that occurred near Mugalpura area of Lahore, tv channels quoting police reported on Wednesday.

According to details, a man opened fire and injured his wife, brother-in-law and a child to settle domestic dispute near Mugalpura area of Lahore.

Police team after receiving reports rushed to the site and shifted the injured identified as Shumaila, Khurram and Usman to nearby hospital for emergency treatment. Police team also conducted raid and arrested the accused with weapon used for criminal purpose. Further investigations are underway.

# MQM Pakistan slams SBCA for legalizing illegal commercial activities

KARACHI (PPI): The central committee of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM) has strongly condemned the amended building regulations by the Sindh Building Control Authority, a civic body operating under the Sindh government.

The purpose of these amendments is to provide legal protection to illegal commercial entities in residential areas across the city.

In a statement issued here today, the central committee criticized the move,

stating that the amendments made by SBCA have changed the definition of an amenity plot and introduced a new term for land use, which will grant legal protection to illegal businesses on residential plots.

MQM stated that these amendments will lead to the misuse of residential areas for financial and commercial benefits, favoring the builder mafia and opening new avenues for corruption. This will push the already deteriorating city infrastructure further towards ruin.

The central committee further noted that the increase in commercial activities such as shops, schools, and clinics in residential areas will add to existing issues.

MQM announced that they will vigorously protest in the Sindh Assembly and will also approach the Sindh High Court. MQM Pakistan accused the Pakistan Peoples Party of infringing on citizens' rights and expressed their commitment to obstructing this corruption through democratic and legal means.

# Punjab health secretary visits Mayo Hospital

LAHORE (APP): Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department Secretary Azmat Mehmood on Wednesday conducted a visit to Mayo Hospital to review healthcare facilities.

He was accompanied by Special Secretary Operations Tariq Mehmood Rahmani and Additional Secretary Technical Dr. Muhammad Waseem.

During the visit, the Punjab Health Secretary interacted with patients, inquired about their well-being, and sought feedback on medical services. Expressing displeasure over doctors not wearing overcoats, he emphasized

adherence to professional dress codes.

The visit also included a comprehensive inspection of medicine availability, doctors' attendance, and the functioning of the Chief Minister's Complaint Cell. Azmat Mehmood issued on-the-spot directives in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, to enhance patient care services.

He instructed hospital authorities to prominently display duty rosters in key locations and questioned officials about the absence of an electronic inventory for medicine supply. Additionally, he expressed dissatisfaction over the lack

of a public address system in the emergency department.

To improve patient and attendant facilities, the Secretary ordered the immediate provision of chairs and benches in waiting areas. He also directed the submission of a compliance report on all issued instructions by the evening.

Speaking on the occasion, Azmat Mehmood reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving public healthcare services, stating that visits to government hospitals would continue to ensure efficient service delivery. He assured that negligence in patient treatment and care would not be tolerated.

## Mela Baharan to begin from April 4

LAHORE (APP): The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) and the Punjab government is set to host the vibrant 'Mela Baharan' on the historic Royal Trail from April 4 to 6 between 6am and 11am.

This free, family-oriented festival would transform the Royal Trail into a lively celebration of spring and Lahori culture, beginning at Delhi Gate and culminating at Masjid Wazir Khan Chowk, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

A key feature of the event is the Shahi Guzargah Moasam-e-Bahar Parade, scheduled for 6:00 pm on both Friday and Saturday. Attendees can expect a diverse range of attractions, including the beautifully restored Khucha Hussain Shah, the blooming Gali Surjan Singh with its folk music, the colorful Shabeel Wali Gali showcasing local crafts and performances and the bustling Wazir Khan Square with its Mena Bazaar.

The festival will also feature various performances, workshops, and exhibitions, highlighting Punjabi Boliyan, Putli Tamasha, live music, and Dastangoi, among other cultural expressions.



KARACHI: People enjoying at the beach during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays celebrate Karachi. —INP Photo



# Derajat Recreational and Traditional Sports Festival to Begin on April 5

Shahid Afridi

PESHAWAR: Dera Ismail Khan is set to host its first-ever and unique Derajat Recreational and Traditional Sports Festival commencing on April 5. All preparations for the event have been finalized and the festival will be officially inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur. This vibrant festival showcasing traditional and national sports will continue until April 20, attracting thousands of visitors from across the country.

The festival will feature various exciting

activities including the historic Mela Aspaan, Off-Road Jeep Show, Pet Show, traditional and national sports competitions, Ladies Meena Bazaar, Grand Mushaira, Qirat and Naat recitation contests, an Art Exhibition, a Tree Plantation Campaign and guided tours of historical sites.

According to the Department of Sports, KP the festival will include traditional competitions such as Neza Bazi (Tent Pegging), Kabaddi, Dangal (Wrestling), Dog Show, Pet Show, Bull Racing, Camel Racing, Pigeon Racing, Karka and Doda. Additionally main-

stream sports like Cricket, Football, Table Tennis, Hockey, Martial Arts, Badminton, Karate, Wushu, Boxing, Chess, Judo, Handball, Bodybuilding, Snooker, Skiing and Gymnastics will also be featured. One of the festival's major highlights will be a 100-kilometer Off-Road Jeep Race attracting top racers from across the country to showcase their driving skills.

Considering the impact of climate change and the need for environmental sustainability, the festival will also launch a Green Dera Plantation campaign, aiming to plant a significant number of

trees at various locations. As part of the festival's schedule Qirat and Naat recitation competitions will be held alongside a Grand Mushaira where renowned poets from across the country will captivate the audience with their literary prowess. The festival will also include guided tours to historical and archaeological sites in Dera Ismail Khan such as the Kafir Kot Temples and Rehman Dheri. Furthermore the Art Exhibition will host talented artists from across the country, providing them with a platform to showcase their creativity.



PESHAWAR: Children enjoying swings during the third day of Eid at Tehsil Gor Ghatrri. — INP photo

## WSSP successfully completes Eid-ul-Fitr cleaning operation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) successfully completed Eid-ul-Fitr operations. More than 2,500 workers participated in the operation, which was supervised by Chief Executive Officer Yasir Ali Khan. General Manager Muhammad Ijaz, zonal managers, and management staff were also present in the field and continuously monitored the operation. Officers from the district administration also visited operational sites to assess

the cleanliness situation. Political, social, and public circles, along with elected representatives, praised the WSSP staff for ensuring cleanliness during Eid and appreciated the management's efforts. A day before Eid, a city-wide clean-up operation was conducted, during which all areas and collection points were cleared, and lime was applied. A day before Eid staff remained on duty despite Sunday and 455 tons of waste was collected. On Eid day, early in the morning, cleaning was carried out around mosques

and residential areas. The staff worked day and night. Over the three days, approximately 1,000 tons of waste was disposed of, collection points were cleared, and lime was applied. Water supply staff also remained on duty to ensure a continuous water supply, and drain clearance operations also continued. A total of 238 small and large vehicles were used to collect and transport waste from streets to collection points, then to transfer stations, and finally to the dumping site. Special teams moni-

tored the operation across all five zones. Elected local bodies representatives commended the Eid cleaning operation, stating that timely cleanliness was ensured, and the staff's hard work made Eid enjoyable for citizens. They acknowledged a noticeable improvement in sanitation, which was evident from Eid operation. Meanwhile, CEO Yasir Ali Khan appreciated the efforts of the staff and management officials, emphasizing that teamwork played a crucial role in keeping the city clean.

## Another prestigious honor for Islamia Collegiate School Dr. Inayat ur Rehman to represent Pakistan at World School Summit



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR :Dr. Inayat ur

Rehman, a distinguished faculty member of Islamia Collegiate School, has been officially selected to participate in the prestigious World School Summit, set to be held in Dubai on April 12. This international gathering will bring together leading education experts, teachers, and policymakers to explore the latest trends in teaching methodologies, educational reforms, and school leadership.

With an impressive career spanning 30 years, Dr. Inayat ur Rehman has

made significant contributions to the field of education, particularly in the area of Parent-Teacher Councils. His research and insights have been instrumental in shaping collaborative approaches to student development. At the summit, he will share his experiences and expertise with a global audience, furthering discussions on strengthening partnerships between parents and educators.

His selection for this prestigious event is a mat-

ter of great pride for Islamia Collegiate School, reflecting its commitment to academic excellence and global engagement. The school community has lauded this recognition, viewing it as a testament to its role in advancing innovative educational practices. Dr. Inayat ur Rehman's participation at the World School Summit not only highlights his personal achievements but also underscores Pakistan's growing presence in international academic forums.

## Eid is a festival of joy and brotherhood: Qasim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: People from different areas meet Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, to exchange eid greetings. On the second day of Eid-ul-Fitr, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, met with dignitaries, public representatives, party workers, and social figures from various regions at his res-

idence. He extended Eid greetings to all guests and expressed his best wishes for the progress and prosperity of the nation. On this occasion, the Minister for Social Welfare stated that Eid is a festival of joy and brotherhood, teaching us lessons of love, unity, and sacrifice. He urged the public to include deserving individuals in their celebrations and actively participate in social welfare

activities. During the meeting, various delegations informed the minister



about public issues, to which he assured his full cooperation in resolving them. Syed Qasim Ali Shah emphasized that the government is taking all possible steps for the welfare of the people and that social development projects will continue to be prioritized. The meeting concluded in a pleasant atmosphere, where all participants exchanged Eid greetings and prayed for the security and progress of the country.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: During the Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations, the Mayor of Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, held meetings at his residence with distinguished individuals, public representatives, party workers, social figures, and people from all walks of life who had gathered from

various areas. He extended Eid greetings to all the guests and expressed his best wishes for the progress and prosperity of the country and the nation. On this occasion, former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali was also present, and a large number of people visited his home to extend Eid

greetings. All the attendees not only praised the public-friendly approach of the Governor and the Mayor but also expressed that their compassionate and approachable manner will always be remembered by the people of Peshawar. On this occasion, Mayor Haji Zubair Ali emphasized

that Eid is a festival of joy and brotherhood, which teaches us love, unity, and selflessness. He urged the public to include the needy in their celebrations and actively participate in social welfare activities. During the meetings, various delegations assured their full support and cooperation.



## Children over the moon after receiving Eidi gifts, visit Eid melas

PESHAWAR (APP): On the second day of Eidul Fitr celebrations, the streets, homes, and parks across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are alive with joy, laughter, and the spirit of togetherness as children visited Eid melas to enjoy swings. This year, like in other parts of Pakistan, the people of the province celebrated the festival of Eid with traditional fervor, exchanging Eidi gifts, visiting loved ones, and flocking to local parks and recreational Eid melas.

Ismail Khan, a 6-year-old boy, was ecstatic after receiving his first Eidi. "Big thank you to my uncle who give me Rs1000 eidi on this Eid," he told APP at Chacha Younas family park, enjoying free swing on Tuesday. The tradition of giving Eidi, a form of monetary gift, to children, further enhances these bonds. "I received total Rs3000 as Eidi from relatives and spent Rs1000 of it visiting parks and the Peshawar Zoo on first day of Eid, while the rest was donated to orphans, so they too could be part of the Eid celebrations," said Ismail. He emphasized how helping those in need

adds an extra layer of joy to the festivities. The exchange of gifts, sweets, and greetings is a staple of Eid celebrations, with the people of Peshawar, Nowshera, and Charsadda ensuring they continue this age-old tradition with great enthusiasm. As per tradition, the residents of Peshawar spent the first day of Eid at home, enjoying the comfort and warmth of family. In the following days, they visited relatives and friends, bringing gifts and exchanging heartfelt Eid greetings. Khayam Khan, 30, a resident of Nowshera said that he visited my maternal uncle on the second day of Eid and exchanged Eid greetings with him and his family. Such joyful moments, especially after a month of fasting, help foster a spirit of love and brotherhood in our society. The 2nd day of Eid saw an influx of people heading to various parks and recreational areas across the province, making the most of the holiday. Popular spots like Chacha Younis Park, Shahi Bagh, and the Peshawar Zoo were bustling with families, especially children,

enjoying free swings, delicious food, and the opportunity to see wildlife. Anaya Bibi (10), a resident of Wapda Town Peshawar remarked, "Eidi from my relatives helped cover the costs of tickets for the swings, food, and transport. Visiting these parks adds so much fun to the celebrations." The Government's stringent security measures ensured that visitors could enjoy these places without any concerns. Notably, Sardaryab picnic point on the Peshawar-Charsadda Road and Kund Park in Nowshera attracted large crowds. People gathered around the banks of the Shah Alam, Khayali, and Indus rivers, where they savored traditional meat and rice dishes and enjoyed the picturesque riverside views. The Sardaryab picnic point in Charsadda was particularly popular, offering tourists a chance to relax along the riverbank. The colorful boats, which cost between Rs300 for a ride, were a huge draw for families. "I visit Sardaryab every Eid. The river views and boat rides pro-

vide a refreshing break from the routine, and the natural beauty of the area makes it a perfect Eid getaway." Local musicians and singers also added to the atmosphere, performing traditional Pashto songs, which were met with applause from the visitors. The lively atmosphere made Sardaryab a prime destination for Eid celebrations. In Kohat, the Tanda Dam continued to attract tourists on the second day of Eid. People from surrounding areas, including Hangu, Karak, and Bannu, came to enjoy the serene beauty of the dam and indulge in activities like swimming and fishing. "Tanda Dam is a peaceful spot, and I always make it a point to visit during Eid," said Akhlaq Khan, a local tourist. Further afield, families flocked to popular hill stations like Nathia Gali, Kalam, and Murree, where the pleasant weather added to the festive mood. For those seeking cinematic entertainment, cinema houses also saw a rise in visitors, as families enjoyed films on the big screen.

## Children flock to Peshawar Zoo on third day of Eid amid funfair

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Zoo saw a vibrant surge of visitors on the third day of Eid-ul-Fitr, with families, especially children, flocking to the wildlife sanctuary to celebrate the joyous occasion amid funfair and excitement. The excitement was palpable as kids, accompanied by their parents, explored the zoo's diverse collection of wild animals and enjoyed the serene, lush environment. The zoo's expansive layout, set on 29 acres near the University of Peshawar, boasts Pakistan's largest collection of native and exotic wildlife. At the entrance, impressive statues of an elephant and a giraffe capture the attention of visitors, sparking curiosity from those passing by Rahatabad Road. Among the delighted visitors was Anaya Khan, a 9-year-old student from Nowshera district, who couldn't contain her joy after visiting the zoo for the first time.

"Seeing wild animals like the cobra snake, lion, falcons, and giraffes with my own eyes was a dream come true today," said Anaya, beaming with excitement. "A big thank you to my papa for fulfilling my childhood dream today." Like many others, Anaya was also taken aback by the zoo's efforts to provide a natural habitat for the animals, as well as the well-maintained facilities for visitors. The zoo's wide array of wild species remained the center of attention, with

children and families captivated by the lions, bears, tigers, giraffes, and the majestic falcons. Visitors came from far-flung regions such as Kohat, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Mohmand, and Swabi, as well as the host city, Peshawar. These visitors were warmly greeted by wildlife experts, who provided educational information on the animals. The zoo, established by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department, is home to a diverse range of animals and birds from across Pakistan. Its exhibits, such as the large eagle enclosure, where brown and black eagles soar, are particularly popular. The zoo also houses zebras, camels, deer, ducks, pheasants, and a variety of birds that intrigue visitors. For those wishing to explore the zoo in a shorter time, a safari bus is available, while a restaurant provides food services. Additionally, the zoo offers free rides on swings, camels, and even

a miniature train – all contributing to an enjoyable experience for children. Lecturer Sundas, who brought her daughter from Nowshera, praised the zoo as a gift to the people of Peshawar, enhancing both the city's beauty and the well-being of its residents. "In the past, I traveled to Islamabad and Lahore to visit zoos. This year, I didn't need to go anywhere else because Peshawar Zoo has become a great alternative," she said. Sundas, whose children were particularly drawn to the falcons, also emphasized the zoo's educational value. "It's not just a place of entertainment; it's also an invaluable source of education and research for students of wildlife and zoology," she added. However, she also pointed out areas for improvement, such as the need for proper shelters, shade, and more trees for the animals, as well as better medical facilities for their care.







## In brief

### Kundi celebrates Eid in D I Khan F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, along with Member of Provincial Assembly Ahmad Karim Kundi, welcomed the people of the area on the second day of Eid ul-Fitr at his residence here on Monday. A large number of political, social, and local representatives, along with a significant crowd from the area, gathered at the Kundi Model Farm in Dera Ismail Khan to celebrate this joyous occasion. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi warmly mingled with guests, offering greetings and exchanging Eid wishes. Guests were treated with sweets and refreshing beverages as part of the hospitality. The local residents expressed their joy at having the Governor among them on this special occasion, appreciating his presence in the community. Governor Kundi emphasized the importance of sharing Eid celebrations with the people, saying, "It is my privilege to be here with my people on this blessed occasion of Eid ul-Fitr. I pray that every day in our province is filled with happiness and peace." He further expressed his gratitude to all the esteemed guests who attended the celebration, saying, "I am deeply thankful for the love and affection shown by everyone who came to celebrate Eid with us."

### Chairman DDAC visits jail F.P. Report

KOHAT: Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat Shafi Jan MPA visited Kohat Jail on the 3rd Day of Eidul Fitr. He on this occasion, met the prisoners in jail, inquired after their well-being, wished them Eid and also knew about their problems. The jail authorities briefed the Chairman DDAC in detail regarding the welfare steps of the prisoners taken by the government. Shafi Jan MPA directed the jail administration to take necessary steps to resolve the problems faced by the prisoners at the earliest and also take special care of their rights. He added that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf provincial government is very serious about the rehabilitation of the prisoners and improving their lives. Chairman DDAC reiterated his resolve that he would talk to the authorities concerned to improve basic facilities in the prison.

### IG FC hosts Eid festive gathering F.P. Report

WANA: A festive Eid gathering was organized at Upper Camp by the Inspector General of Frontier Corps (IGFC), attended by tribal elders, religious scholars, and local journalists. However, IGFC South was unable to attend due to personal commitments, and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Brigadier Ashfaq participated on his behalf, extending Eid greetings to the attendees. Addressing the gathering, Brigadier Ashfaq emphasized that maintaining peace and order in the region is the top priority, along with the revival of trade and business activities, which are crucial for regional stability. Speaking about the Pakistan-Afghanistan border situation, he stated that the Government of Pakistan and law enforcement agencies have reopened the border, but obstacles are being imposed by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He expressed hope that a resolution would be reached soon, bringing relief to the people facing difficulties.

# Several traffic accidents happened during Eid

## F.P. Report

KARAK: Almost eight people were seriously injured and one died in various traffic accidents on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr. According to the details, eight people were seriously injured and one died in various traffic accidents on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The first accident was an accident due to excessive speeding at Mir Kalam Kala on the Indus Highway. Four people were injured as a result of the accident. As soon as the control received information, an ambulance reached the spot.

The injured were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital Karak after being provided first aid by the Rescue 1122 medical team. Identification: Hameed, age 25, Ehtesham, age 16, Salman, age 11, Moazzam, age 17, residents of Dub Kala Union Council, Mehita Khel, Karak. The second accident was an accident due to negligence of a motorcycle at Amberi

Kala Chowk.

### Weapons recovered:

Inter-district vagrants who indulge in car and motorcycle fun arrested, weapons recovered. According to details, on the occasion of Eid, loafers and vagrants from other districts like Lucky, Bannu, Tank, DI Khan, etc., head to Karak district and indulge in car and motorcycle fun at various places and places. They drift on motor cars and pickup trucks and one-wheel on motorcycles, which pose a threat to their own lives as well as the lives of the common people.

DPO Karak Shahbaz Elahi has taken strict notice of this game of death and ordered action to be taken against these vagrants, under which action is being taken by the police at the level of various police stations.

DSP Headquarters Fazal Akbar Khattak along with a police team conducted an operation in Kamran Shaheed Chowk and nearby

areas and arrested 15 vagrants from Lucky, Tank, DI Khan etc., recovered 3 pistols and ammunition and took into custody two motorcycles. They will be shifted to Sabirabad police station and further legal action will be taken against them. While SHO of Yaqub Khan Shaheed police station Zafar Ali Khan has also taken 7 accused who staged the death act into custody and two pick-up trucks have been locked up in the police station. Regular legal action has been taken against them.

Meanwhile, Date palms and other trees caught fire due to unknown reasons in Ahmadi Banda area of Tehsil Banda Dawood Shah. As soon as the Rescue 1122 control room received the information, the Station 22 Firefighters team was dispatched to the scene. The Rescue 1122 Firefighters team immediately reached the spot and brought the fire under control after fighting for 2 hours.

# WSSCM completed Eid cleanliness operation

## F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) successfully completed its cleanliness operation during Eidul Fitr. 472 tons waste has safely disposed of during four days. The waste disposal operation started from Chand Raat and continued till 3rd day of Eid.

According to the spokesperson of WSSCM, The Management staff were on duty during Eid holidays, 216 sanitation workers participated in the sanitation operation, while 32 vehicles were deployed. 57 Complaints were received during Eid which were immediately resolved.

The water supply staff of the company also ensured

uninterrupted supply of clean water to the citizens while team also carried out to repair pipe leakages in different areas of the city. The sanitation staff of the company cleaned all EidGahs in Mardan city before Eid prayer. The company's staff knocked every door and by making announcements through loudspeakers to remove garbage from their homes before Eid so that they can have a clean environment on the occasion of Eid.

Chairman Board of Directors WSSCM, Engineer Adil Nawaz and Chief Executive Officer Shahid Khan celebrated Eid with sanitation staff and present in the field throughout the holidays to ensure a clean and waste free environment for the

citizens. They also visited various areas of Mardan and commended the management and workers for their outstanding performance. They paid tribute to all the staff of the company for their excellent cleanliness, and said that our workers worked day and night to provide clean environment to the citizens of Mardan.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan, Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, distributed sweets and Eid gifts among the WSSCM staff after the Eid prayers, appreciating their dedication and hard work in maintaining cleanliness across the city. From Chand Raat to the third day of Eid, 472 tons waste was collected from 14 union councils of Mardan city and safely disposed of.

# Eid a festive to spread brotherhood: Mir Hassan

## F.P. Report

HUB: Provincial Minister for Agriculture and Co-operative Mir Ali Hassan Zehri have told the people at the Hub that Eid-ul-Fitr is a festival to spread of happiness and love, and that Eid-ul-Fitr is a prestigious gift for Muslims after completion of Ramadan. Meanwhile, provincial minister Mir Ali Hassan Zehri organized the Eid Milan party on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr at Zehri Farm House in Hub. Thousands of constituencies, including PPP officials and workers, tribal elders and regional trusters attended the ceremony.

On this occasion, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri received Eid and congratulated the Eid and expressed his best wishes. On this occasion, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri welcomed the people. Tribal elders, party officials and

the people of Hub congratulated Mir Ali Hassan Zehri on the performing Umrah and Eid.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri mixed with people on the occasion while regional issues were also discussed during the meeting with the people. He thanked the people of the constituency who supported us and appreciated our work. He further said that the hub is changing rapidly towards development and prosperity. He said that we have tried to do what we could do for the people of the Hub as a servant of the people, and Al-Hamdullah is leading the development.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said more that, in the previous periods, those who ignore the hub have taken silence to see the development of the hub and their politics have been limited to their homes. We say that if they had done a little

work for the hub in their periods, then the hub would not have turned into ruins. We worked day and night in the hub under the vision of President Asif Ali Zardari and Insha'Allah is not far when the district hub will be known as a model district. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri thanked the people and said that with the help of the people, more development schemes will be laid for the hub and will continue to work for the people for all possible facilities.

On this occasion, regional elders, party officials, workers and the people assured their full support to Mir Ali Hassan Zehri and expressed his best wishes for the future and prayed that Allah Almighty should give more power and ability to Mir Ali Hassan Zehri so that the mission of making the hub a model district is a matter of greatness.



HYDERABAD: Children enjoying traditional swings of a vendor in the street on the third day of Eidul Fitr celebrations in the city.

### Admn distributes Eidi, sweets F.P. Report

THALL: Implanting the directions of the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah, the district administration Hangu has on the orders of the Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah and Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir, the affectees of the Kurram District were also engaged in the joys of Eidul Fitr under the Chief Minister's Program "Awami Agenda".

The Additional Assistant Commissioner Thall Syed Ehsan Ali Shah, in this connection visited the TDPs Camp established by the Provincial Government for the affectees of the Kurram district at Government Degree College Thall on the 1st day of Eidul Fitr, where he met the victims, inquired about their health and greeted them on Eidul Fitr. He also distributed Eidi, Sweets and Food among the victims on behalf of the Provincial government and the District Administration Hangu.

The Additional Assistant Commissioner also appraised himself of the problems of the affectees on this occasion and resolved most of their needs and problems on the spot. He said that the victims of Kurram district are our brothers and sisters and special guests, so we will spare no moment in their serving and ensure them with all possible facilities here. The affected families expressed their satisfaction with the facilities being provided in the camp and the hospitality shown by the administration.

### Rally held F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A rally was held in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, to show solidarity with the oppressed people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine.

The rally, organized by the International Forum for Justice and Human Rights and the Central Seerat Committee, commenced at Eidgah and proceeded to Upper Adda, drawing a large turnout of civil society members, Seerat Committee representatives, and citizens.

# Saiful Malook: The fairytale lake beckons Eid vacationers

KAGHAN (APP): Saiful Malook--a lake Known for fairytales attracted influx of tourists and adventure sports enthusiasts during vacations of Eidul Fitr. Nestled amidst snow-capped peaks of the Malika Parbat range in Mansehra's Kaghan Valley, the famous lake captivates the visitors with its fairytale-like charm this week amid fun and excitement.

The arduous journey from Pakistan's plain districts to the northern highlands of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is instantly rewarded as the travelers encounter the breathtaking beauty of Saiful Malook lake. Spanning 1.06 square miles with a depth of 113 feet and sitting at an elevation of 3,224 meters above sea level, Saiful Malook's oval shape with crystal-clear and greenish-blue waters leave an indelible mark on the hearts of millions of tourists each year.

Revered as a lake of legends and princes, Saiful Malook is enveloped by the serene mountains of Malika Parbat in upper Kaghan, offering a peaceful retreat to tourists from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Named after the Persian Prince Saiful Malook, the lake attracts both international and local tourists, particularly during the summer months when its pleasant climate and cascading waterfalls from nearby glaciers add to its allure.

The lake is immortalized in Sufi poet Mian Muhammad Bakhsh's epic, "Fairytale of Saiful Malook," which recounts the prince Saiful Malook quest for the fairy princess Badriul Jamala, a journey marked by enchanting stories and unfulfilled longing. Though Pakistan boasts numerous stunning lakes like Ansoo, Lalasar, Dudipastar, and Sheosar, Saiful Malook stands out for its unique blend of fairytales, striking beauty, and pristine waters.

Dental surgeon Dr Muhammad Tahir, attested to the lake's exception-

al charm, citing its lasting impression compared to other global lakes destinations. In the today's digital age, he said there is a growing recognition of the potential for leveraging social media to enhance mountains and eco-tourism as well as archeology for economic development.

Abu Zafar Sadiq, President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, highlighted how the growing digital and social media can transform the tourism landscape especially Saiful Malook charm in Pakistan. "Saiful Malook and similar breathtaking tourism sites offer stunning beauty and significant economic promise for Pakistan subject to the government patronage. Despite its immense potential, he said Pakistan's tourism sector had struggled to reach its full economic potential mainly due to natural calamities and security challenges.

In 2017, Zafar said tourism contributed only \$8.8 billion, or 2.9% of GDP, a stark contrast to the \$15 billion, or 5.7% of GDP, in 2019. However the COVID-19 pandemic and security issues have exacerbated these challenges, with a notable decline in tourism revenue and employment in Pakistan. Abu Zafar emphasized the importance of embracing digital innovations, such as virtual tours of Saiful Malook through social media campaigns, to attract more visitors.

He advocated for hiring digital professionals and utilizing platforms like GPS and artificial intelligence to promote Pakistan's diverse tourism offerings. "I came Saiful Malook lake to spend Eid holidays in its soothing environment with family" said Khayam Khan, a resident of Nowshera. He said Saiful Malook waterfall emanating from Malka Parbat and boats ride inside the lake add its charm.

The potential for tourism growth is evident in Pakistan, with the "One

Belt, One Road" initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) playing pivotal roles in improving infrastructure and boosting tourism, transport and hospitality industries. He also suggested that developing attractions like a chairlift between Naran and Saiful Malook besides proposed Dir-Chitral Cable Car could generate significant revenue and enhance the socio-economic conditions of people of the region.

However, challenges remain, including environmental and accommodation concerns. Efforts to improve waste management and enhance facilities are crucial for preserving the natural beauty of Saiful Malook and other lakes of Pakistan. Increased litter bins, sanitary workers, and improved parking facilities are among the necessary measures to maintain the lake's allure.

Professor Khurshid Khan of Peshawar University underscored the importance of digital showcasing of all lakes especially Saiful Malook for attracting foreign tourists. Saiful Malook Ansoo and Mahudhand lakes are gems of Pakistan. Utilizing digital technology to highlight these treasures can draw international visitors in droves and further boost tourism.

KP Wildlife Department, which oversees Saiful Malook and Lulusar lakes as national parks, is working to ensure sustainable protection and improved tourist facilities. Future developments, such as a chairlift project and enhanced service areas, aim to elevate the tourist experience while supporting local economies. Overall, as Pakistan continues to enhance its digital presence and infrastructure, Saiful Malook Lake remains a symbol of the nation's rich natural and cultural heritage, poised to attract and inspire millions of visitors from around the world.

# Weathering the storm: Harnessing psychology to face Pakistan's climate crisis

## Baseer Ali Rahman Khan

**T**HE state of our planet often feels like a hard nut to crack. Forests are disappearing, rivers are running out and entire communities are facing the wrath of an unpredictable climate change.

Pakistan, in particular, is no stranger to these challenges-devastating floods, scorching heatwaves and rapidly melting glaciers paint a grim picture. Faced with such a tough battle, it's easy to feel like a drop in the ocean-helpless, frustrated, and exhausted. But what if, instead of sinking into despair, we turned these emotions into a driving force for change?

A Fork in the Road: A Personal Awakening

When I first started studying environmental issues, it felt like staring into the abyss. Learning about the impact of climate change on Pakistan-the encroaching deserts, the receding Indus River, and the displacement of millions-left me

feeling paralyzed. The more I understood, the more I felt like a deer caught in headlights, unable to move forward. That changed when I studied the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral in the northern region of the province, where I met locals directly impacted by glacial melt yet still resilient and hopeful-transforming my perspective.

Instead of bottling up my emotions, I engaged in open conversations about climate anxiety. That experience was a lightbulb moment: perhaps psychology could be the missing piece in climate action. Could understanding our emotions help us fight this crisis more effectively?

The Psychology Behind Climate Action

Returning from that trip into the Northern range, I pivoted my focus toward clinical psychology, exploring how grief, fear, and resilience shape human behavior. One thing became clear-climate discussions often ask, "Why aren't we doing more?" but rarely examine how

people mentally process a crisis of this magnitude. To tackle climate change, we must first understand the human mind.

Here are three psychological insights that can help us respond more effectively:

1. The Window of Tolerance: Why Overwhelm Leads to Inaction

Dr. Dan Siegel's "window of tolerance" concept, rooted in neuroscience and psychology, describes the ideal emotional and physiological state for effectively managing stress, processing emotions, and making decisions. Within this window, we can think clearly and respond thoughtfully. However, when overwhelming challenges-such as relentless floods, unpredictable monsoons, or suffocating smog-push us beyond our limits, we may either shut down in despair or seek false comfort. The constant stream of distressing news can further push individuals out of this balanced state, making action feel impossible. Understanding this concept allows us to build resilience and remain engaged without succumbing to burnout.

2. The Double Bind: Stuck Between Care and Powerlessness

Many Pakistanis deeply care about climate change but feel like a cog in the machine-too small to make a real difference. At the same time, they fear that large-scale policy shifts, like phasing out fossil fuels, might worsen economic hardships. This creates a psychological double bind: caring but feeling powerless. When people feel stuck, they disengage-not out of apathy, but out of exhaustion.

Consider Pakistan's struggle with sustainable energy. While there's a strong push for renewables, communities reliant on coal and gas fear job losses. This mirrors the global dilemma: the desire for progress tempered by the fear of its consequences. Instead of swinging between doomsday warnings and blind optimism, we must acknowledge these fears while guiding people

toward practical, manageable solutions.

3. Attunement: Meeting People Where They Are

A skilled therapist doesn't force change but builds trust first. The same principle applies to climate conversations. Instead of shaming people into action or dismissing their doubts, we must create dialogues that validate concerns while steering them toward solutions.

A great example is Pakistan's local water conservation initiatives. By collaborating with farmers and incorporating indigenous water management techniques, experts have found ways to conserve resources without disrupting livelihoods. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, making change feel less like a foreign imposition and more like a shared mission.

Turning Climate Anxiety into Action

These psychological tools aren't just for therapists-they're for all of us.

"Self-awareness: Instead of suppressing climate anxiety, acknowledge it. It's okay to feel overwhelmed.

"Supportive dialogue: Create spaces where people can voice their fears without judgment.

"Authentic leadership: Leaders must admit uncertainties while committing to action. Saying, 'We don't have all the answers, but we're in this together' is far more powerful than empty reassurances.

The silver lining? We already have the resilience, adaptability, and ingenuity needed to tackle this crisis. What we need now is to foster the right conditions-together.

So take a deep breath. Let's extend compassion to ourselves and each other. The road ahead won't be easy, but we don't have to walk it alone. Pakistan is ready for change. And we have what it takes to make it happen.

*The author is a Provincial Management Service (PMS) officer of BS-19, serving in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.*





# Mandalay was the ‘city of gold’ - now it reeks of death

LONDON (BBC): Mandalay used to be known as the city of gold, dotted by glittering pagodas and Buddhist burial mounds, but the air in Myanmar’s former royal capital now reeks of dead bodies. So many corpses have piled up since a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck close to Mandalay, that they have had to be “cremated in stacks”, one resident says.

The death toll from the quake and a series of aftershocks has climbed past 2,700, with 4,521 injured and hundreds still missing, Myanmar’s military chief said. Those figures are expected to rise. Residents in the country’s second most populous city say they have spent sleepless nights wandering the streets in despair as food and water supplies dwindle. The Mandalay resident who spoke of bodies being “cremated in stacks” lost her aunt in the quake.

“But her body was only pulled out of the rubble two days later, on 30 March,” said the 23-year-old student who wanted only to be known as J. Poor infrastructure and a patchwork of civil conflicts are severely hampering the relief effort in Myanmar, where the military has a history of suppressing the scale of national disasters. The death toll is expected to keep rising as rescuers gain access to more collapsed buildings and cut-off districts. J, who lives in Mandalay’s Mahaangmyay district, has felt “dizzy from being deprived of sleep”, she said. Many residents have been living out of tents - or nothing - along the streets, fearing that what’s left of their homes will not hold up against the aftershocks.

“I have seen many people, myself included, crouching over and crying

out loud on the streets,” J said. But survivors are still being found in the city. The fire service said it had rescued 403 people in Mandalay in the past four days, and recovered 259 bodies. The true number of casualties is thought to be much higher than the official version. In a televised speech, military chief Min Aung Hlaing said the death toll may exceed 3,000, but the US Geological Survey said “a death toll over 10,000 is a strong possibility” based on the location and size of the quake.

Young children have been especially traumatised in the disaster. A local pastor told the BBC his eight-year-old son had burst into tears all of a sudden several times in the last few days, after witnessing parts of his neighbourhood buried under rubble in an instant. “He was in the bedroom upstairs when the earthquake struck, and my wife was attending to his younger sister, so some debris had fallen onto him,” says Ruate, who only gave his first name.

“Yesterday we saw bodies being brought out of collapsed buildings in our neighbourhood,” said Ruate, who lives in the Pyigyitagon area of southern Mandalay. “It’s very sobering. Myanmar has been hit by so many disasters, some natural, some human made. Everyone’s just gotten so tired. We are feeling hopeless and helpless.” A monk who lives near the Sky Villa condominium, one of the worst-hit buildings reduced from 12 to six storeys by the earthquake, told the BBC that while some people had been pulled out alive, “only dead bodies have been recovered” in the past 24 hours.

“I hope this will be over soon. There are many [bodies] still inside, I

think more than a hundred,” he said. Crematoriums close to Mandalay have been overwhelmed, while authorities have been running out of body bags, among other supplies, including food and drinking water. Around the city, the remains of crushed pagodas and golden spires line the streets. While Mandalay used to be a major centre for the production of gold leaf and a popular tourist destination, poverty in the city has soared in recent years, as with elsewhere in Myanmar (formerly called Burma).

Last week’s earthquake also affected Thailand and China, but its impact has been especially devastating in Myanmar, which has been ravaged by a bloody civil war, a crippled economy and widespread disillusionment since the military took power in a coup in 2021. Myanmar held a minute of silence to remember victims, part of a week of national mourning. The junta called for flags to fly at half mast, media broadcasts to be halted and asked people to pay their respects. Even before the quake, more than 3.5 million people had been displaced within the country.

Thousands more, many of them young people, have fled abroad to avoid forced conscription - this means there are fewer people to help with relief work, and the subsequent rebuilding of the country. Russia and China, which have helped prop up Myanmar’s military regime, are among countries that have sent aid and specialist support. But relief has been slow, J said.

“[The rescue teams] have been working non-stop for four days and I think they are a little tired. They need some rest as well. “But because the



damage has been so extensive, we have limited resources here, it is simply hard for the relief workers to manage such massive destruction efficiently,” she said. While the junta had said that all assistance is welcome, some humanitarian workers have reported challenges accessing quake-stricken areas.

Local media in Sagaing, where the earthquake’s epicentre was located, have reported restrictions imposed by military authorities that require organisations to submit lists of volunteers and items that they want to bring into the area. Several rights groups, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have urged the junta to allow aid workers imme-

diates access to these areas. “Myanmar’s military junta still invokes fear, even in the wake of a horrific natural disaster that killed and injured thousands,” said Bryony Lau, Human Rights Watch’s deputy Asia director.

“The junta needs to break from its appalling past practice and ensure that humanitarian aid quickly reaches those whose lives are at risk in earthquake-affected areas,” she said. The junta has also drawn criticism for continuing to open fire on villages even as the country reels from the disaster. Large parts of Sagaing are under control of resistance groups. A commander in the People’s Defence Forces (PDF) – a network of pro-

democracy civilian groups – told the BBC that the military was carrying out ground attacks.

Rebel commander Min Naing, who commands 300 fighters, said his forces were not fighting back, claiming to be respecting a two-week ceasefire announced by the opposition National Unity Government after the earthquake. The Three Brotherhood Alliance – which is made up of three ethnic groups that also oppose the junta – also announced a month-long ceasefire in order, it said, to help facilitate relief efforts. Meanwhile, BBC Burmese reported there had been drone attacks and aerial bombings in Kachin and Shan states.

## Chinese tourists pine for Taiwan’s return as Beijing jets surround island

BEIJING (AFP): Chinese tourists visiting the country’s closest point to Taiwan wished for the democratic island’s return to Beijing’s rule, as their leadership called its president a “parasite” and unleashed ships and jets in drills to encircle it.

On a sunny Wednesday at a scenic park in Pingtan -- just 130 kilometres (80 miles) from Taiwan -- a steady stream of tourists wearing sunglasses and brandishing mobile phones hiked to the edge of a cliff for views of the self-ruled island. Ye Shenjian, snapping a photo of his wife and young son, told AFP he had seen news of the drills on TV and was hopeful that one day Taiwan would “return to China”.

“I hope that one day we can ride the train directly to Taiwan,” he said. Another, Gao Feng, toured the park with his wife, using a looking glass to peer at nearby rock formations and the water. “I’d always heard of this beautiful place, I’ve wanted to come and see a bluer sea, which is pretty rare in China,” the 55-year-old doctor from eastern Anhui province said.

“It’s pretty close to Taiwan. Makes me a bit sentimental.” For Gao and others in his generation, the idea of Taiwan under Chinese control has been much-discussed since his youth. “The liberation of Taiwan was something written in our primary school textbooks,” he said. “I’ve always

believed we are one family, and a family should be together sooner or later.”

Visiting with her friend from southwestern Yunnan, Wang Juedan also said she had Taiwan on her mind since her youth -- the island produced some of her favourite television shows. “Seeing it feels pretty shocking,” she said. “We’ve only seen Taiwan on television in dramas or the news.”

The 28-year-old said she hopes unification would come soon: “Travelling there will be more convenient.” Communist China has never ruled Taiwan, where indigenous tribes have lived for thousands of years. The island was partly or totally ruled at various times by the Dutch, Spanish, China’s Qing dynasty and Japan. While Beijing has threatened to use force to bring Taiwan under its control, and its annexation by China would likely see the eradication of the island’s vibrant democratic system and a crackdown on any opposition to Chinese rule.

That did not phase retiree Wang Quanqu, who said he had driven almost 2,000 kilometres from Beijing to Pingtan with his wife. He said he dreams of going back to Taiwan one day, which he visited twice before Taipei restricted Chinese residents from travelling there. “Once our precious island Taiwan returns, I want to

drive my own car all the way to Taiwan,” the 71-year-old said.

He and his wife stay up to date with the news about Taiwan as avid watchers of a regular state media programme on cross-strait activities, Wang said. “It won’t take that long for my dream to come true,” Wang said. AFP journalists saw a jet flying from the sea over the scenic area, which lies next to a Chinese military base -- a stark reminder of the military drills taking place in the waters around Taiwan.

Resident Liu Lili, visiting her son who studied nearby, also told AFP she was “looking forward to the day when China could get them back.” Liu, in her 50s, expressed disdain for some Taiwanese politicians -- in particular former President Tsai Ing-wen. They were “eating China’s food”, she said. Pingtan locals were a little more circumspect.

One resident, wearing a bright orange vest and tall rubber boots as she gathered waste from the ocean, said she did not expect Chinese leadership to use force. The woman, who did not want to share her name, said she and other locals kept their distance from anything related to China’s military -- gesturing towards a set of an army compound atop a nearby mountain. “Locals definitely want peace.”

## Kenyan police in Haiti suffer more casualties

NAIROBI (Reuters): Two Kenyan police officers in Haiti have been seriously injured in clashes with gangs over the past week, three officers told Reuters, adding to the mission’s growing list of casualties as it comes under increasingly frequent attack.

Kenya first deployed officers last June to the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, which currently has around 1,000 security personnel, about three-quarters of them from Kenya. The mission, aimed at restoring enough security for Haiti to hold elections by February 2026, has faced morale issues almost from the start and uncertainty about its possible expansion amid escalating gang violence.

It suffered its first fatality in February, and the MSS reported another Kenyan officer missing last week. The three officers, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal, said he was believed to be dead. They said the two injuries came during routine patrols in and around the capital Port-au-Prince, which is mostly controlled by heavily armed gangs blamed for thousands of deaths since 2021.

MSS spokesperson Jack Ombaka confirmed two officers had been evacuated to the Dominican Republic for medical care. “As in any mission, casualties are sometimes unavoidable,” he said. The three officers said the gangs were attacking them on an increasingly regular basis and complained that their equipment was inadequate.

They said one of the officers was shot in the head after a bullet pierced his helmet and the other was hit in the ear when a gunshot penetrated the walls of an armoured vehicle. Twenty armoured vehicles have been grounded since this weekend after officers refused to use them, complaining that this was the second time a vehicle had failed to stop a bullet, the three officers said.

An MSS delegation plans to travel to Washington this week to present concerns over the quality of protective gear to US officials, two senior MSS officers told Reuters. The United States has provided most of the funding and equipment for the mission, which has struggled to secure significant contributions from other countries.

Kenya’s government has cited humanitarian reasons for its intervention in Haiti, though analysts say the deployment is also motivated by a desire to boost the country’s international profile and win favour with the United States. Asked about concerns about the equipment, Ombaka said: “MSS continues to receive increased logistical support from partners and stakeholders, with assurances that all equipment meets international standards.” The US State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## Syrians rejoice during first Eid after Assad’s fall

DAMASCUS (AFP): Eid al-Fitr in Syria was charged with newfound joy this year, as thousands freely celebrated the holiday for the first time after the fall of Bashar al-Assad. From the early morning hours, crowds of men, women and children flocked to pray at Damascus’s historic Umayyad Mosque in the Old City.

“This is the first time we truly feel the joy of Eid, after getting rid of Assad’s tyrannical regime,” Fatima Othman told AFP. Following prayer, worshippers exchanged Eid greetings while street vendors sold colourful balloons and toys to children posing for photos with their parents. “Our celebration is doubled after Assad’s fall,” said Ghassan Youssef, a resident of the capital.

A few kilometres (miles) away, on the slopes of Mount Qasyun overlooking Damascus -- a site previously off-limits to Syrians until Assad was deposed on December 8 -- a few thousand people gathered at Unknown Soldier Square for an open-air prayer. Among them were mem-

bers of the security forces and the army, dressed in uniform and armed. The road leading to the square was packed, according to an AFP photographer.

Some worshippers distributed sweets to celebrate, while the three-star Syrian flag, adopted by the new authorities, waved in the air. Under the previous government, access to the Unknown Soldier monument was typically restricted to Assad and his close associates, who would lay wreaths there during national ceremonies. The memorial, where a giant screen broadcast the Eid prayer, is near the presidential palace. There, interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa prayed alongside Syria’s new mufti Osama al-Rifai and several cabinet ministers in the presence of a large crowd.

He later delivered a speech emphasising the country faced “a long and arduous road to reconstruction but possesses all the resources needed to recover”. This came two days after the formation of a new government, which faces daunting challenges in a

country devastated by 14 years of civil war. Wael Hamamiya, who had been in Sweden since the early days of the conflict, returned to Damascus to celebrate Eid with his family.

“This is my first Eid here in nearly 15 years. I truly feel the celebration in its full meaning,” he told AFP, beaming. “Everyone who has come is over the moon. This is the celebration of celebrations!” The occasion was more sombre for some Syrians, who were able to visit the graves of loved ones that had been off-limits during Assad reign, especially in former opposition strongholds. At Al-Rawda Cafe in Damascus, 36-year-old Amer Hallaq chatted with friends after returning from exile in Berlin where he ended up after dodging compulsory military service in 2014. “For years, I thought I’d never see my family again or celebrate Eid with them,” Hallaq said. “The joy of liberation and victory is immense, but there’s still a lot of work ahead. This is only the beginning of the road.”

## Chinese developer under scrutiny over Bangkok tower quake collapse

BANGKOK (AFP): A Chinese construction company is facing questions over the deadly collapse of a Bangkok skyscraper -- the only major building in the capital to fall in a catastrophic earthquake that has killed more than 2,000 people in Thailand and neighbouring Myanmar.

The 30-storey tower, still under construction, was to house government offices, but the shaking reduced the structure to a pile of rubble in seconds, killing at least 13 people and injuring nine. It was the deadliest single incident in Thailand after 7.7-magnitude quake, with the majority of the kingdom’s 20 fatalities thought to be workers on the building site and hopes fading for around 70 still trapped.

Sprawling Bangkok bristles with countless high-rise blocks, but none have reported major damage, prompting many to ask why the block under construction gave way. “We have to investigate where the mistake happened,” said Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who has ordered a probe into the materials and safety standards at the construction site.

“What happened from the beginning since it was designed? How was this design approved? This was not the first building in the country,” she told reporters. The development near Bangkok’s popular Chatuchak market was a joint project involving China Railway No. 10 Engineering Group (Thailand) -- an offshoot of China Railway Group (CREC), one of the world’s largest construction and engineering contractors.

Testing of steel rebars -- struts used to reinforce concrete -- from the site has found that some of the metal used was substandard, Thai safety officials said. Industry Minister Akanat Promphan announced that a committee would be set up to investigate, saying one supplier of the steel had failed safety tests in December and may have its licence withdrawn. He did not name the supplier.

Professor of Civil Engineering at King Mongkut’s Institute of

Technology Ladkrabang Suchatwee Sunaswat said there were questions to be answered. “We have to look at the design. At the beginning, how they calculate, how they design. And in the rescue mission, how they collect evidence at the same time,” he told reporters. The local partner in the project, Italian-Thai Development (ITD) offered condolences to quake victims but said it was “confident” the incident would not impact its other projects.

Beijing-owned building conglomerate CREC is one of the world’s largest construction and engineering contractors, with projects in more than 90 countries and regions, according to its website. The Bangkok construction collapse is not the first time CREC and its subsidiaries have come under fire after deadly incidents. A tide of anger was unleashed at authorities in Serbia following the deaths of 14 people when a roof collapsed in November last year at a train station built by CREC subsidiaries -- largely focused on reports of alleged shortcuts made with building projects.

Roisai Wongsuban of the Migrant Working Group advocacy organisation said there have been a large number of complaints from migrant workers employed by Chinese companies in Thailand about lax safety standards and poor labour rights. “For Chinese companies we can’t see the human rights due diligence, to see if labour standards are being met,” she told AFP.

“There is always a power imbalance between employer and employee.” Bangkok’s construction boom is powered by an army of labourers, a large proportion of them migrant workers from Myanmar, toiling on hot building sites for low pay. The Migrant Working Group has called on Thailand’s labour ministry to hold the employers involved in the construction project criminally liable if they have failed to meet health and safety laws.

AFP has asked China Rail No. 10 Engineering Thailand and CREC for comment but has not had a response. An announcement celebrating the

completion of the main structure at the Chatuchak construction site posed on China Rail No. 10’s official WeChat channel was deleted soon after quake, AFP archived the post shortly after the tremors hit but before the page was removed.

## Evacuations ordered after winds in California blaze

BISHOP, Calif. (AP): Firefighters stopped the forward spread of a wildfire tearing through a remote area of eastern California, but evacuation orders for residents of hundreds of homes remained in place, officials said.

The Silver Fire erupted along Route 6 in Inyo County, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) northeast of Bishop in the Owens Valley, near the Nevada border. The cause was under investigation. It had churned through nearly 2.5 square miles (about 6.5 square kilometers) of grass and brush, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said in a post on the social platform X. It was 47% contained.

Residents of about 800 homes near the tiny communities of Laws, Chalfant and White Mountain Estates had been ordered evacuated after the fire broke out. Officials didn’t provide an update on how many people were still under those orders. Crews were expected to stay overnight to keep an eye on hotspots and work on containment.

The potential for 65 mph (104 kph) gusts had limited flights by water-dropping helicopters and kept air tankers grounded, Cal Fire spokesperson Chloe Castillo said. “The winds are very erratic,” she said. “One minute they’re pushing north, the next they’re going east.” Cal Fire said the blaze was threatening land belonging to the Bishop Paiute Tribe as well as habitats for endangered species including the Owens pupfish and desert bighorn sheep.



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## US trade war could hit Chinese suppliers harder

**ORDERS** have evaporated for Richard Chen, who manufactures Christmas decorations in southern China for US retailers, including Walmart and Costco, facing crippling US tariffs.

"The orders are half of what they were last year," said Chen, who is based in the manufacturing hub of Dongguan.

He is now in survival mode.

"There's no more scope to cut prices. But to get orders we sometimes have to take a price cut ... we have no choice," Chen said, declining to elaborate on cuts he had agreed to.

"We're losing money."

On February 4, US President Donald Trump applied a new 10% tariff to the \$400 billion worth of Chinese goods exported annually to the United States, with an additional 10% tariff announced on March 4 and further reciprocal tariffs expected on April 2.

Chinese suppliers and their American clients are now coming to grips with the grim reality that this trade war will hit harder than in Trump's first term in 2018, according to Reuters.

This time is different because low-end manufacturers are already struggling with razor-thin margins, so they cannot cut prices to help their US customers, and local Chinese governments that might have provided support to protect jobs are mostly too cash-strapped to give new subsidies.

Suppliers estimate wages have grown by 2-5% since the first US-China trade war of 2018, while raw material costs have climbed for some sectors and overseas competition has intensified, making Trump's latest tariffs the final straw for many low-end manufacturers.

Liz Picarazzi, the Brooklyn-based founder and CEO of trash box company Citibin, said her goods produced in China are now subject to 52.5% tariffs and she can no longer afford to manufacture there.

US customers are pressing for 10% price cuts, according to interviews with 10 Chinese manufacturers and exporters and two US-based retail executives with Chinese supply chain exposure.

Ongoing negotiations are yielding average discounts of 3%-7% from suppliers, they said.

On the Chinese side, suppliers who got burnt in 2018 when some US customers refused to pay for container-loads of goods subjected to higher tariffs are now asking for payments upfront rather than waiting 30-90 days after sending an invoice.

The tariffs have rattled China's industrial heartland and could lead to substantial layoffs as factories shutter or downsize, analysts and manufacturers say.

He-Ling Shi, an economics professor at Monash University in Melbourne, said Chinese manufacturers are succumbing to a wide range of pressures.

Some US customers believe Chinese authorities will step in to support their local manufacturing industries with additional tax rebates, rent and utilities subsidies or other support as they have done in the past – including in 2018..

Several suppliers interviewed by Reuters said, so far, new support had not been forthcoming.

Economics professor Shi said the heavy debt loads of local governments, many weighed down by an ongoing property crisis, will prevent them from being as generous with subsidies as they have been in the past.

The message from Beijing is that exporters can pivot to other markets and China's own 1.4 billion customers, but that too is a difficult strategy in a time of overcapacity and depressed domestic demand.

While one of the stated aims of Trump's tariff regime is to draw manufacturing back to the US, Citibin's Picarazzi says she has looked into the possibility at least half a dozen times and it remains unfeasible from a cost and quality perspective.

For now, as she prepares to move 100% of her manufacturing to Vietnam, she says she has already advised her customers to expect higher prices.

"This is just a really unfair thing for the American government to do to American companies and American consumers," she said. "There is no patriotism in ruining American companies."

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



## Has the Apex Court finally disdain itself from a dark chapter after 44 Years

Qurban Hyder

**PAKISTAN People's Party** commemorate April 4 as it has been a significant day in Pakistan's political history, reminding us of an everlasting tale of democracy, public rights, and political struggle. It marks the day when Pakistan's former Prime Minister, the founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and a people's leader, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was martyred through a erroneous judicial decree. His martyrdom anniversary serves as a reminder that democratic struggles never go in vain. Even in death, Bhutto became immortal, and to this day, his followers believe in his ideology. Bhutto is not just a name; he represents a vision, a revolution, and an unwavering commitment to the people.

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was among those rare leaders who redefined Pakistan's political landscape. In 1967, he founded the Pakistan People's Party and introduced the slogan, "Roti, Kapra, aur Makan" (Food, Clothing, and Shelter), igniting a new era of public-centric politics. He firmly believed that real power resides with the people and that democracy is the only pathway to the country's progress. In 1971, after the tragic disintegration of Pakistan, Bhutto took charge of a crisis-ridden nation and led it forward with renewed determination. Under his leadership, Pakistan secured its first consensus-based Constitution in 1973, which remains the foundation of the country's legal system. He successfully united Islamic nations on a single platform and laid the groundwork for Pakistan's nuclear program, making the country's defence impregnable.

However, Bhutto's immense popularity posed

the biggest threat to his opponents. In 1977, he was arrested in a politically motivated case—an act that has since been regarded as judicial murder. Finally, on April 4, 1979, he was executed in Rawalpindi Jail. Despite relentless efforts by his adversaries, his ideology did not perish with him. Even after 45 years, Bhutto's name remains an essential reference in Pakistan's political discourse. His ideals continue to thrive in the hearts of PPP supporters. Bhutto's vision was for a Pakistan where people were empowered, democracy was strong, and every citizen had their due rights.

Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a martyr of judicial injustice. It was not just the people who believed this—it took 44 years for the country's highest judiciary to acknowledge and rectify this historical injustice. This was no ordinary verdict; it took decades to cleanse this dark stain from the judiciary's record. Initially, Bhutto's wife, Madar-e-Jamhooriat Begum Nusrat Bhutto, and his daughter, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, persistently knocked on the judiciary's doors for justice, but to no avail. This raises an important question why it takes 44 years for Bhutto to receive justice. The simple answer is that the judiciary itself facilitated his judicial murder, while the mastermind behind this crime was the most powerful dictator of his time—General Zia-ul-Haq, a puppet of international conspirators. Bhutto's execution was not just a loss to his family but an irreparable tragedy for Pakistan and its impoverished masses. There is no doubt that if Bhutto had lived, neither Pakistan nor its people would be in their current state.

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto did not live to see her father get justice; she too was assassinated on December 27, 2007. Similarly, Madar-e-Jamhooriat Begum Nusrat Bhutto passed away without witnessing her husband's vindication. However, after the PPP government came to power in 2008, their unfulfilled dream was taken up by Bhutto's son-in-law and Benazir Bhutto's husband, President Asif Ali Zardari. As the President of Pakistan, Zardari filed a presidential reference in the Supreme Court, seeking justice for Shaheed Bhutto. Initially, the case did not even get a hearing. However, in 2024, when Justice Qazi Faez Isa became Chief Justice, the case finally moved forward. It was a bold and courageous decision by Chief Justice Isa to take up this historic case.

I witnessed the proceedings firsthand. Every time a hearing took place, Shaheed Bhutto's grandson and Benazir Bhutto's son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, attended the Supreme Court, listening intently to the arguments from both sides. Then came March 6, 2024—the day of the verdict. Courtroom No. 1 was packed. A nine-member bench, led by Chief Justice Justice Qazi Faez Isa, entered and began reading the judgment. As the Chief Justice read through the decision, Bilawal Bhutto's eyes filled with tears.

The courtroom became somber. It was evident that Bilawal was struggling to contain his emotions. As the judges left the courtroom, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari quickly got up and rushed outside.

As journalists and security personnel followed him, an unexpected moment unfolded. Everyone suddenly

stopped. At first, it was unclear what had happened, but then we heard muffled sobs from the empty space near the elevators. A fellow journalist remarked, "Bilawal was holding back his tears inside the courtroom, but he couldn't anymore. This is his moment to release the burden of decades." We all agreed.

A little while later, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari emerged—his eyes red, his hair disheveled. He walked toward the media, but when he tried to speak, he could barely form words. Finally, he managed to say, "The court has given a historic decision, but the detailed verdict is yet to come. The Supreme Court has acknowledged that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was denied a fair trial. The judiciary has admitted that this decision is meant to correct past mistakes. We hope that this verdict will brighten Pakistan's future, strengthen the judiciary, and uphold democracy. This stain on our judiciary's credibility has finally been addressed. How could an ordinary citizen expect justice from an institution that failed to give Bhutto a fair trial?" Bilawal thanked the judges, lawyers, and legal advisors who fought Bhutto's case, expressing hope that this decision would lead to much-needed judicial reforms. With that, he walked away, ignoring journalists' attempts to ask more questions, and quickly got into his car.

Even today, I am searching for the answer to my question:

The natural question arises here: has the Supreme Court of Pakistan truly erased this stain. In my opinion, complete justice will only be served when all those who conspired in Bhutto's murder are also held accountable and punished.

## Europe's security hangs in the balance

Daoud Kuttab

**IT** is hard not to notice the wrecking power that the Donald Trump 2.0 presidency is inflicting on the world. However, it might not be all bad. It might instill a new sense of purpose into old machines of government that have become inefficient, stale and, to the younger generation, outdated. The jury is still out on whether Trump's domestic and international shake-up of processes and reform will amount to much. But the key factor is whether the world will be safer, more stable and certain and reliable or if it will be marred by divisions, discord, wars and instability.

The established wisdom about defense up until today has been whether we mobilize states and armies to defend borders, to defend ideas or both. In the current lens of world affairs, one sees that the Western world is splitting between two visions: one that wants to use brute force to change borders and/or utilize it in the pursuit of more land, hegemony and wealth, and another that still believes in self-defense, sovereign borders and the rule of law, as well as the defense of ideas such as liberty, freedom and democracy.

The advocates of the latter idea are the Europeans, who are finding themselves pushed into new territories of not only having to choose sides, but also having to be more active and ruthless in defending ideas, as not doing so is likely to cost them their borders, sover-

eignty and freedom.

Many historians have long argued that nation states need occasional shocks to wipe away the dust and cobwebs that have gathered over the years. Trump is certainly having this effect on the US and the rest of the world, especially its oldest Western allies in Europe.

Up until recently, NATO was an umbrella that shielded Western sovereignty and territorial integrity and, more broadly, freedom and democracy. But as Trump has been racing to break the norms and seek accommodation with Russian President Vladimir Putin seemingly at any price, leaders in the EU, UK and Canada are finding themselves unable to underwrite their own security. They are also struggling to offer enough guarantees to defend the territorial integrity of Ukraine and safeguard the international rule of law as far as Russia's invasion is concerned.

Many new defense formats have been discussed. NATO minus the US is a nonstarter. The so-called coalition of the willing is yet to offer a functioning formula. The E5 — a core group of European powers made up of the UK, France, Germany, Poland and Italy — could offer interim support for Kyiv and prevent its total capitulation. But it remains less than perfect, as Italy could side with Trump and Putin. And many say that the E5 should widen to

include the Baltic nations that share borders with Russia, as well as having good standing armies, defense budgets, advanced defense industries and mobilized societies.

Europe is increasingly having to face the inevitable questions and is being pushed to redefine its doctrines for politics, war, peace and its role in the world.

Love French President Emmanuel Macron or loathe him, he was the first to highlight the need for an EU security initiative back in 2017. He even agreed with Trump and said that NATO is "brain dead," arguing in 2019 that European countries could no longer rely on America to defend its NATO allies. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, 44 nations came together within a European Political Community that rallied to help Kyiv, but its members continued to work under US leadership on the conflict.

What Europe did not do in 2022, it needs to do in 2025. All states need to rally behind a united defense doctrine to do whatever is necessary to protect their borders, as well as their democratic models, values and freedoms.

The EU, UK and Canada need to stop wavering and agree that the US has changed. And maybe that is not all for the worse, especially if it instills in them the drive to finally become self-reliant. In their soul-search-

ing exercise, they must agree that they will not stop being aligned with their oldest and biggest Western power and ally. But somehow they need to find a modus vivendi to coexist with, while being independent of, the new transactional, isolationist-leaning Make America Great Again leadership in Washington.

The US president is acting like a bull in a china shop. If the American people agree to that, then that is their business. It will also not be the business of the US' Western allies if Trump goes on to change course domestically. But the sooner they embrace the fact that the norms and conventions guiding their policies and governance of recent decades have changed, the more likely it will be that they rise to meet the challenge in a realistic way.

Nothing is forever in life and that includes war and peace. So, maybe Trump's actions, however disconcerting they may appear, will trigger the start of something better — something that ends the war in Ukraine and pushes those countries that are reliant on the US to redefine where their best interests lie and how best to achieve them, whether they are related to the defense of their borders or the defense of their values and way of life. Then they can put their money where their mouth is, even if it means redrawing the social contract and the purpose of the state and governance in the post-Western-dominated age that is forming as we speak.

## A better world begins with raising better children

Arnab Neil Sengupta

**TO** people born between the mid-1960s and about 1980, Gen Xers in short, the world can seem increasingly complex. We deal with political challenges, economic uncertainties and rapidly changing social norms. Often, we look for grand solutions in famous quotations, autobiographies, speeches and even podcasts, but overlook the most fundamental building block of a thriving society: our children.

A better world will not be built on abstract ideals but on the values, skills and character that parents impart to the next generation. Even while caught up in the pressures of day-to-day life and the demands of the modern world, parents cannot afford to forget that early childhood experiences provide the foundation for cognitive and emotional growth.

A nurturing environment all the way from infancy through adolescence to adulthood is, therefore, a necessity. The interactions a young man or woman has with their parents, caregivers, friends, teachers and the world around them in those formative years will shape their intellectual development. They could make all the difference between an individual ending up as a radical political activist or a job-creating serial entrepreneur.

The media that we expose our children to also plays a crucial role. Positive media exposure can help impart lasting social-emotional skills, which in turn enable children to manage their emotions and forge healthy relationships. Conversely, exposure to heated rhetoric, misguided narratives, violence and negativity can have detrimental effects on their development, delaying intellectual maturity.

Research conducted in various parts of the world consistently demonstrates the tangible benefits of parental involvement. Children with hands-on parents tend to perform better academically. It is not just about helping with homework, but about instilling a love of learning, encouraging intellectual curiosity and creating an environment where children feel empowered to explore their potential. In her book, "My Life in Full: Work, Family and Our Future," and in numerous interviews, Indra Nooyi has credited her upbringing for instilling discipline, hard work and gratitude, which influenced her journey from the Indian city of Chennai to becoming the US-based CEO of PepsiCo. Raised in a disciplined environment with supportive yet strict parents who balanced freedom with boundaries, Nooyi's parents encouraged her to think about how she could contribute to the world, rather than just what she wanted to be. "I think I am a product of my family, my upbringing, the city and the country," she said in one interview. In the Arab world, the concept of "tarbiyah" encompasses not just education but overall upbringing — the nurturing of a child's intellectual, moral and spiritual development. It emphasizes the importance of building character, instilling values such as honesty, compassion and respect for others. Family background continues to exert a strong influence on educational outcomes. Studies have shown that socioeconomic status significantly influences a child's academic achievements, which is why excellence in medicine, law, engineering, business, mathematics and literature seems to run in some families instead of all.

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The downside is that this phenomenon can also reinforce inequalities that can be difficult to overcome. This is not a Western, or "First World," problem but a global one. In many parts of the Middle East and North Africa, for instance, access to quality education remains uneven, meaning children from underprivileged backgrounds face significant barriers to success.

Fortunately, early interventions have the potential to generate crucial long-term benefits. Indeed, investments in early childhood care and education are a lot more than just a social good. Such programs have been shown to improve academic performance and reduce social problems later in life.

There is also a strong need to recognize the importance of neighborhood and peer influences. Children from low-income families who form friendships with wealthier friends or classmates have been found to earn significantly more as adults, underscoring the importance of diverse social interactions.

The Arab world, where family and community ties are deeply valued, is well placed to utilize its cultural strengths to raise better children. It can draw on its

rich traditions of support spanning generations, strong family networks and emphasis on moral education to create ideal environments for children to thrive and become role models.

This is not to say Arab communities can afford not to adapt and evolve. The need to embrace modern educational techniques, promote gender equality and address the socioeconomic challenges that hinder the development of children cuts across borders and geographical boundaries.

While embracing these responsibilities, every generation must demonstrate to members of the next the overarching goal of contributing to society and making a difference. This perspective should ideally shape their values, crucial decisions, conversations and actions for the rest of their lives.

All things considered, creating a better world starts at home, in schools and in communities, whether in North America or North Africa. It requires a collective commitment to investing in the well-being of children, nurturing their potential and instilling in them the values that will help build a brighter future for all humankind. The children society raises today will determine, for better or worse, the world they inhabit tomorrow.



# Yet another Israeli war crime is buried in the sand as the world looks away

EVERY day, his mother Nahaj, prayed for a miracle to save their son. They imagined that Mohammad had escaped just before the area was sealed, or that he was hiding under the rubble of a house, or perhaps that he was kidnapped by Israeli soldiers but was still alive. As Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian national poet, said, Palestinians are suffering from an “incurable malady: hope”.

Although the Bahloul family dared to hope, they also carried within them the dread that Mohammad would never be seen again. They knew the stories. In January 2024, the paramedics sent to rescue six-year-old Hind Rajab who lay in a car, injured and bleeding, beside her slain relatives, were also targeted and murdered. Likewise, in December 2023, the medics dispatched to rescue Al Jazeera cameraman Samer Abudaqa, who was bleeding in a street in Khan Younis after being hit by an Israeli drone, were also killed. For seven long days, hope battled fear. “May God return you and all your colleagues to us safe and sound,” Sobhi wrote on Facebook above a photo of his selfless son.

The family had already suffered so much during the genocide, having lost many loved ones. Early on, they had to flee from their home in eastern Rafah to al-Mawasi in Khan Younis, searching for an illusion called safety. When the ceasefire was announced, the family marched back to their home in the eastern part of Rafah with thousands of others. They found their home destroyed but did their best to restore two rooms to functionality where they could sleep. During that period the children resumed their education in makeshift tents because so many schools had been destroyed. Just a week before Mohammad disappeared, an air raid flattened the house across the street from the family home, and his father’s car was severely damaged. Once again, the family fled, carrying what little they had left. With each displacement, their possessions dwindled – an unbearable reminder that as belongings shrink, so too does dignity.

But Mohammad had no time to help his father pitch another displacement tent. He immediately returned to his duty, working around the clock with his fellow medics in Khan Younis, answering endless calls for help, rushing from one horror to the next. Even during Ramadan, the holiest month of the year, he barely had a moment to speak for what happened. A statement released by the Palestinian Ministry of Health on March 30 said the Israeli forces carried out an execution and that some of the victims were handcuffed and had injuries to the head and chest. The chief of the UN humanitarian affairs office in Palestine, Jonathan Whittall, said the paramedics and first responders were killed “one by one”.

Israel, of course, used the familiar playbook of denial and obfuscation. It first claimed the paramedics were members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Then it claimed that its soldiers fired on the ambulances because they were “advancing suspiciously toward” them. Meanwhile, in an act of blatant cynicism, the Israeli government announced it was sending a rescue mission of 22 to Thailand and Myanmar following the deadly earthquake. Ten days earlier, it sent a medical delegation to North Macedonia. From Asia to Europe, it seems acceptable that a country that has massacred more than 1000 health workers and first responders in a territory it occupies illegally can feign humanitarianism abroad.

The Geneva Conventions, which explicitly protect medical personnel in conflict zones, have clearly been rendered meaningless in Gaza. International bodies, designed to uphold human rights, continue their performative outrage while failing to act. Western governments continue to be actively complicit in the genocide by sending weapons and inviting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu despite the warrant for his arrest issued by the International Criminal Court.

How much longer will the world watch this genocidal violence in silence? There seems to be no end to the barbarity and crimes. The executions of these medics should have been a turning point, a moment of reckoning. Instead, they are yet another testament to the impunity granted to the Zionist apartheid regime. May the souls of those who died in Tal as-Sultan rest in peace and may the political leaders of the Western world rest in shame.

— *Aljazeera*

Stephen Collinson

The killing of these paramedics is not an isolated incident. Israel has been systematically targeting medical and rescue workers as part of its genocidal war – a war against life itself in Gaza. Only in Gaza, medical uniforms and ambulances do not offer protection, which international law affords. Only in Gaza, medical uniforms and ambulances can mark people as targets for execution.

For the seven agonising days in which Mohammad’s fate remained unknown, his father Sobhi Bahloul, a former principal at Bir al-Saba’ High School in Rafah, whom I have known for decades, and his mother Najah, prayed for a miracle to save their son. They imagined that Mohammad had escaped just before the area was sealed, or that he was hiding under the rubble of a house, or perhaps that he was kidnapped by Israeli soldiers but was still alive. As Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian national poet, said, Palestinians are suffering from an “incurable malady: hope”.

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Self-reliance was an aspiration of independence leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president and a co-founder of the Organization of African Unity (a forerunner of the African Union), who viewed the foreign aid system as a form of neo-colonialism. Current Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama has taken up the cause, calling the destruction of USAID “a signal to Africa that the time has come for us to be more self-reliant.”

Africa’s muted response contrasts sharply with the dire predictions of development

professionals in Western capitals, who are warning that a humanitarian catastrophe will soon unfold on the continent. According to Nicholas Enrich, formerly USAID’s acting assistant administrator for global health, gutting the agency would result in an additional 71,000 to 166,000 deaths per year from malaria and 1 million children annually with untreated severe acute malnutrition, among other harmful consequences.

True, Africa has long depended on foreign aid not just for short-term emergency relief but also for critical health funding. The US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the President’s Malaria Initiative, decades-old programs created by US President George W. Bush, have been instru-

mental in combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, which are disproportionately prevalent in Africa. About 67 percent of people living with HIV worldwide reside in sub-Saharan Africa and the continent accounts for more than 90 percent of malaria cases and deaths.

This aid is not confined to Africa’s neediest and most vulnerable countries, such as the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan, where official development assistance accounts for more than 20 percent of gross national income.

Even Nigeria and South Africa, two of the continent’s largest economies, rely heavily on USAID programs. The US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief funds nearly

every day. And the President’s Malaria Initiative’s support comprises about 21 percent of the national health budget in Nigeria, which has the world’s highest burden of malaria.

African countries’ dependence on the US for public health expenditure poses a national security risk, as vaccine nationalism during the COVID-19 pandemic made clear. It also implies massive governance costs. A 2023 study showed that foreign aid tends to weaken fiscal capacity in African democracies. These governments may become less accountable to their

citizens and more autocratic, propped up by official development assistance. Foreign aid precludes economic progress precisely because of its “terms and conditions,”

— *Aljazeera*

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ciency. That means taking more control over the response to HIV/AIDS and malaria, from research and development to manufacturing diagnostics and treatments, rather than relying on extra-regional solutions and imports. To mitigate the risks of aid dependence and to bolster economic growth, African countries must take advantage of the opportunities inherent in health crises and unleash the animal spirits of local entrepreneurs.

The Nigerian government has already approved an additional \$200 million in health spending as part of its 2025 budget and other countries are contemplating similar increases.

African countries must take the same approach to other strategic sectors, especially nutrition security, because overreliance on foreign aid-funded food imports harms African farmers by distorting markets and depressing local prices. The continent needs fair trade, not aid. With an estimated 60 percent of the world’s uncultivated arable land, Africa should not be dependent on external suppliers to feed itself.

To be sure, African governments with limited fiscal space and poor access to international markets may not be able to build the infrastructure required to drive domestic production.

This problem can be solved by pooling resources with other countries to develop productive infrastructure and resilient regional supply chains, thus boosting intra-African trade and deepening regional integration. India is an example of what can be achieved. After all, its world-beating and uber-price-competitive generic drug industry began to take off long before India’s national economy did.

Achieving economies of scale through the African Continental Free Trade Area could help crowd in private capital to build up critical industries. This would enable Africa to expand aggregate output and increase trade levels, both of which have remained dismally low.

The US’ attack on development assistance can be the wake-up call African leaders need. After decades of lowering ambitions and outsourcing development, it is time for the continent to take full advantage of the growth opportunities associated with domestic crises, rather than ceding control to the aid system and the foreign contractors that fill its ranks. Necessity is the mother of invention, as the cliché goes, which means that the end of USAID could galvanize African governments to confront their countries’ challenges head-on.

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

ernment and the international community. Ataulлах’s arrest might have been expected to weaken the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, but it has instead exposed the fragility of the Rohingya’s situation, driving many toward militancy as a last resort. Several converging factors are eroding what little hope remains.

First, the civil war in Myanmar, sparked by the 2021 military coup, has turned even potential allies against them. The Arakan Army, a powerful Rakhine Buddhist rebel group fighting the junta, was once seen as a possible partner in resisting military tyranny. However, it has increasingly targeted Rohingya villages, forcibly recruiting men and boys or displacing entire communities, as reported by The Independent. This betrayal underscores a bitter truth: even those opposing the junta do not recognize the Rohingya as legitimate citizens of Myanmar.

Second, the humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar camps, home to more than a million Rohingya refugees, has worsened. The World Food Program recently announced plans to cut food rations by more than half due to funding shortages, a move activists warn will plunge an already vulnerable population into malnutrition and despair. For refugees like Mohammed Ayas, a 25-year-old father interviewed by The Independent, the camps offer no future — just a limbo of deprivation. His decision to join a rebel group training in Myanmar reflects a growing sentiment: when survival is at stake, violence becomes a viable option.

Finally, the international community’s waning attention has left the Rohingya isolated. Conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza dominate headlines, while Myanmar’s crisis fades from view. Aung San Suu Kyi, once a beacon of hope, remains imprisoned, her past silence on the Rohingya genocide now irrelevant. With no political solution in sight and repatriation talks stalled, the Rohingya see little prospect of reclaiming their homeland or dignity.

In this vacuum of hope, militancy gains traction. The arrest of Ataulлах has not dismantled the underlying grievances — land theft, massacres and statelessness — that fuel resistance. Instead, it has fragmented the Arakan

Rohingya Salvation Army, creating space for new, potentially more radical factions to emerge. Young men like Ayas, who trained in Myanmar’s jungles, articulate a clear goal: “We want our motherland back, and we will fight for it.” This resolve, born of desperation, is ripe for exploitation.

Historically, when local resistance falters, transnational extremist groups step in. Lashkar-e-Taiba, notorious for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, has a track record of inserting itself into Muslim struggles worldwide. In the 1990s, its operatives trained in Afghanistan and Kashmir, offering expertise to beleaguered communities. The Rohingya, with their statelessness and proximity to South Asia, present a similar opportunity.

Reports of militant recruitment in Cox’s Bazar, as detailed by The Independent, suggest that secretive commanders are already mobilizing refugees. If Lashkar-e-Taiba or other similar groups — drawn by shared religious identity or strategic interest — establish a foothold, the conflict could escalate beyond Myanmar’s borders, destabilizing the region.

The Rohingya’s turn to militancy is not inevitable, but the conditions are aligning ominously. The Arakan Army’s hostility ensures they have no allies within Myanmar, while the junta’s forced conscription of Rohingya men — ironic given its history of genocide — only deepens their alienation. In the camps, ration cuts signal abandonment by the world, pushing refugees toward those offering action over inertia. Extremist groups thrive in such despair, promising empowerment through violence where diplomacy has failed.

The Rohingya are not inherently militant, they are a people pushed to the brink.

Restoring hope requires urgent action: pressuring Myanmar to grant citizenship, bolstering aid to avert starvation and mediating between the Arakan Army and Rohingya communities. Without these steps, the arrest of one leader will not end militancy — it will birth a hydra, with extremist groups ready to exploit the fallout. The world has ignored the cries of the Rohingya before, it cannot afford to do so again as desperation turns to violence and new actors enter the fray.

— *Arab News*

# Hopelessness threatens to push Rohingya toward militancy

LAST month’s arrest of Ataulлах Abu Ammar Jununi, the leader of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, was heralded by some as a blow to Rohingya militancy. Yet, far from quelling unrest, this development may be igniting a new wave of radicalization among the Rohingya, a persecuted Muslim minority in Myanmar.

As hope dwindles amid worsening conditions — abandonment by former allies, slashed humanitarian aid and unrelenting statelessness — extremist groups are poised to exploit this despair, filling the void left by a fractured resistance. The history of Rohingya militancy, rooted in decades of oppression, suggests that such desperation could fuel a violent resurgence, with transnational actors like Pakistan’s Lashkar-e-Taiba potentially stepping in to capitalize on the chaos.

The Rohingya’s struggle is a saga of marginalization spanning generations. Denied citizenship under Myanmar’s 1982 Citizenship Law, they have been systematically stripped of rights and relegated to statelessness in their own homeland, Rakhine State. The military’s brutal campaigns, most notably the 2017 “clearance operations” that killed thousands and displaced more than 700,000 to Bangladesh, were labeled by the UN as a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.”

This violence birthed the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, a militant group formed in 2016 under Ataulлах’s leadership. Unlike the sophisticated insurgencies of Myanmar’s ethnic armed organizations, its attacks — such as the 2017 assaults on security posts — were crude, often relying on makeshift weapons. But they provoked a disproportionate military response, amplifying the Rohingya’s plight.

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army’s emergence was less about ideology and more about survival — a desperate retort to decades of persecution. Earlier Rohingya resistance, like the Rohingya Solidarity Organization in the 1980s, had similarly sought to counter military oppression but lacked the cohesion or resources to sustain a movement. This group, though limited in scope, gave voice to a community with few options, its militancy a symptom of abandonment by both Myanmar’s gov-

ernment and the international community. Ataulлах’s arrest might have been expected to weaken the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, but it has instead exposed the fragility of the Rohingya’s situation, driving many toward militancy as a last resort. Several converging factors are eroding what little hope remains.

First, the civil war in Myanmar, sparked by the 2021 military coup, has turned even potential allies against them. The Arakan Army, a powerful Rakhine Buddhist rebel group fighting the junta, was once seen as a possible partner in resisting military tyranny. However, it has increasingly targeted Rohingya villages, forcibly recruiting men and boys or displacing entire communities, as reported by The Independent. This betrayal underscores a bitter truth: even those opposing the junta do not recognize the Rohingya as legitimate citizens of Myanmar.

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Finally, the international community’s waning attention has left the Rohingya isolated. Conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza dominate headlines, while Myanmar’s crisis fades from view. Aung San Suu Kyi, once a beacon of hope, remains imprisoned, her past silence on the Rohingya genocide now irrelevant. With no political solution in sight and repatriation talks stalled, the Rohingya see little prospect of reclaiming their homeland or dignity.

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— *Arab News*

# Dismantling USAID could boost African self-reliance

BACK in 2015, then-Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta warned the Pan-African Parliament about the dangers of development assistance. “The future of our continent cannot be left to the good graces of outside interests,” he said. “Foreign aid, which often comes with terms and conditions that preclude progress, is not an acceptable basis for prosperity and freedom. It is time to give it up.”

Kenyatta’s call for self-reliance seems prescient in light of US President Donald Trump’s dismantling of the US Agency for International Development and recent cuts to already-diminished foreign aid budgets in France, Germany and the UK. He had a point: as aid dependence became more entrenched over the decades, Africa’s share of global trade steadily fell. It now stands at less than 3 percent. National ambitions to build productive industries that can meet domestic demand have atrophied and continent-wide efforts to strengthen regional integration have waned.

That is why, despite the disproportionate impact of these cuts on the continent, some Africans see the demise of foreign aid as an opportunity. An

Afrobarometer survey of 34 African countries found that 65 percent of respondents wanted their governments to finance development with their own resources, rather than with external loans.

Other Japanese American activists and civil rights groups say much the same thing. As Kyoko Nancy Oda, who was born in a prison camp in 1945, told reporters: “We will not stand by and watch while other communities are attacked like we were. We will remind America of what can happen when our Constitution is tossed aside.” That fight will likely be hard. But their moral clarity, historical perspective and empathy might be exactly what’s needed in these deeply cynical and callous political times. Polls show that more Americans approve than disapprove of Trump’s handling of immigration and border security. A recent Washington Post analysis of polls conducted between February and March found that 51% of Americans supported the Trump administration figuring out a way to deport all 11 million people estimated to be living in the U.S. illegally. Meanwhile, the administration’s agenda has become increasingly draconian, with ICE agents rounding up not only undocumented immigrants, but also immigrants who are in the U.S. legally, including those with green cards and visas. Even tourists. Invoking the Alien Enemies Act is part of this. It’s unclear what the effect will be on public opinion going forward. But as one Democratic voter told the Washington Post: “At some point you’ve got to be like, ‘We’ve got this issue. Trump’s handling it.’ And with my Democratic Party, yes, we’re empathetic, but we kind of went too much in the other direction.” There’s a reason why Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, fresh off his “Fight Oligarchy” tour, told ABC News on Sunday that he agrees with Trump’s focus on curbing illegal immigration — and that there’s ‘no argument’ Joe Biden should have been at ‘much better’ at it. Meanwhile, Arizona’s junior senator, Ruben Gallego,

Self-reliance was an aspiration of independence leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president and a co-founder of the Organization of African Unity (a forerunner of the African Union), who viewed the foreign aid system as a form of neo-colonialism. Current Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama has taken up the cause, calling the destruction of USAID “a signal to Africa that the time has come for us to be more self-reliant.”

Africa’s muted response contrasts sharply with the dire predictions of development

professionals in Western capitals, who are warning that a humanitarian catastrophe will soon unfold on the continent. According to Nicholas Enrich, formerly USAID’s acting assistant administrator for global health, gutting the agency would result in an additional 71,000 to 166,000 deaths per year from malaria and 1 million children annually with untreated severe acute malnutrition, among other harmful consequences.

True, Africa has long depended on foreign aid not just for short-term emergency relief but also for critical health funding. The US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the President’s Malaria Initiative, decades-old programs created by US President George W. Bush, have been instru-

mental in combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, which are disproportionately prevalent in Africa. About 67 percent of people living with HIV worldwide reside in sub-Saharan Africa and the continent accounts for more than 90 percent of malaria cases and deaths.

This aid is not confined to Africa’s neediest and most vulnerable countries, such as the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan, where official development assistance accounts for more than 20 percent of gross national income.

Even Nigeria and South Africa, two of the continent’s largest economies, rely heavily on USAID programs. The US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief funds nearly

every day. And the President’s Malaria Initiative’s support comprises about 21 percent of the national health budget in Nigeria, which has the world’s highest burden of malaria.

African countries’ dependence on the US for public health expenditure poses a national security risk, as vaccine nationalism during the COVID-19 pandemic made clear. It also implies massive governance costs. A 2023 study showed that foreign aid tends to weaken fiscal capacity in African democracies. These governments may become less accountable to their

citizens and more autocratic, propped up by official development assistance. Foreign aid precludes economic progress precisely because of its “terms and conditions,”

— *Aljazeera*

Hippolyte Fofack

20 percent of South Africa’s \$2.3 billion annual HIV/AIDS program, providing life-saving antiretroviral treatments to 5.5 million peo-

ple every day. And the President’s Malaria Initiative’s support comprises about 21 percent of the national health budget in Nigeria, which has the world’s highest burden of malaria.

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ciency. That means taking more control over the response to HIV/AIDS and malaria, from research and development to manufacturing diagnostics and treatments, rather than relying on extra-regional solutions and imports. To mitigate the risks of aid dependence and to bolster economic growth, African countries must take advantage of the opportunities inherent in health crises and unleash the animal spirits of local entrepreneurs.

The Nigerian government has already approved an additional \$200 million in health spending as part of its 2025 budget and other countries are contemplating similar increases.

African countries must take the same approach to other strategic sectors, especially nutrition security, because overreliance on foreign aid-funded food imports harms African farmers by distorting markets and depressing local prices. The continent needs fair trade, not aid. With an estimated 60 percent of the world’s uncultivated arable land, Africa should not be dependent on external suppliers to feed itself.

To be sure, African governments with limited fiscal space and poor access to international markets may not be able to build the infrastructure required to drive domestic production.

This problem can be solved by pooling resources with other countries to develop productive infrastructure and resilient regional supply chains, thus boosting intra-African trade and deepening regional integration. India is an example of what can be achieved. After all, its world-beating and uber-price-competitive generic drug industry began to take off long before India’s national economy did.

Achieving economies of scale through the African Continental Free Trade Area could help crowd in private capital to build up critical industries. This would enable Africa to expand aggregate output and increase trade levels, both of which have remained dismally low.

The US’ attack on development assistance can be the wake-up call African leaders need. After decades of lowering ambitions and outsourcing development, it is time for the continent to take full advantage of the growth opportunities associated with domestic crises, rather than ceding control to the aid system and the foreign contractors that fill its ranks. Necessity is the mother of invention, as the cliché goes, which means that the end of USAID could galvanize African governments to confront their countries’ challenges head-on.



# EU, Uzbekistan significant potential for increasing economic, trade cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The development of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and EU countries has significant potential and opens up broad opportunities for mutually beneficial partnership.

In the lead-up to the “Central Asia – European Union” Summit, which will take place on April 3–4, 2025, in Samarkand, the Center for Economic Research and Reforms (CERR) organized the Summit, which highlight the dynamics of Uzbekistan’s foreign trade and investment cooperation with the European Union countries over the past 7 years.

The Uzbekistan is interested in attracting European investments and advanced technologies in strategically important sectors such as renewable energy, the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, agriculture and transport logistics, said a release issued by the embassy of Uzbekistan in Islamabad here on Wednesday.

Overall, the upcoming summit in Samarkand may become not only a symbolic but also a practically significant step toward a new level of cooperation, based on pragmatism, mutual benefit and a shared commitment to sustainable development.

In the year, 2024, the main share of Uzbekistan’s trade turnover with EU countries was with: Germany (19.1%), France (17.8%), Lithuania (9.4%), Italy (6.9%), Czech Republic (6.8%), Poland (6%), Latvia (4.5%), the Netherlands (4.2%), Belgium (3.3%), Austria (3.3%), Slovenia (2.8%) and others.

In Uzbekistan’s foreign trade, the European Union ranks third among trading partners by volume of trade turnover, exports and imports, after China and Russia.

In 2024, the share of EU countries in Uzbekistan’s foreign trade amounted to: 9.7% in trade turnover, 6.3% in exports, and 12% in imports.

Uzbekistan’s trade turnover with EU countries from 2017 to 2024 increased 2.4 times from \$2.6 billion to \$6.4 billion, exports increased 3.6 times from \$472.3 million to \$1.7 billion, imports increased 2.2 times from \$2.2 billion to \$4.7 billion.

During the period 2017–2024, the share of EU countries in Uzbekistan’s total trade turnover slightly decreased from 9.9% to 9.7%, in total exports it increased from 3.8% to 6.3%, and in total imports it decreased from 15.5% to 12%.

In 2024 compared to 2023, Uzbekistan’s trade turnover with the EU increased by 5.2% from \$6.1 billion to \$6.4 billion, exports increased by 26.9% from \$1.3 billion to \$1.7 billion, imports remained unchanged at \$4.7 billion.

In 2024, Uzbekistan’s exports to EU countries amounted to \$1.7 billion.

The main volume (54%) was chemical products – \$877.4 million, including radioactive elements (uranium) – \$775.3 million, fertilizers – \$95.6 million, various sulfates and carbonates – \$2.5 million. In 2024, 86% of all uranium exports, about 27% of fertilizer exports, 5% of textile products and 2.1% of fruit and vegetable products were supplied to EU countries.

In 2024, Uzbekistan’s imports from EU countries amounted to \$4.7 billion. EU countries are among the main suppliers to Uzbekistan of “machinery, equipment and transport vehicles,” chemical and other industrial products necessary for development.

In 2024, about 50% (\$2.3 billion) of Uzbekistan’s imports from EU countries consisted of “machinery, equipment, transport vehicles, electrical goods, instruments and medical equipment,” including aircraft (10 units) worth \$272.4 million from Germany, France, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The second major import category from EU countries is chemical products (pharmaceuticals, perfumery, cosmetics and other chemical substances) – \$1.2 billion (24.9% of imports).

EU countries account for about 16% of Uzbekistan’s total imports of “machinery, equipment and transport vehicles,” including almost all imported civil aircraft, as well as 40% of total pharmaceutical imports.

In 2024, the volume of foreign direct investment and loans from EU countries (including financial institutions of EU countries) increased by 77% and amounted to \$4.1 billion (in 2023 – \$2.3 billion). At the same time, in 2024 compared to 2017, the annual volume of attracted investments from EU countries increased 18 times (in 2017 – \$222 million, in 2018 – \$324.1 million).

The largest volume of investment in 2024 was attracted from Germany – \$1.4 billion, the Netherlands – \$1.1 billion, Cyprus – \$858.9 million, the Czech Republic – \$137.8 million, Italy – \$99.8 million, Sweden – \$97.5 million, and others.

For the period 2017–2024, the total volume of attracted direct investments and loans from EU countries (including from EU financial institutions) amounted to \$12.4 billion.

At the same time, European companies gain the opportunity to expand their presence in promising new markets in Central Asia, strengthening their positions in global production chains.

Equally important is the active use of the GSP+ beneficiary status granted to Uzbekistan to increase exports of high-quality agricultural and textile products to European markets. Further technical assistance from the EU in certification, digital transformation and WTO accession will enhance the competitiveness of Uzbek goods and services, which in turn will strengthen bilateral trade and economic ties.

The entry into force of the new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Uzbekistan and the EU, as well as the effective use of European financial support programs, could become an important incentive for the sustainable development of Uzbekistan’s economy.

Promising areas also include joint projects in the field of tourism infrastructure, taking into account the preferences of European tourists, which will ensure growth in tourist flows and contribute to the strengthening of intercultural ties between the parties.

## Stock markets mixed as uncertainty rules ahead of Trump tariffs

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Equity markets were mixed Wednesday as nervous investors brace for Donald Trump’s wave of tariffs later in the day, with speculation about what he has in store stoking uncertainty on trading floors.

Equities have been battered leading up to the US president’s announcement – which he has dubbed “Liberation Day” – with warnings that friend and foe are in the crosshairs after what he says is years of “ripping off” the US.

He has trailed the measures for weeks, initially suggesting they would match whatever levies other countries impose.

But US media reported he has also considered either blanket 20 percent levies or another plan where some countries get preferential treatment.

Sweeping auto tariffs of 25 percent announced last week are also due to come into effect on Thursday.

The White House has said Trump will unveil his decision at 4:00 pm in Washington (2000 GMT), after Wall Street markets close, with the Republican promising a new “golden age” of US industry.

However, officials admitted he was still ironing out the details late Tuesday.

Analysts said the ongoing uncertainty was spooking markets.

“Investors and company management dislike uncertainty, and the piecemeal, unreliable way in which tariff announcements are being delivered is creating plenty of it,” said Oliver Blackburn and Adam Hets at Janus Henderson Investments in a commentary.

“Estimates on what the average tariff rate will look like range from a few percentage points in moderate outcomes to double-digit levels in more forceful scenarios,” they added.

“What does seem less uncertain is that tariffs are, without much exception, likely to be bad for economic growth, consumers, and markets.”

Pepperstone Group’s Chris Weston said the suggestion that the tariffs would be effective immediately would provide some sort of certainty, even if it limited the scope for talks.

“This scenario – while hardly a positive for economics or earnings assumptions – would increase the conviction behind how we respond to the ‘facts,’” he explained.

“That said, life is never straightforward, and we will still need to consider the counter response from other countries.”

The planned duties have ramped up fears of a global trade war after several countries warned they were lining up their responses.

With that in mind, economists have warned that economic growth could take a hit and inflation reignite, dealing a blow to hopes that central banks would continue cutting interest rates.

Asian markets skidded between gains and losses through the day.

Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Wellington, Taipei, Mumbai and Bangkok rose, while Hong Kong, Singapore, Manila and Seoul slipped. London, Paris and Frankfurt fell at the open.

Safe haven gold held above \$3,100 after touching a record high \$3,149.00 on Tuesday.

And HSBC strategists led by Max Kettner warned Wednesday might not mark the end of the tariff uncertainty.

“We’d argue the potential is in fact higher for the 2 April deadline to introduce even more uncertainty – and hence prolonged broad-based weakness in leading indicators,” they said.

Chinese tech giant Xiaomi dropped three percent in Hong Kong, extending Tuesday’s fall of more than five percent after the firm confirmed one of its electric vehicles was involved in an accident in China that reportedly left three people dead.

## Institutional oversight to help boost ERRA’s mandate: Experts

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government’s recent decision to establish Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) is seen as a crucial step toward reforming Pakistan’s real estate market. Experts said that if implemented transparently and backed by strong institutional support, RERA can play a pivotal role in curbing illicit financial activities, increasing government revenue, and restoring investor confidence in the property sector.

Dr Shahid Khan, a macroeconomist at the Centre of Business and Economic Research (CBER), Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, said that the establishment of Real Estate Regulatory Authority can significantly reduce tax evasion if it is accompanied by stringent enforcement measures.

He noted that real estate transactions in Pakistan have historically been marred by under-invoicing, benami properties, and speculative pricing, all of which contribute to an artificial increase in property values. By enforcing proper documentation and valuation mechanisms, it could discourage these malpractices and bring more transactions into the formal economy, thereby improving tax compliance and government revenues.

However, he stressed that the mere establishment of an authority is not enough; its operational independence and institutional oversight will determine its effectiveness.

Dr. Ikram-ul-Haq, a tax expert, highlighted that the regulatory authorities in Pakistan have often struggled due to political interference and weak enforcement mechanisms. He suggested that the authority must have strong legal backing, ensuring that it can function independently without external pressures from powerful real estate lobbies.

“If the authority is empowered to monitor transactions, verify ownership records, and coordinate with tax agencies, it will go a long way towards reducing the illegal wealth accumulation in the real estate sector,” he asserted.

He said one of the major challenges in Pakistan’s real estate market has been a lack of transparency, which has discouraged legitimate investments.

He explained that foreign investors and overseas Pakistanis often hesitate to invest in real estate due to concerns about land encroachments, unclear property rights, and fraudulent dealings. By establishing authority, the government can create a structured environment where property transactions are conducted fairly, ensuring that investors have legal recourse in case of disputes.

He advised that the government should implement RERA in phases, allowing time for stakeholders to adapt to the new requirements. He added that incentives such as tax benefits for compliant developers and clear guidelines on property registration can help facilitate a smoother transition.

According to the sources, the IMF urged Pakistan to take firm measures against property value misdeclaration.

The government has assured the IMF of activating the Real Estate Regulatory Authority, which will be empowered to impose strict penalties, including imprisonment and fines, on individuals and agents providing false property valuations.

## Integrating green budgeting into fiscal policies to help tackle environmental challenges

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan must integrate environmental considerations into fiscal policies through green budgeting to address mounting environmental challenges, said Muhammad Saleem, media spokesperson for the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), in an interview.

He said green budgeting involves identifying budgetary measures that contribute to climate change by conducting environmental impact assessments and evaluations. This economic instrument ensures that government actions, including taxation, revenue generation, spending, and investments, align with environmental objectives such as reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, conserving natural resources and promoting renewable energy. It also includes tracking air quality, mainstreaming climate change adaptation, and protecting biodiversity.

“By aligning public spending with environmental goals, the government can make informed decisions to address climate impacts and build resilience. Green budgeting can be implemented at all government levels, including provincial and local bodies. The public sector also plays a pivotal role in responding to climate change,” he said.

Saleem said, “Pakistan urgently needs to transition toward sustainable economic policies. In this context, green budgeting mechanism is critical. It involves assessing the environmental impact of budget allocations and directing public finances toward projects that promote sustainability. This approach can balance economic growth with clean energy investments, pollution control measures, afforestation programs, and efficient water management.”

He said as a viable tool for promoting environment-friendly development strategies, green budgeting is crucial for Pakistan’s transition to sustainability. The country ranks among the top 10 most climate-vulnerable nations, facing challenges like glacial melting, floods, and heatwaves. To mitigate these weather-related impacts, substantial funding is required, and green budgeting can help channel this funding effectively.

He said, “The Pakistani government has made initial efforts to integrate environmental considerations into the budget process. The Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review (CPEIR) framework has been developed to analyse climate-related expenditures and prioritize funding for sustainable initiatives. The government is also working in coordination with international organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, to strengthen these efforts.”

The MoCC&EC spokesman said the path to effective green budgeting still faces several challenges, including limited institutional capacity, policy incoherence, budgetary constraints, and issues with monitoring and accountability. Economic instability in Pakistan further complicates the allocation of funds for green initiatives.

“To overcome these hurdles, successful implementation of green budgeting will require strengthening institutional capacity through training programs for financial managers and policymakers. Transparent reporting mechanisms are essential to track green expenditures and ensure accountability,” he said.

Muhammad Akbar, an environmentalist from Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) said, “If adopted successfully, green budgeting will help Pakistan transition to a low-carbon economy and achieve sustainable socio-economic development. Integrating environmental concerns into fiscal policies will mitigate climate impacts and help build a resilient future for the country’s citizens.”

He said aligning the economic policies with environmental sustainability is a promising opportunity for Pakistan.



HYDERABAD: Workers preparing special Chicken Tikka Booti for customers.

## SWCCI pays tribute to women’s struggles

SARGODHA (APP): The Sargodha Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SWCCI) organised a ceremony on Wednesday, the third day of Eid-ul-Fitr, to pay tribute to working women and their effective role in society.

SWCCI Chairperson Shamim Aftab, executive members including Dr. Humaira Azhar, Samra Abu Huraira, and Secretary SWCCI Saira were also present. They extended Eid greetings to all women and acknowledged their resilience and determination.

The SWCCI chairperson said that women had always been a pillar of strength in society, and their contributions could not be overlooked. She urged every woman to move forward with renewed commitment to strengthen the community.

Dr Humaira highlighted the importance of women’s empowerment and health, stressing that every woman had the right to a healthy life. She stressed the need for raising awareness about health issues, as a strong society could only be built when women prioritise their well-being.

## Fall in legal tea imports hits state kitty hard

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tea Association (PTA) has urged the government to take notice of an alarming decline in the legal tea imports, which is rapidly depleting the government revenue.

The PTA Chairman Muhammad Altaf claimed that the drop in legal imports had resulted in a revenue loss of Rs3.23 billion in the last quarter of the Fiscal Year 2024. He further revealed that over the past eight months, illegal channels had diverted 29.67 million kilograms of tea, causing a loss of Rs13.84 billion to the national exchequer.

To plug revenue leakage, Altaf recommended eliminating all exemptions granted to the dry ports, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), and under the Export Facilitation Scheme. According to him, these schemes have been misused and have become significant sources of financial loss.

The chairman also urged the government to limit tea imports under PATA/FATA to 4 million kilograms, aligning with their population of 4 million people.

Calling for stricter regulations at the dry ports, he emphasized the need to prevent the misuse of this facility and suggested that the PTA be granted authority to conduct both quantitative and qualitative checks.

He further demanded an immediate halt to the re-export of tea, warning that the estimated annual revenue loss from this practice was expected to rise significantly.

Altaf demanded that the Minimum Retail Price (MRP) SRO 1735(I)/2024 should be withdrawn immediately, as basically it was not applicable and unjustified on tea, which was imported in bulk packing from 5kg to 80kg for further processing.

Tea is an essential commodity and should be classified accordingly in the Customs Tariff, he said. It is recognized as a staple food by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and is a part of the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), highlighting its significance in household consumption.

Ensuring fair taxation on tea will help maintain affordability and stability in the market, benefiting consumers, tea trade and the industry, he added.

To support tea trade and reduce illicit imports, Altaf proposed reducing the Customs Duty from 11% to 5%, abolishing 2% Regulatory Duty, lowering the Sales Tax from 18% to 10%, and cutting the Withholding Tax from 5.5% to 2%.

The PTA is an independent, non-profit organization, representing tea packers, indenters, and traders in Pakistan.

## Karachi’s mega IT park to generate 13,400 jobs

ISLAMABAD (INP): The development of a mega IT Park in Karachi is set to generate 13,400 jobs and boost the country’s economy by addressing infrastructural deficits, fostering innovation, and driving IT exports.

Awais Ahmad, Director at Tech Solutions Pro, a leading IT solutions provider, highlighted that Karachi is set to become a hub of innovation with the establishment of a mega IT Park, a project that aims to generate jobs and boost the economy.

“The initiative, spearheaded by the federal government in collaboration with the Sindh government, is a significant step towards addressing the infrastructural deficits that have long hampered the city’s IT sector.” Karachi is developing a state-of-the-art IT Park spanning 1.12 million square feet, expected to be completed by 2027. This project, estimated to cost \$186 million, is projected to generate 13,400 jobs and increase IT exports by \$90 million. The IT Park aims to be a hub of innovation, creating job and business opportunities, especially for the youth.

According to Ahmad, the city’s IT sector has the potential for exponential export growth, which can deliver swift economic benefits. However, infrastructural deficits significantly hampered this potential, limiting its capacity to attract substantial investments and fully capitalise on IT export opportunities.

Ahmad advocated for a collaborative strategy, proposing a joint initiative between industry stakeholders and governmental bodies like the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB). “This partnership would focus on attracting investment, exploring new export markets, and simplifying visa processes for IT professionals.”

He also underscored the importance of raising awareness about the advantages of establishing Software Technology Parks (STPs) and Special Technology Zones (STZs) to foster innovation and growth, and recommended the establishment of a dedicated software technology park in Karachi to provide the resources and infrastructure to support the IT sector and facilitate its expansion into international markets.

Muhammad Iqbal Kakakhail, chief executive officer and Co-Founder of IdeoMetriX, a software company, called for strategic IT infrastructure development in Karachi, emphasising that the city’s IT sector growth is stunted by a lack of adequate resources and infrastructure despite its talented pool of over 60,000 tech professionals.

He advocated for policies that foster innovation and create a supportive ecosystem for tech startups, highlighting the importance of public-private partnerships to establish technology incubation centres that provide mentorship, workspace, and networking opportunities to support emerging startups.

Kakakhail emphasised that by prioritising the development of a robust IT infrastructure and fostering a culture of innovation, Karachi can unlock its full potential as a regional tech hub and significantly contribute to the country’s GDP.





In brief

Playing conditions were tough with new ball: Faheem

HAMILTON (Web Desk): Pakistan all-rounder Faheem Ashraf said on Wednesday that the playing conditions were tough with the new ball. Addressing a post-match conference in Hamilton after Pakistan's defeat against New Zealand in the second ODI, Ashraf said, "When Naseem Shah and I were batting, the ball got old." He stated, "I cannot isolate myself by performing individually in a losing cause. We are looking to win matches." "Backing each other as a unit will help Pakistan win matches," said Ashraf. It is pertinent to note that Faheem Ashraf's 73 off 80 balls went in vain and Pakistan got drubbed at the hands of the Black Caps again in the second ODI at Seddon Park in Hamilton.

SA white-ball coach Walter resigns

CAPE TOWN (AFP): South Africa's white-ball coach Rob Walter has resigned from the role, Cricket South Africa announced on Tuesday. CSA said that Walter's resignation for "personal reasons" will come into effect on April 30. Walter was barely two years into a four-year contract which was due to end with the Cricket World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia in 2027. Walter, 49, took South Africa to the final of the T20 World Cup in Barbados in 2024, the country's first global final since South Africa won the first Champions Trophy in 1998. He was also in charge when they reached the semi-finals of the 2023 Cricket World Cup in India and the 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan. But Walter faced criticism for South Africa's patchy record in bilateral series outside major tournaments — although he pointed out that many leading players were seldom available for international matches because of their commitments to franchise competitions. Although a South African, Walter has lived in New Zealand since accepting a coaching position with Otago in 2016. He commuted to South Africa for coaching duties since being appointed in January 2023. Enoch Nkwe, CSA director of cricket, said Walter had done an "immense job" in achieving success in big tournaments while building for the future by providing opportunities to emerging players in matches outside the ICC events.

Messi's bodyguard no longer on Miami sidelines

MIAMI (Agencies): Lionel Messi's bodyguard Yassine Cheuko said he has been banned from protecting the Argentine forward from the touchline during Inter Miami matches. Cheuko gained widespread recognition after social media videos showed him closely watching the crowd to stop potential pitch invaders from harming the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner. "They don't allow me to be on the field anymore," the bodyguard was quoted as saying by Spanish media. "I was in Europe for seven years, working for Ligue 1 and the Champions League, and only six people invaded the pitch. I came to the USA and in just 20 months 16 people have already done so. There's a huge problem here, let me help Messi." Major League Soccer said on Tuesday that its protocols regarding team security guards had not changed, and multiple sides had designated team security guards who are stationed near team benches on the field. Inter Miami have been contacted for comment.

Hay shines as New Zealand beat Pakistan for ODI series win

HAMILTON (AFP): Mitch Hay's rollicking 99 not out backed by some feisty seam bowling steered New Zealand to an 84-run win over Pakistan on Wednesday to take an unbeatable lead in their one-day international series. New Zealand made 292-8 and bowled Pakistan out for 208 in the 42nd over in Hamilton in the second of three ODIs. Hay's lusty hitting snapped a mid-innings slump by the hosts as he raced to a career-best score which included 22 off the final over by Mohammad Wasim.

The wicketkeeper-batsman smacked seven fours and as many sixes in his 78-ball innings after going into the middle with New Zealand struggling at 132-5 in the 27th over. In reply Pakistan were in early trouble when Will O'Rourke had Abdullah Shafique (one) caught at first slip in the third over and in the following over Babar Azam (one) was caught at second slip off Jacob Duffy.

Duffy struck again in his next over with the wicket of

Imam-ul-Haq. Pakistan were 9-3 in the sixth over when New Zealand at the same stage were 50-0.

Ben Sears entered the attack and took two wickets in his first over, removing Salman Agha for nine and Mohammad Rizwan for five.

A combination of poor shot selection and some lively seam bowling reduced Pakistan to 32-5 after 12 overs. Tayyab Tahir (13) and Faheem Ashraf put on 33 for the sixth wicket and when Haris Rauf retired hurt on three, his concussion replacement Naseem Shah put on 60 with Ashraf.

Both posted maiden 50s with Ashraf scoring 73 off 80 deliveries and Naseem making 51 from 44. Sears took 5-59 for New Zealand.

Rizwan won the toss and opted to bowl with overcast skies and a green-tinged wicket favoring the bowlers. Novice Black Cap openers Nick Kelly and Rhys Mariu took control early.

They put on 54 before Kelly, in only his second international, was caught

behind for a hard-hitting 31 which included four fours and two sixes.

Debutant Mariu followed soon after for 18 off 25 when a leading edge lobbed up to Azam at mid-off in Wasim's opening over.

Wasim and Rauf slowed the scoring and it took Henry Nicholls and Daryl Mitchell until the 16th over to get New Zealand to the 100 mark. The introduction of spin brought Mitchell's innings to a halt for 18, stumped by Rizwan when beaten in the air by Sufyan Moqim. Nicholls went for 22 in the following over.

Michael Bracewell and Muhammad Abbas added only 30 runs in the next 10 overs when Bracewell was caught behind off Wasim for 17. Pakistan-born Abbas and Hay set about restoring the innings with a patient 77-run partnership until Abbas went for 41. Moqim was the pick of the Pakistan bowlers with 2-33 while Wasim took 2-78.

The third and final match is at Mount Maunganui on Friday.



HAMILTON: New Zealand's Jacob Duffy (R) celebrates the wicket of Pakistan's Akif Javed (L) during the 2nd one-day international (ODI) cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Seddon Park.

PSL X anthem 'X Dekho' launched

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday launched the much anticipated anthem for its 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) on the HBL PSL Youtube channel.

The anthem features an electrifying lineup of artists, including Punjabi music sensation Abrar-Ul-Haq, making his debut for the HBL PSL. Joining him are renowned singer and songwriter Ali Zafar, the powerful voice of Natasha Baig — who is also singing the anthem of HBL PSL for the first time and the dynamic rap style of Talha Anjum. The anthem captures the energy, excitement and passion of Pakistan's marquee event, reflecting the unbreakable connection between cricket, music and the fans. The six-team tournament will be played in four cities — Lahore, Karachi, Multan and Rawalpindi from 11 April to 18 May.

HBL PSL Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer said: "The vision for this year's anthem is to celebrate a milestone — ten years of HBL Pakistan Super League. The anthem is thus named 'X Dekho', representing pride over the achievements and the hurdles overcome by the HBL PSL over the last decade.

"The four artists from different backgrounds, genres, and vocal ranges reflect the diversity of Pakistan's talent. This year, the idea was to create a song that is fresh, yet familiar and resonates across fans globally."

India to host West Indies and South Africa in home season

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India will host the West Indies for two Tests in October followed by a series across formats against South Africa, the country's cricket board said Wednesday.

The West Indies Test tour to India begins on October 2 with the opener at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. Kolkata's iconic Eden Gardens will host the second Test from October 10-14.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said the upcoming international home season "promises thrilling encounters" as they announced the schedule in a release.

South Africa will play two Tests in India starting November 14 in New Delhi. The second match will be in Guwahati — the venue to host its first-ever Test — starting November 22.

The two teams will then clash in three one-day internationals and five T20 matches across different venues in India.

Schedule  
West Indies tour of India  
Oct 2-6 1st Test Ahmedabad  
Oct 10-14 2nd Test Kolkata  
South Africa tour of India  
Nov 14-18 1st Test New Delhi  
Nov 22-26 2nd Test Guwahati  
Nov 30 1st ODI Ranchi  
Dec 3 2nd ODI Raipur  
Dec 6 3rd ODI Visakhapatnam  
Dec 9 1st T20I Cuttack  
Dec 11 2nd T20I New Chandigarh  
Dec 14 3rd T20I Dharamsala  
Dec 17 4th T20I Lucknow  
Dec 19 5th T20I Ahmedabad.

Saka scores on return as Arsenal beat Fulham



LONDON (Agencies): Bukayo Saka marked his return from a lengthy injury absence with a goal as Arsenal beat Fulham 2-1 on Tuesday to cut the gap on Premier League leaders Liverpool to nine points.

Saka came off the bench to head in on his first appearance since December 21, after Mikel Merino's deflected effort had given Arsenal a first-half lead.

However, victory came at a cost as key defender Gabriel Magalhaes limped off injured. "It was a good opportunity to see how much people love him and missed him," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta on Saka's ovation before he even stepped foot back on the field.

"The reception he got was magnificent. He lifts the stadium and I am so happy for him because he fully deserves it." Rodrigo Muniz pulled a goal back in stoppage time, but defeat is a blow to Fulham's ambitions of European football next season.

The Cottagers remain in eighth, three points outside a top-five finish that would

almost certainly secure Champions League football next season. Just one week away from the Gunners' Champions League quarter-final, first leg against Real Madrid, the sight of Gabriel pulling up with a hamstring problem added to Arteta's injury woes.

Jurrien Timber was also forced off late with a knee injury. "(We are) worried because he never wants to come off and he had to," added Arteta. "He felt he could not continue."

- Enter Saka -  
However, the return of Saka is a massive boost to Arsenal's faint hopes of chasing down Liverpool and a shot at becoming European champions for the first time. Arsenal's place in the top five is looking assured as they move 14 points clear of sixth-placed Newcastle.

Arteta's men are on course to finish second for the third consecutive season given Liverpool's commanding lead. But the Spaniard showed no sign of having one eye on a blockbuster Champions League

tie against the holders with his team selection.

Gabriel would be a massive miss and the centre-back will now be a major doubt for that tie after pulling up inside the first 15 minutes. Arsenal never got going as an attacking threat in a first half short on clear-cut chances, but Merino maintained his impressive record as a makeshift striker due to season-ending injuries to Kai Havertz and Gabriel Jesus.

The Spanish international now has five goals in eight games in his new role, but had fortune on his side to break the deadlock. Ethan Nwaneri was Arsenal's biggest threat in the first 45 minutes and his cross picked out Merino, who needed the benefit of a big deflection to see his shot loop into the far corner. Saka's introduction was greeted with the biggest cheer of the night until that point at the Emirates Stadium when he replaced Nwaneri 25 minutes from time.

The England international took just eight minutes to net his 10th goal of the season. Saka was in the right place to head in from close range after Gabriel Martinelli flicked on Merino's cross. Muniz should have set up a grandstand finish when he headed wide a glorious chance to pull a goal back for the visitors 10 minutes from time.

The Brazilian made amends to net a consolation in stoppage time but it was too little, too late for Fulham as Arsenal maintained some pressure on Liverpool ahead of their Merseyside derby at home to Everton on Wednesday.

Neilson Powless fools Visma to win across Flanders



WAREGEM (AFP): American Neilson Powless won the Across Flanders cobbles classic on Wednesday, leaving Wout van Aert and his Visma team with egg on their faces.

The Dutch outfit broke as a team with Van Aert, Matteo Jorgenson and Tiesj Benoot breaking away in the final hour.

But Powless grimly held on to the yellow-shirted trio and began his sprint early on the run into Waregem to outwit the three riders and win the 184.2km loop around Flanders with its 10 climbs and seven cobblestone sections.

The debacle represents a second disaster here in two seasons for the 30-

year-old Van Aert, who suffered a fall on this race last season that scuppered much of his year.

American Jorgenson won in Van Aert's absence in 2024 and came home fourth Wednesday.

The ecstatic Powless told reporters it was "the win of my life" at the finish line as he celebrated with his teammates.

"I just can't believe it, I sprinted for second place never thinking I'd beat Wout," said the 28-year-old Powless.

Jorgenson said Visma followed team instructions to wait for the sprint rather than attack Powless over the final 50km.

But the dejected Van Aert admitted the decision had really been his.

"It was me who made the call for the sprint. I was confident I could win, but in the sprint I cramped completely," he said.

"I wanted the victory so bad, especially after all the criticism I've been through and all the bad luck I've been through."

Van Aert crossed the line with his head very low in a state of dejection before slumping to the ground.

Without a win since claiming the 10th stage in the Vuelta a Espana last August, he goes into the season's two hottest one day races -- the Tour of Flanders and the Paris-Roubaix -- in the next 10 days nursing a bruising near miss.

Jokic sets NBA record in 61-point haul



DENVER (Agencies): The Denver Nuggets' Nikola Jokic hit a career-high 61 points as he recorded the highest-scoring triple-double in NBA history.

The Serb, a three-time MVP, claimed 10 rebounds and 10 assists in a 140-139 overtime defeat by the Minnesota Timberwolves at Ball Arena.

The previous record was held by Nuggets teammate Russell Westbrook, who scored 57 points and made 13 rebounds and 11 assists for Oklahoma City Thunder in 2017.

Westbrook, who joined the Nuggets in 2024, missed a lay-up with 10 seconds remaining in over-

time with the Nuggets leading 139-138.

He then fouled Nickell Alexander-Walker in trying to block a three-point attempt with 0.1 seconds on the clock.

Alexander-Walker made two of the three free throws to seal a dramatic Timberwolves victory.

They were without Naz Reid and Donte DiVincenzo, who were serving one-match bans for their part in a brawl with the Detroit Pistons this week. The Timberwolves are seventh in the Western Conference and the Nuggets third.

Curry shines for Warriors

Two-time MVP Stephen Curry hit 12 three-pointers in a 52-point haul as the Golden State Warriors beat the Memphis Grizzlies 134-125 at FedEx Forum.

"The guy's 37 years old - it's incredible," said Warriors coach Steve Kerr. "I can't believe he's still doing this at this age. But he's put the work in and he's still got it. "Fifty-two points with people draped all over him all game long. The conditioning, the skill, the audacity, the belief. It's incredible to watch Steph at work."

Victory lifted the Warriors above the Grizzlies and into fifth in the Western Conference.

Haaland ruled out for up to seven weeks: Guardiola

LONDON (AFP): Erling Haaland will be out of action for up to seven weeks after suffering an ankle injury, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said on Tuesday.

The prolific 24-year-old Norwegian was forced off in Sunday's 2-1 FA Cup quarter-final win at Bournemouth after scoring his 30th goal of the season.

City said on Monday that the forward would see a specialist but anticipated he "will be fit to play a further part in the remainder of this season including this summer's FIFA Club World Cup".

Guardiola gave an update on Tuesday, on the eve of his side's Premier League match against struggling Leicester at the Etihad.

"The doctors told me between five and seven weeks," he said. "So hopefully for the end of season and FIFA Club World Cup he will be ready."

"Sometimes there are years where these kinds of things happen. It's happened all season."

Premier League champions City have been hit hard by injuries in the current campaign, most damagingly losing Ballon d'Or winner Rodri for the bulk of the

season. Guardiola said City did not have another player with Haaland's attributes but would have to adapt as they chase a spot in the Champions League next season.

City are currently fifth in the Premier League, which is likely to be enough to secure a place in Europe's top club competition after strong performances from English clubs in European competition.

They have nine games left in the Premier League season plus an FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest towards the end of April.

A seven-week absence would rule Haaland out of most of the rest of the Premier League campaign.

The FA Cup final takes place on May 17, a day short of seven weeks after Haaland suffered the injury.

City's final Premier League game is at Fulham on May 25 while their first match in the Club World Cup in the United States takes place on June 18.

'Predator'  
"We need players with other qualities and we have to bring more players close to the box," he said.

"Erling's numbers again have been exceptional and he is an incredible threat for many things with long balls and his sense of goal but we have to adjust."

"We will find a solution for the players that we have with different skills and qualities. We will find that."

Guardiola played down the challenge of qualifying for the Champions League.

"We had in the past much tougher than this one," he said. "When you have to win 16 or 17 games to win the Premier League don't tell me it's not a tough one."

"In the past except the first season we were together, and one season when Liverpool were extremely strong and we could not compete with them, all the time we were there to fight for the Premier League."

"This is the first time, along with the first season I was here nine years ago, that we have to fight to qualify for the Champions League."

"We have nine games left and we know what we have to do."





## In brief

### RWMC claims to make arrangements for cleanliness

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) on Wednesday claimed that it had made excellent arrangements for cleanliness during Eid-ul-Fitr, making all the cities of the division zero waste as per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. People and members of the Parliament from the region, and authorities concerned had expressed satisfaction over the performance of the Company, an RWMC spokesman said. RWMC Chief Executive Officer Rana Sajid Safdar congratulated all the staff for the effective cleanliness measures during Eid days. He said that the Company launched a special cleanliness campaign during the Eid-ul-Fitr under which complete cleanliness of roads, streets, markets and other public places was ensured. He said that the cleaning staff worked hard for three days and disposed of the waste immediately. The citizens also appreciated the performance of RWMC and said that thanks to the effective measures of the Company, the city witnessed excellent cleanliness. The members of Parliament also appreciated the performance of the Waste Management Company and said that it had helped in improving the standard of cleanliness in Rawalpindi. The RWMC CEO said that the Company was starting preparations for Eid-ul-Adha right now so that the waste of sacrificial animals could be disposed of immediately. He said that the RWMC would utilize all resources for the successful implementation of the "Suthra Punjab" programme of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The Company, he said, was working on a plan to use modern machinery and increase the capacity of the staff to further improve the sanitation system in the city. In addition, a campaign would also be launched to increase awareness among the citizens about cleanliness, he added. He appealed to the citizens to fulfill their responsibilities regarding cleanliness and throw the garbage at the designated places so that the city could be made more beautiful and clean.

### IRSA releases 56,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 56,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 64,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1410.59 feet which was 8.59 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,300 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1083.20 feet, which was 33.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,000 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 35,700, 22,600, 16,600 and 5,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

# Nawaz assures early completion of Rawalpindi's uplift projects

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has assured the people of Rawalpindi of the early completion of development projects including Nala Lai Expressway, Mother and Child Hospital, Ring Road and others.

The projects were very important for public welfare, and their completion would be made possible at all costs, he said during a meeting with Punjab Chief Minister's Inspection Team Chairman and Member Punjab Assembly Raja Muhammad Hanif on Wednesday.

According to a news release, during the meeting a detailed discussion was held on the political situation and administrative affairs of Rawalpindi.

Raja Hanif highlighted the basic issues and development projects of Rawalpindi, especially the increasing traffic problems in the city and stressed the need for the

construction of Nala Lai Expressway.

"The phased completion of this project will improve the traffic flow in the city and significantly reduce the difficulties faced by the citizens," he added.

Nawaz Sharif, who is thrice elected former prime minister, agreed with the proposal and said that it would be an important project for the citizens of Rawalpindi and its construction could be made possible as soon as possible.

Raja Hanif also raised the issue of early completion of the Mother and Child Hospital. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, who was also present in the meeting, assured that the project had now been transferred to the provincial government, which was giving top priority to its completion.

Raja Hanif also mentioned the major development projects completed

in Rawalpindi during the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, including the Metro Bus Project, Cardiology Hospital, PKLI, Ring Road and others.

All the projects were completed under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif and now Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was also active for the development of the province. She was focused on development works in all districts including Rawalpindi, he added.

During the meeting, Nawaz Sharif described Rawalpindi as a stronghold of the PML-N, saying the members of the National and Provincial Assembly from the area were working hard for the development and progress of the city.

He assured that the government would provide them with all the resources to take Rawalpindi on the path of further development.



RAWALPINDI: Motorcyclist is on his way with his horses on Murree road. —INP Photo

## Gilani named founding Chairman of Inter-Parliamentary speakers' conference

ISLAMABAD (PPI): In a landmark diplomatic achievement for Pakistan, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, has been appointed as the Founding Chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference (ISC), a global forum based in Seoul.

This forum focuses on fostering parliamentary dialogue and cooperation on critical challenges such as climate change, renewable energy, and water scarcity. The decision was made during Chairman Gilani's recent visit to Kuala Lumpur, where he attended a briefing session on the upcoming ISC event in Seoul, Korea.

The formal ceremony for this appointment is scheduled to take place during the World Summit 2025 in Seoul, sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation. The summit will see participation from 500 representatives and 45 parliamentary speakers

from 150 countries. In recognition of his leadership, Gilani received an award lauding his efforts to build bridges between legislative bodies and promote a global agenda focused on peace, prosperity, and democratic values.

Chairman Gilani's visit and his new role as the Founding Chairman of ISC are seen as significant milestones for Pakistan, highlighting its growing influence in international parliamentary relations. Under his leadership, the ISC aims to serve as a platform for countries to exchange ideas and develop policies that transcend traditional diplomatic boundaries.

During the Kuala Lumpur briefing, Chairman Gilani delivered an address emphasizing the ISC's mission to tackle global issues such as climate change and economic inequality through collaborative legislative efforts. He stressed the importance

of partnerships in addressing these challenges and highlighted Pakistan's commitment to fostering dialogue and inclusivity.

The visit also included discussions with H.E. Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Johari bin Abdul, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia, to enhance parliamentary diplomacy between Pakistan and Malaysia. Both leaders reaffirmed the strong bilateral relations and explored opportunities for further cooperation.

The Pakistani delegation in Kuala Lumpur included notable figures such as H.E. Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Johari bin Abdul, Hon. Chung Woo Lee, and others, reflecting the global significance of this initiative. The visit concluded with formal dinners hosted by the Malaysian Speaker and the Ambassador of Pakistan in Malaysia, underscoring the importance of Pakistan-Malaysia relations.

## PHA makes special arrangements for cleanliness of parks

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) made special arrangements for cleanliness along with security and recreational facilities in all the small and big parks of Rawalpindi.

Like the rest of the country, the Pindiites also flocked to parks and recreational places with great enthusiasm on Eid-ul-Fitr. Children, adults and children were seen bustling around in the parks and other and recreational places.

According to a PHA

spokesman on Wednesday, on the special instructions of PHA Rawalpindi Director General Ahmed Hassan Ranjha, the staff took all special measures for the convenience of the people, with the aim of providing the best recreational facilities to the people of Rawalpindi so that they could enjoy Eid festivities.

He said the PHA staff remained fully alert to keep the parks clean. Strict security arrangements were also made in the parks to avoid any untoward incident, he added.

## 4 illegal arms owners arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Wednesday continued operations against illegal arms owners and arrested four accused with weapons and ammunition.

According to the police spokesman, the Naseerabad Police nabbed two arrested accused Usman and Shahryar recovering a 30-bore pistol from both of them.

Similarly, the Airport Police also netted two accused Suleman and Ilyas with a 30-bore pistol and ammunition, and six round of 30-bore pistol from them respectively.



RAWALPINDI: Muslims offering Eid-ul-Fitr prayers at Eidgah Sharif on 31 March. —INP Photo

## Pindiites enjoy Eid festivities amid tight security arrangement

RAWALPINDI (APP): The people of Rawalpindi and elsewhere in the district enjoyed the festivities during the three days of Eid-ul-Fitr amid tight security arrangements.

On the first day of Eid on Monday the faithful offered Eid prayers at more than 700 mosques, Imambargahs and open spaces across the district, with 5,000 police personnel performing security duties, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said.

The largest gathering in Rawalpindi was held at Liaquat Bagh, where a large number of people, including political and social figures, offered Eid prayers.

The Women Safety Squad comprising 130 lady police officers along with respective police station squads performed patrol duties to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for women in the markets.

Some 400 policemen kept a vigil on miscreants and criminal elements during the Chand Rat (Eve before Eid day).

More than 600 traffic police officers performed traffic duty duties to maintain traffic flow. They also

set up special pickets with patrolling teams to prevent one-wheeling.

More than 600 policemen secured public places, parks and graveyards. Elite Force, Ladies Police, Dolphin Force and Muhafiz Squad were also in the field with mobiles and motorcycle squads of police stations conducting special patrols in their respective area.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Aamir Khattak, Regional Police Officer Babar Sarfraz Alpa, City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani, Deputy Commissioner Hassan Waqar Cheema, SSP Operations and other senior police officers and officials offered Eid prayers at the Jamia Masjid of Police Lines Headquarters.

After offering Eid prayers, the citizens spent their time with friends, relatives, and helped the deserving. Special arrangements were made at houses for serving the guests on the auspicious occasion of Eid with vermicelli, kheer and other sweet dishes.

On Tuesday and Wednesday – the second and third days of Eid, the

## Murree sparks as top visited touring site on Eid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Thousands of tourists flocked to Murree on Eid holidays making it a top visited touring site. Besides locals from the twin city of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, a magnificent number of tourists enjoyed pleasant weather in convenience travel arrangements made by the Distt Government.

Mall Road, Pindi Point, Ayubia and other areas witnessed huge rush round the clock. Hotels located in Jhiga Gali, Ghora Gali and rest houses were fully packed with the guests. People enjoyed with gast foods on various restaurants and shopping in Murree's markets.

The facility centers, control rooms and traffic management plan were fully implemented to manage. RWMC workers remained active for maintaining cleanliness in Murree and its surroundings round the clock. PHA, Municipal Corporation Murree and all other institutions performed their duties well on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The Deputy Commissioner, Agha Zaheer Abbass Shirazi congratulated the officers and personnel for sacrificing their holidays in performing their duties well.

Pindiites kept enjoying the festivities with thronging parks and entertainment venues. The people of all ages - children, young and old – were out to enjoy sightseeing, delicious food and cold ice cream.

There was great rush of families at Ayub Park, Iqbal Park, Jinnah Park, Shehbaz Sharif Park, Children's Park, Satellite Town Family Park, 502 Park and other entertainment venues. Children were seen swinging and

eating delicious food in entertainment venues and parks to spend their Eidi.

People with disabilities were also seen strolling in parks on wheelchairs. The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company made elaborate arrangements for cleanliness across the city.

Similarly, the Water and Sanitation Agency Rawalpindi ensured provision of uninterrupted water supply during the three days of Eid-ul-Fitr.

## Islamabad Police ensure strict security on third day of Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the special directives of Inspector General (IG) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi,

enhanced security measures remained in place across the city on the third day of Eid, on Wednesday.

A police spokesman told APP that Islamabad Police made special security arrangements for parks and recreational areas to ensure the safety of citizens.

He said that more than 2,500 officers had been deployed to maintain law and order and oversee traffic management across the capital.

He said that over 500 traffic officers were on duty to ensure the smooth flow of traffic in key areas.

He said that police quick response teams were actively

patrolling different parts of the city to respond promptly to any emergency.

The Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Chief Traffic Officer, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations, and other senior officials are personally present in the field to monitor security and traffic arrangements.

All patrolling units were deployed to enhance vigilance and maintain public safety, he told. The spokesman said that a strict crack-down against one-wheelers and reckless driving was underway to prevent accidents and ensure road safety.

He said entry into public parks is restricted to families only, with no

unauthorized individuals are allowed there, adding that special checkpoints and security barricades had been established at the city's entry and exit points to prevent any security threats.

He said that citizens could obtain traffic-related information by contacting the emergency helpline Pukar 15, Islamabad Traffic Police helpline 1915, or through the official social media platforms of the police.

He said that no effort would be spared in maintaining law and order across the city.

"All officers must remain in the field and ensure the effectiveness of security arrangements," said IGP Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi.



RAWALPINDI: Youngsters flying kites despite ban from the roof top of their house in the city.



2 killed, 4 wounded in clash

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Two people were killed and four others wounded in a clash between two families over a property dispute in Chaparhar district of eastern Nangarhar province on Wednesday, an official said. Police spokesman Syed Tayeb Hammed told Pajhwok Afghan News the clash took place in Dawlatzo village of the district. He said two people lost their lives and four others were wounded in the armed conflict.

Eid celebrated in peace

KABUL (BNA): The three days of Eidul Fitr celebrated in a spirit of peace and happiness throughout Afghanistan. Mufti Abdul Matin Qane, spokesman for Ministry of Interior, said that the leadership and security forces of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ensured the safety of citizens during the festive period. He stated, "The police forces were fully committed to protecting your security, and we have fulfilled this promise. Security was completely ensured across the country."

‘Over 6,800 literacy classes established’

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education announced that it established 6,819 literacy classes across the country over the past year.

According to officials, more than 122,000 individuals have graduated from these courses, and around 145,000 people have benefited from them.

"We have established 6,819 literacy courses, and 145,305 individuals have benefited from these programs; more than 122,000 of them have graduated," stated Zahedullah Salimi, head of the National Mobilization of the Literacy Department.

According to plans, this department is set to launch

an additional 7,200 classes this year to serve over 180,000 individuals across the country.

Over the past two decades, many citizens, especially in remote areas, have been deprived of access to educational services due to war, poverty, and economic challenges.

These literacy classes are considered a step toward individual and social empowerment for these groups.

"Providing basic literacy education is a positive and commendable step. This initiative should be strengthened, and higher education opportunities should also be made available to people in remote areas," Zakiullah Moham-

madi, a university professor said.

"Awareness, dynamism, and enlightenment in society are dependent on literacy levels. The role of literacy should not be limited to the Ministry of Education alone; other institutions must also participate in this endeavor," stated Tariq Haqjoo, another university professor.

Earlier, education officials in Kunduz province of Afghanistan had also announced that, with the cooperation of aid organizations, 700 local educational classes were launched in the provincial capital and districts to educate over 25,000 boys and girls who had been deprived of schooling.

Ministry calls on US to release frozen funds

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Economy has called on the United States to release Afghanistan's frozen assets and return the funds to the country's central bank.

Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, also urged the international community and other countries to lift banking sanctions and restrictions against Afghanistan and for continued humanitarian and developmental aid to help rebuild the country's infrastructure.

Afghanistan has been experiencing an economic crisis for more than three and a half years, with many citizens facing dire financial conditions.

This crisis is largely attributed to the freezing of Afghanistan's central bank assets by the US and the international community's banking sanctions on the country.

While criticizing the continuation of these pressures, calls on the US to release Afghanistan's frozen assets and hand them over to the country's central bank have continued to be made.

Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, also emphasized the importance of rebuilding Afghanistan's infrastructure and urged the international community to support Afghanistan through sustained humanitarian and developmental assistance.

Meanwhile, experts believe that if Afghanistan's assets are released and economic and banking sanctions are lifted, it could help the country emerge from its economic crisis and improve its financial situation.

This comes after the Islamic Emirate took power in Afghanistan, prompting the United States to freeze more than \$9.5 billion of the country's central bank reserves.

However, in 2022, \$3.5 billion of these funds were transferred to a trust fund in Switzerland to be used for Afghanistan's economic aid.

Currently, another \$3.5 billion remains frozen in US banks, while over \$2 billion is held in banks in Europe and the United Arab Emirates.

Mawlawi Hanafi praises Parwan's contributions

PARWAN (BNA): In a recent meeting with the governor and leadership of Parwan province, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, emphasized the significant sacrifices made by the people of Parwan in support of the Islamic system.

The meeting, attended by Mawlawi Najibullah Haqqani, Acting Minister of Communications and Information Technology, included a report from Governor Mufti Mohammad Idris Anuri.

The report covered various aspects of the province, including administrative, economic, developmental, social, and security issues, as well as the needs and suggestions of the local population.



Deputy pM Hanafi praised the people of Parwan for their hospitality and resilience. He assured the attendees that the government is committed to addressing the needs of the province and providing

comprehensive services. Expressing satisfaction with the performance of the local administration, Mawlawi Hanafi promised that the concerns raised by provincial leadership would be taken into account.

Following the meeting, the officials visited several historical sites, including the Jabal-Sarraj Palace, Golghandi Hill in Charikar City, and the Topdare Stupa, highlighting Parwan's rich cultural heritage.

163 enmities resolved in Laghman province last year

MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): About 163 enmities, including decades-old disputes, have been resolved through the mediation of tribal elders and religious scholars in eastern Laghman province.

Abdul Malik Niazi, spokesperson for the Laghman governor, told Pajhwok Afghan News that numerous feuds had been resolved in Mehtarlam city, the provincial capital, and five districts.

Niazi explained: "Disputes among 110 families resulted in 50 injuries in Mehtarlam city. Conflicts among 153 families led to 14 deaths and 45 injuries in Alingar district.

"A feud among 11 families caused 30 deaths in

DawlatShah district. Disputes among 40 families led to the killing of six individuals and injuring of eight others in Alishang district. Seven similar cases have been resolved where 18 people lost their lives and 10 others injured, in Qarghayi district. Seven cases, involving two deaths and six injuries, have been resolved in Badpakh district."

Total 327 families have found peace through these mediations, Niazi said.

Meanwhile, families that once trapped in long-standing conflicts and have now reconciled expressed their gratitude to local officials, tribal elders, and religious scholars for their efforts.

Mohammad Rahim, a

resident of Alingar district, shared his experience:

"Twelve years ago, our feud started over land, leading to the loss of my young nephew. We couldn't sleep in peace; every day, we planned retaliation. But thanks to the mediation of tribal elders, religious scholars, and local officials, our enmity has now turned into friendship."

Similarly, 50-year-old Khyl Gul from Qarghayidistrict recalled that he spent 30 years of his life in conflict.

He lost two uncles and his children were deprived of education, and his home, village, and farmland were abandoned. He endured many hardships. However, last year, tribal elders and

local officials intervened, and the dispute was resolved. Now, he lives in peace.

Additionally, Mohammad Iqbal, a resident of DawlatShah district, said his two-year-long conflict resulted in the death of four family members. However, the dispute has now been settled, and he no longer has any issues with the opposing side.

Since the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)'s return to power, hundreds of enmity cases have been resolved across various provinces through the mediation of local officials, tribal elders, and religious scholars, bringing peace and stability to the people.

25,000 tourists visit Panjsher during Eid festival

CHARIKAR (Pajhwok): As many as 25,000 domestic tourists have visited central Panjsher province during the three days of Eid-ul-Fitr, an official said on Wednesday.

Information and Culture Director Nasrullah Malikzada told Pajhwok Afghan News efforts were underway to enhance hospitality and services for tourists. He highlighted Panjsher's pristine natural beauty, gushing rivers, refreshing climatic conditions and breathtaking landscapes attracted thousands of domestic tourists every year.

Meanwhile, Governor Hafiz Mohammad Agha Hakim noted under his directive, security committees and the Vice and Virtue Department had been mobilised to promote tourism and designate suitable recreational spots for visitors during the Eid holidays.

Irfan, a tourist from Logar, shared his experience: "I visit Panjsher several times a year along with friends. The serene river, towering mountains, fresh air and people's hospitality keep bringing us back." Similarly, Qudratullah, a visitor from Kandahar, praised Panjsher's security and said its refreshing climate prompted him to travel there with friends.

Taliban welcome possible suspension of Russian ban

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban on Tuesday welcomed a move by Russia's top court to consider lifting a longstanding ban on the group, calling it a "valuable step" toward strengthening ties between the two countries, according to Russian state media.

"We believe that all actions in this area aimed at cementing relations between Afghanistan and Russia are a good step," Zabiullah Mujahid, the Taliban's chief spokesman, told the Russian news agency TASS. "These measures will help strengthen relations between the two countries and the two peoples and are regarded as a very valuable step."

Russia's Supreme Court announced on March 31 that the Prosecutor General had filed a request to suspend the ban that designates the Taliban as a terrorist organization under Russian law. The court has yet to issue a final

ruling. In December, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed legislation permitting legal interaction with groups on Russia's list of banned organizations under certain conditions, paving the way for formal engagement with the Taliban, who have ruled Afghanistan since 2021.

Leonid Slutsky, chair of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, said at the time that the legal change would allow Russia to pursue "official interaction" with the Taliban authorities.

No country has formally recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, but several—including Russia, China, Iran, and Pakistan—maintain diplomatic ties with the group. The Russian Embassy in Kabul continues to operate, and Taliban representatives currently manage Afghanistan's diplomatic mission in Moscow.

Kunar double murder 16 suspects being grilled

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Following a verbal clash and the murder of two people by a third person, 16 people have been detained for investigation in eastern Kunar province, police said on Wednesday.

In a statement, the Kunar police headquarters said a man, who had come to the province as a tourist, shot dead two individuals involved in testy exchanges

in Shegal district.

Police said the deadly gunshots were fired by a third person who had come to Kunar from another province for sightseeing.

The statement added: "It remains unclear whether the shooting was intentional or accidental. An investigation is underway, but some biased, anti-Islam and anti-Afghan media outlets have portrayed the heart-

breaking incident as an act by the mujahidin of the Islamic Emirate. This is far from reality ... The perpetrators have no links with the military and security institutions of the Islamic Emirate."

The real perpetrators of the double murder are ordinary tourists who had gone to Kunar for sightseeing, the statement insisted.

The real culprits

involved in the offense were in custody and would be referred to judicial organs once the investigation was completed, the statement continued.

Police spokesman Faridullah Dehqan told Pajhwok Afghan News all of the 16 people, who came to Kunar on a bus, had been arrested for investigation. One suspect managed to flee the area.

Early marriages snatch joys from children's lives

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Kharaman, a 42-year-old mother in western Ghor province, who was forced by poverty to marry off her 10-year-old daughter, says that at night when she goes to sleep, she wishes her daughter was in her arms.

Forced and child marriages, a problem that has existed for many years in various parts of the country, often have severe consequences.

Child marriages for survival of other children

A girl named Razia, a resident of Ferozkoh, is one of the victims of forced marriages. Poverty and family's financial struggles forced her to marry at the age of 10.

Razia, who has never experienced the true smile of a childhood, was married off by her family due to poverty and hunger, instead of playing and enjoying time with other children of her age.

Almost a year has passed since Razia's marriage. She came to visit her mother's house but sits quietly in a

corner, reluctant to speak, as she fears saying something might land her in trouble.

Kharaman, 42, Razia's mother, who feels her daughter's pain more than anyone else, says: "At night when I sleep, I wish my daughter was in my arms; but she isn't. It's very hard for me. When I miss her too much, I go and bring her home for a few days."

Regarding her daughter's marriage, Kharaman recounts: "I married off my elder daughter to the son of a man, and his daughter was married to my son. Unfortunately, my daughter's fiancé passed away. Her father-in-law came and demanded 600,000 afghanis. We didn't have the money, so we were forced to give our young daughter to another son."

Kharaman says her daughter was in the fourth grade and loved studying, but after going to her husband's house, she was no longer allowed to attend school.

She explains: "My

daughter is forced to do all the housework, from sweeping and cooking to washing clothes and taking care of the animals. It's too much for her, but what can she do? She has no choice."

Kharaman, with a voice full of pain, says that she is the only breadwinner for her family of eight. While enduring the endless pains of life, she not only sent her young daughter to another home but also carries the heavy burden of her husband and son's addiction.

She also added her economic situation is not good, and while she is happy that her daughter is not hungry at her in-laws' house, her main concern is the possibility of losing the rest of her children due to poverty.

She stresses that they now have to beg every day to feed her children. Razia's story is not the only heartbreaking one of a child forced into early marriage. There are many other girls who, due to harmful customs, poverty, hunger, and sometimes family pressures, have been married

off at a young age.

Sabzar, another 40-year-old mother, also forced her 11-year-old daughter into engagement due to poverty and economic hardships.

She adds: "Out of necessity and debt, I gave my daughter away. We went to the man's house and told him that our children are hungry, and asked him to marry our daughter to his son in exchange for wheat and barley each year."

She explains her daughter was engaged to the man's 20-year-old son and he promised not to conduct the wedding until she reaches puberty.

Sabzar's daughter is currently in the fifth grade at a school in Ferozkoh, but it is uncertain when she will marry or what her future holds.

Experts

Zarina Azimi, a social activist, says that the prevalence of harmful traditions in society and the existence of poverty are major factors behind child marriages. These can lead to lack of marital harmony, family

discord, unhealthy child upbringing, and even an increase in suicides among girls.

She adds: "Child marriages result in gender inequality. At this age, girls are heavily impacted, and their rights are violated and overlooked. They cannot communicate properly, and the pressure from all sides can lead them to severe psychological problems, contributing to suicides."

Ghulam Nabi Saqi, an education expert, says that in addition to economic poverty, illiteracy and lack of awareness among families are also major causes of forced and early marriages, which can prevent girls from attending school.

He says that forced marriages at a young age leave girls illiterate, unable to support their children's education, and if their family is financially unstable, they cannot play a positive role, facing many additional challenges.

He believes that awareness campaigns through the media, mosque imams, and



village elders can help prevent child marriages.

However, Obaidullah Barhani, a religious scholar, says that families should not force young girls into early marriages for the sake of providing for their household.

He adds: "A daughter is not a source from which we can earn money. It's true that Islam has prescribed a dowry for girls, and it is their right, but it is not a means for fathers to sustain their household. This leads to many consequences and violence."

He states that to address

this issue, it is essential to provide families with education and cultural awareness, and the government should take necessary actions to prevent child marriages.

"Efforts being made to ensure women and girls enjoy all their rightful religious entitlements."

Maulvi Abdul Basit Malazada, the head of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice department in Ghorprovince, says that since the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate, they have addressed 260 cases of forced mar-

riages, 10 of which occurred this year.

He adds: "These cases include inheritance rights, domestic violence, and other issues raised by families or other government and non-government entities, and we have addressed them." He said they have resolved these issues through meetings with families, local elders, and by imposing penalties and fines.

He added that the IEA is committed to supporting women's rights and works to ensure that women and girls enjoy all their religious rights.



## KP govt urged to focus on security situation

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday underlined the need for provincial government to take tangible measures for improving security situation in the province.

He said that security forces were playing effective role on their part and making sacrifices for the sake of peace. Similarly the state was fulfilling its responsibilities and after 18th amendment it was responsibility of the Chief Executive of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Chief Minister, to ensure the protection of the lives and property of the people.

Talking to media, during the Eid occasion, where he met with Pakistan Peoples Party officials, workers, and local dignitaries to exchange Eid greetings at his residence, he told media that this issue also came under discussion in the recently-hled meeting of the National Security Council and expressed regret that some political parties had boycotted the session.

He suggested that this indicated their intent to seek concessions from the government for their political purposes. He also questioned why similar demands were not made when other political leaders were imprisoned in the past.

He said that if anyone was facing corruption allegations, they must face the courts, and the government could not grant anyone an NRO in this regard. He also referred to Afghanistan's current situation, saying that it posed a significant challenge for Pakistan, as most terrorism-related incidents were linked to Afghanistan.

He also mentioned that while Pakistan has always supported the Afghan people but it is now time to bring Afghan refugees into the ambit of law. The Governor highlighted the issues of water scarcity in Sindh and the unresolved matter of the distribution of the NFC (National Finance Commission) award, which requires immediate attention from the federal government.

Faisal Karim Kundi also discussed the lack of visible developmental projects in Dera Ismail Khan, stating that if there were any real progress, it would be evident to the public. He stressed that with the complete support of the federal government, developmental work would continue in Dera, and work on the Dera Chashma Lift Canal would begin before the next fiscal year. He also assured that work on Dera's new international airport and other federal projects would not be delayed.

## Asif: No talks with BLA terrorists

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif Tuesday issued a resolute and unwavering commitment to bolster national security, prioritize public relief and intensify counter-terrorism efforts while greeting the nation on Eid.

Talking to media, the minister stated that Pakistan's armed forces have been reformed to tackle terrorism and will soon successfully counter-terrorism operations in Baluchistan. In response to a question, Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated that the resources of Baluchistan should not be limited to Quetta alone and that previous central governments should also be held accountable for the current situation in the province.

Muhammad Asif also assured that the federal government will extend its full support to the provincial government in Balochistan and fulfill all genuine demands of the province. Responding to a query, Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated that there will be no talks with the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) due to their involvement in terrorist activities, killing innocent labourers.

Khawaja also expressed his admiration for the efforts of the Chief Minister of Punjab and the Prime Minister towards the welfare of youngsters and the country. The minister further hinted that the nation can expect good news regarding electricity after Eid.

# 30 more Palestinians killed in Israeli action

JERUSALEM (AP): Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip is expanding to seize "large areas," the defense minister said, while officials at hospitals inside the Palestinian territory said Israeli strikes overnight and into Wednesday had killed more than 30 people, nearly a dozen of them children.

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory was "expanding to crush and clean the area" of militants and "seizing large areas that will be added to the security zones of the State of Israel," Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a written statement. The Israeli government has long maintained a buffer zone just inside Gaza along its security fence and has greatly expanded since the war began in 2023. Israel says the buffer zone is needed for its security, while Palestinians view it as a land grab that further shrinks the narrow coastal territory, home to around 2 million people.

Katz didn't specify which areas of Gaza would be seized in the expanded operation, which he said includes the "extensive evacuation" of the population from fighting areas. His statement came after Israel ordered the full evacuation of the southern city of Rafah and nearby areas. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel aims to maintain an open-ended but unspecified security control of the Gaza Strip once it achieves its aim of crushing Hamas.

The minister called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all hostages." The militant group still holds 59 captives, of whom 24 are believed to still be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. "This is the only way to end the war," Katz said.

The Hostage Families Forum, which represents most captives' families, said that it was "horrified to wake up this morning to the Defense Minister's announcement about expanding military operations in Gaza." The group said the Israeli government "has an obligation to free all 59 hostages from Hamas captivity — to pursue every possible channel to advance a deal for their release." They stressed that every passing day puts their loved ones' lives at greater risk.

"Their lives hang in the balance as more and more disturbing details continue to emerge about the horrific conditions they're being held in — chained, abused, and in desperate need of medical atten-

tion," said the forum, which called on the Trump administration and other mediators to continue pressuring Hamas to release the hostages. "Our highest priority must be an immediate deal to bring ALL hostages back home — the living for rehabilitation and those killed for proper burial — and end this war," the group said.

Israel continued to target the Gaza Strip, with airstrikes overnight killing 17 people in the southern city of Khan Younis. Another 15 people were killed in a strike in the north of the strip Wednesday, according to officials at hospitals where the bodies were taken.

Officials at the Nasser Hospital said the bodies of 12 people killed in an overnight airstrike that were brought to the hospital included five women, one of them pregnant, and two children. Officials at the Gaza European Hospital said they received five bodies of people killed in two separate airstrikes. Later Wednesday, officials at the Indonesian Hospital said an Israeli strike on a building of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA, in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip killed 15 people, including nine children and two women.

Juliette Touma, a spokeswoman for UNRWA, confirmed that an UNRWA building had been hit, but did not have any further details on casualties or what the building was being used as. The Palestinian Civil Defense said the building had been an UNRWA clinic that was now being used to house displaced people. It said the attack hit two rooms in the building, and that it evacuated the bodies of seven of those killed as well as 12 people who were wounded.

The Israeli military said it struck Hamas members in the area, adding that they were hiding inside "a command and control center that was being used for coordinating" armed activity and served as a central meeting point for the Palestinian group. The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages. Israel's offensive has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, including hundreds killed in strikes since a ceasefire ended about two weeks ago, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say whether those killed are civilians or combatants. Israel said it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

# Russian strike on Ukraine leader's home city kills 4

KYIV (AFP): A Russian ballistic missile strike killed at least four people and wounded nine others in Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's home city of Kryvyi Rig on Wednesday, authorities said.

The strike followed an overnight drone barrage on the regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv, which killed one and wounded a dozen others, according to officials. The head of Kryvyi Rig's military administration, Oleksandr Vikul, said Russia attacked civilian infrastructure with a ballistic missile, sparking a large fire, and that a rescue operation was underway.

An unverified social media video from the scene showed fire and smoke rising from a damaged indus-

trial building and debris lying around. "The death toll in Kryvyi Rig has risen to four," Dnipropetrovsk regional governor Sergiy Lysak said. Among the wounded were a 29-year-old woman and men aged 35 and 41, he added.

Russia and Ukraine have stepped up aerial attacks even as US President Donald Trump pushes the Kremlin and Kyiv to agree to a ceasefire after more than three years of costly fighting. Earlier on Wednesday, a 45-year-old man was killed when a Russian strike hit cars parked outside a house in Zaporizhzhia, the head of the Ukrainian region's military administration Ivan Federov said on Telegram.

In Kharkiv, five people

were wounded in drone strikes, the head of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration Oleg Syniegunov said. An AFP reporter saw firefighters hosing down smoke from a building in Kharkiv, where a blaze was raging and black smoke billowed from windows.

Zelensky said earlier Russia had launched 74 drones in total at targets across Ukraine. The "systemic" Russian attacks, he added, showed the Kremlin "despises the diplomatic efforts" to halt the war. "Putin does not even want to ensure a partial ceasefire. What's needed is new and tangible pressure on Russia to put this war on a path towards ending," he added.



MANDALAY: Rescuers carrying the body of a victim who was trapped under the rubble of the collapsed building Sky Villa area five days after a powerful earthquake struck Myanmar.

# US approves sale of 20 F-16 fighter to Philippines

WASHINGTON: The United States has approved the potential sale of \$5.58bn in F-16 fighter jets to the Philippines, describing the proposed deal as supporting the security and foreign policy concerns of the US by improving the capability of a "strategic partner".

Describing the Philippines as "an important force for political stability" in Southeast Asia, the US State Department announced on Tuesday that the sale had been approved and could see 20 F-16 warplanes and related equipment transferred to Manila. The acquisition of the F-16s would improve "the Philippine Air Force's ability to conduct maritime domain awareness and close air support missions and enhance its suppression

of enemy air defences," the State Department said.

"The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region," it added. Manila's potential purchase of the F-16s comes amid months of mounting tension with Beijing and confrontations between the Philippine Navy and Chinese coast-guard forces in the disputed South China Sea, where China has claimed almost complete ownership despite an international legal ruling that such an assertion has no merit.

The Philippines has publicly expressed interest in acquiring F-16s from Washington since at least the administration of former Philippine President Benigno Aquino, which

ended in 2016. Since then, Manila and Washington have significantly deepened their defence cooperation, particularly under the current President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, who took office in 2022 and began pushing back on Beijing's sweeping claims to the South China Sea.

US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said during a visit to the Philippines last week that Washington and Manila must stand "shoulder to shoulder" against "threats from the communist Chinese". News of the potential sale of advanced fighter aircraft to the Philippines also comes as China on Monday and Tuesday conducted military drills around Taiwan to simulate a blockade of the self-ruled island. — Aljazeera



KARACHI: Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf interacting with Pakistan Navy personnel deployed at forward posts in costal and Creek areas on the occasion of Eidul Fitr.

## Naval Chief visits forward posts

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf has reaffirmed Pakistan Navy's steadfast commitment to protect country's maritime borders.

He was talking to the officers and men of Pakistan Navy during his visit to forward posts in Coastal and Creeks Areas, as well as several Pakistan Navy ships. Highlighting the crucial role of Pakistan Navy in regional stability, the Naval Chief emphasized that safeguarding national interests remains paramount, even during festive occasions.

He commended the unwavering dedication and high morale of Pakistan Navy personnel in undertaking the task of defending this vital frontier amidst harsh terrain of marshes, swamps, and unpredictable waterways.

Admiral Naveed Ashraf also lauded their sacrifices in maintaining vigilance and operational readiness and encouraged them to continue their mission with the same professionalism and resolve. The Naval Chief expressed his complete satisfaction with the operational preparedness of Pak Marines in the Creeks Area.

## Singapore detains teenage boy

SINGAPORE (AFP): A Singaporean teenager allegedly planning to kill dozens of Muslims outside several mosques has been detained, the city-state's Internal Security Department said on Wednesday. The 17-year-old boy was detained in March, the ISD said in a statement, adding that he had regarded white supremacist Brenton Tarrant — who in 2019 had killed worshippers at mosques in New Zealand — as a "hero".

ISD also said he had "identified as an 'East Asian Supremacist'", and had decided on five mosques across Singapore for his post-Friday prayer attacks. "This boy wanted to kill at least 100 Muslims, so that he can kill more Muslims than Tarrant had killed. He also wanted to live-stream his attacks," Home Minister K Shanmugam told reporters.

"When he was arrested... he had already made a number of attempts to get a gun. He told ISD quite openly if he had gotten a gun, he would have carried out his attacks." The teen had been in online contact with 18-year-old Nick Lee, who was detained in December for having similar plans. The multicultural country has seen several cases in recent years where young Singaporeans have been detained for allegedly making attack plans following exposure to extremist content online.

In 2024, authorities arrested a teenage boy who was allegedly planning a Daesh group-inspired stabbing attack at a busy suburb. In the same statement Wednesday, the ISD also said a 15-year-old girl was placed under a restriction order in February, forbidding her from travelling nor having access to the internet without the approval of the ISD director.

It alleged that between July 2023 and December 2024, the girl was in at least eight short-term romantic online relationships with overseas-based Daesh group supporters. "She went to pledge allegiance to an Daesh chatbot," said Shanmugam.

# Myanmar quake death toll surges past 2,800

BANGKOK (Reuters): Myanmar's junta said on Wednesday its troops fired warning shots at a Chinese Red Cross aid convoy, underlining the challenge of delivering relief amid a civil war as aid groups called for better access to help survivors of a devastating earthquake.

The military has struggled to run Myanmar following its coup against the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, reducing the economy and basic services including healthcare to tatters after civil war broke out. Junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun said the Chinese Red Cross had not informed authorities it was in a conflict zone on Tuesday night, and a security team fired shots in the air after the convoy, which included local vehicles, failed to stop.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said the aid team and supplies were safe, and called on all parties in Myanmar to ensure the safety of rescuers. "It's necessary to keep transportation routes for relief efforts open and unobstructed," Guo Jiakun told a press conference. The firing came as the death toll from Friday's 7.7-magnitude quake rose to 2,886, with 4,639 injured, Myanmar state media said.

The rural parts of hard-hit Sagaing region were mostly under the control of armed resistance groups fighting the military government, the International Crisis Group said. "They will be among the most challenging for aid agencies to reach, given regime restrictions, a complex configuration of local administrations and control by armed resistance groups, and the persistent conflict," it added in a statement.

Even before the quake, the ICG said, information had been hard to gather from such areas, because of a junta blackout of internet and mobile phone networks as part of the conflict. "Soldiers are everywhere in the town," a man who travelled to Sagaing told Reuters. "They are there for security, not for rescue. They check every vehicle."

New York-based Human Rights Watch urged the junta to allow unfettered access for humanitarian aid and lift curbs impeding aid agencies, saying donors should channel aid through independent groups rather than only junta authorities. "Myanmar's junta cannot be trusted to respond to a disaster of this scale," Bryony Lau, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a report. "Concerned governments and international agencies need to press the junta to allow full and immediate access to survivors, wherever they are."

The military has dismissed as misinformation accusations that it committed widespread atrocities as it fought against a multi-pronged rebellion that followed the coup. Rebels have accused the military of conducting airstrikes even after the quake and on Tuesday a major rebel alliance declared a unilateral ceasefire to help relief efforts.

The United Nations said there were more than 28 million people in the six regions affected by the quake, and it had \$12 million in emergency funding for food, shelter, water, sanitation, mental health support and other services. "The situation remains critical, with disrupted communications and road access hampering response efforts, particularly in Sagaing," the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) said.

Australia announced a further A\$6.5 million (\$4.1 million) in humanitarian support for Myanmar, supplied "through thoroughly vetted international and local partners". In a statement on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said, "We take proactive steps to ensure our assistance does not legitimise the military regime in Myanmar."

A woman in Mandalay, near the quake epicentre, told Reuters that authorities were building a stage for this month's Thingyan water festival, though many people were homeless, with bodies left under collapsed buildings. The military council has rejected requests from international journalists to cover the quake devastation, citing the lack of water, electricity and hotels.

In neighbouring Thailand, the death toll from the quake rose to 22 on Wednesday, with hundreds of buildings damaged. A search for survivors in the rubble of a skyscraper under construction in the capital, Bangkok, entered its fifth day with a change in role for some rescue dogs at the site, where 15 people died and 72 are missing.

Officials said two dogs were reassigned to provide emotional support for the families of those missing. Children patted the golden retrievers wearing light-up vests in a temporary shelter, while others spoke softly to them. It brought a small sense of comfort, said Chanpen Keawnoi, whose mother and younger sister are missing.

"They said as long as the dog keeps barking when it hears a signal, there's still a chance someone could be alive," she said. The government is investigating the collapse and initial tests showed some steel samples from the site were substandard.

# US attacks kill 4 in Yemen

SANAA: Four people have been reported killed in attacks by the United States on Yemen's Hodeidah region, the latest deadly strikes against Houthi forces as the US announced the deployment of a second aircraft carrier and more warplanes to the Middle East. Anees Alasbahi, a spokesman for the Houthi health minister, said three people were confirmed killed in the US attack night but that the death toll was preliminary.

"The American attack, which targeted the water management building in the district of al-Mansouriyah in the governorate of Hodeidah with several strikes on Tuesday resulted in three deaths and two injuries, mostly employees," Alasbahi said. The Houthi-affiliated Al Masirah TV later reported that the death toll had risen to four. Local media reported that the Hajjah region in the northwest and Saada in the north had also been attacked.

The US has not confirmed that it carried out the attacks, which came after Al Masirah TV reported multiple US attacks hitting the Saada and Sanaa regions. There were no immediate reports of casualties from the Monday night attacks. More than 60 people have been killed in Yemen since Washington launched a military offensive on March 15 against Houthi forces. The Yemeni armed group had threatened to renew attacking Israeli-linked shipping in the Red Sea in response to Israel's breaking of the ceasefire in Gaza.

The Pentagon has also

announced that it will increase the number of US aircraft carriers deployed in the Middle East to two, keeping one that is already stationed in the Red Sea and sending another from the Asia Pacific region. The USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier will join the USS Harry S Truman in the Middle East, the Pentagon said in a statement on Tuesday, adding that the US will also deploy additional military aircraft.

"The United States and its partners remain committed to regional security in the CENTCOM (Central Command area of responsibility) and are prepared to respond to any state or non-state actor seeking to broaden or escalate conflict in the region," the Pentagon said. Houthi forces also claimed late on Tuesday that they had fired a number of cruise missiles and drones at US ships in the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, according to US officials speaking on condition of anonymity with the Reuters news agency. The Diego Garcia base is within striking distance of Yemen and Iran, experts say.

The US military's Strategic Command has declined to say how many B-2s have reached Diego Garcia and noted that it

does not comment on exercises or operations involving the bombers. The deployment of a second aircraft carrier and B-2 bombers — there are only 20 of the latter in the Air Force's inventory so they are usually used sparingly — comes after US President Donald Trump said that strikes on Houthi fighters would continue until they are no longer a threat to shipping.

Trump has also ramped up rhetoric towards Tehran, threatening on Sunday that "there will be bombing" if Iran does not reach a deal with Washington, on his terms, on Iran's nuclear programme.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Monday that the US would receive a strong blow if Trump followed through with his threats.

The aerospace commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, Amirali Hajizadeh, reminded Washington that it had bases in the Middle East, saying, "They are in a glass house and should not throw stones". The Tehran Times also reports that Iranian forces have readied missiles "with the capability to strike US-related positions" due to Trump's threats.

Trump added that the Houthis had been "decimated" by "relentless" strikes since March 15, saying that US forces "hit them every day and night — Harder and harder." He has also ramped up rhetoric toward Tehran, with the president threatening that "there will be bombing" if Iran does not reach a deal on its nuclear program. — Aljazeera