

Bilawal to lead protests
F.P. Report
HYDERABAD: Pakistan People's Party Information Secretary Senator Aajiz Dhamrah has announced that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will lead protest demonstrations against the illegal canals on the Indus River. This protest will see enthusiastic participation from the leadership and workers of the People's Party, along with the people of Sindh.

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Nepra cut electricity prices
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday reduced electricity prices by Rs1.90 per unit for consumers nationwide, including those in Karachi, as part of the quarterly adjustment. The Nepra issued a notification confirming the price reduction under the quarterly adjustment for the October to December 2024 period.

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Sigh of relief for nation

Prime Minister announces Rs7.41 per unit cut in electricity tariff

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday announced a significant reduction in the electricity prices of up to Rs 7.69 per unit for the consumers, pledging to provide further relief in near future through structural reforms in the power sector.

The prime minister, addressing a ceremony to unveil the package, said that the average per unit price for the domestic consumers had been brought down by Rs 7.41 and Rs 7.69 industrial sector. "In June 2024, the per unit price for industrial sector was Rs 58.5 which was first reduced by Rs 10.3 and further by Rs 7.69," he added.

The prime minister pointed out that the government was taking structural reforms especially in power sector to ensure further relief for the consumers and overall development of the country. "This reduction will help industrialists to produce cheaper and more competitive products," he added. He noted that the common people had to suffer a lot in the past due to high inflation rate and electricity bills. However, he assured that the government was taking further steps to provide maximum relief to them.

Highlighting the structural reforms

to be taken in power sector, the prime minister said the government will ensure halting power theft which was around Rs600 billion per year. Similarly, he said by establishing open market, the electricity tariffs will be further decreased. He said there was no option but to privatize or commercialize Power Distribution Companies (DISCOs) to reduce the burden of line losses and power theft on the national exchequer.

"I have directed the team concerned to work diligently to implement reforms in the sector as soon as possible," he added. Appreciating the task force formed to finalize power reforms, the prime minister said the force worked really hard and through their innovative thoughts, they brought different options and managed to convince the IMF to reduce the power tariffs.

"We did not pass on the low international petroleum prices and retained the prices to ensure that the government will reduce the power tariffs to which IMF agreed in principle," he added. He said the trust with the IMF that was breached in 2020, was now being restored. Similarly, he said the government successfully negotiated with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and praised the government team, led by Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, for their



commendable efforts.

"After negotiation with the IPPs, our team managed to save Rs 3,696 billion that were to be paid to the IPPs," he added. Likewise, he added that the government was also facing an immense challenge of circular debts of Rs 2,393 billion. However, he informed that the government had also made arrangements to gradually but permanently solve this problem within five years.

He also extended his gratitude to his leader and PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and the allied political party leadership for their support and guidance in this regard. Recalling the time when he took over the charge of Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan was on the verge of being default at that time and the nation,

especially business community was afraid about the future of the country. He said the government even had to face difficulties to open LCs for importing petroleum products and other essential items. "We did not have resources to even run the power sectors as well." The elements who were responsible for all these wrongs, were exited to see Pakistan going to default and were claiming that no one could save Pakistan from being default now, he added. He said such elements crossed all limits, and it was the same group that breached its own agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Later on, he said the same party also created hurdles in the way of the government's negotiations with the IMF. "By doing this, they tried to save their own politics at the cost of the country's interests," he added. "This is the Almighty's blessing Who accepted the government's hard work and saved the country from default". PM Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan's economy had now become stabilized and was moving towards sustainable growth and development. He said during the process of macroeconomic stability, the Army Chief played key role whose support was worth appreciation.

He also acknowledged the sacrifices of the people who suffered a lot due to high inflation. "The country's economy badly needed a surgical operation to get rid of all the issues responsible for the crisis in economic sector," he added. He said that Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, during election campaign had committed to bring the inflation rate that peaked at 38% down to single digit by 2026. "By the grace of Allah Almighty and due to the government team efforts, the inflation had now eased to as low as to around 1.5% even a year ahead.

He said that in one year, the government had also reduced the petroleum prices by Rs 38 to the lowest in the region. The policy rate, he said that was 22.5%, had been lowered to 12% due to which the business community got immense relief. He emphasized that right sizing and pri-

vatzation of the government owned entities was the part of difficult decisions which had to be made now. "The government have to face a huge loss of Rs 800 billion due to the loss making SOEs." He said all the government efforts will go in vain if it did not take action to get rid of these huge losses. The prime minister informed that this year, the government was going to collect taxes 35% more than the last year.

Earlier, Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari said the prime minister was very enthusiastic to finalize the power package as soon as possible. "The prime minister kept issuing guidelines all the time and worked really hard in this regard," he added. The prime minister also gave away shields to Deputy Prime Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Power Minister Awais Leghari, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, SAPM Muhammad Ali, Finance Secretary Imdadullah Bosal, Power Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam Irfan, National Coordinator on Task Force on Energy Lt General Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and FBR Chairman Rashid Langrial. Members of the federal cabinet, parliamentarians, business community members, and senior government officers also attended the ceremony.

Pakistan's inflation drops to historic low

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's inflation rate continued its sharp decline, reaching a historic low of 0.7% year-on-year (YoY) in March, marking the slowest pace in three decades.

This reflects a trend of disinflation, indicating a slowdown in rising prices, while deflation refers to an overall decrease in price levels. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, CPI inflation stood at 0.7% YoY in March 2025, down from 1.5% in February and significantly lower than 20.7% in March 2024.

"On a month-on-month basis, inflation increased by 0.9% in March 2025, following a 0.8% decline in the previous month," the bureau reported. Karachi-based brokerage firm Topline Securities noted, "Pakistan's CPI for March 2025 recorded at 0.7%, the lowest monthly YoY figure in over 30 years."

It further stated that inflation averaged 5.25% during the first nine months of FY25, compared to 27.06% in the same period of FY24. The latest figures indicate that Pakistan's National Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 0.89%

in March 2025 compared to February 2025 and by 0.69% year-over-year. Food prices, holding the largest share in the CPI basket at 34.6%, remain a primary concern. The food index reached 278.3 in March 2024, marking a 5.1% annual increase.

On a monthly basis, notable price hikes were observed in tomatoes (36.35% in urban areas), fresh fruits (18.66%), and eggs (14.92%). Meanwhile, the cost of some essential food items dropped, including onions (14.89%), tea (7.69%), and potatoes (6.83%). Year-over-year, the prices of pulse moong (31.02%) and butter (23.84%) saw significant increases, while onions and tomatoes experienced sharp declines. This trend reflects the ongoing financial strain on households managing rising food costs.

Housing, which constitutes 23.6% of the CPI, recorded a 2.2% annual rise, whereas transport costs dropped by 1.2%, offering some relief to consumers. Other essential sectors showed notable year-over-year price increases, including clothing and footwear (13.5%), education (11.9%), and health

services (13.8%).

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over the significant drop in inflation to 0.7 percent, calling it a testament to his government's effective economic policies and dedication to public welfare.

In a statement here, the prime minister underscored that the inflation rate in March 2025 was recorded at just 0.7 percent, a dramatic drop from 20.7 percent in the same month last year which was the lowest inflation level in six decades.

"This Ramadan, inflation was at its lowest in decades, easing the financial burden on citizens," PM Shehbaz stated. He credited the decline in price hike to the government's strategic economic planning and tireless efforts to stabilize prices.

The prime minister also emphasized that lower inflation was already translating into positive impacts on people's lives, with a gradual boost to the economy. "Pakistan is now firmly on the path of progress, and we will continue working day and night for the well-being of our people," he reaffirmed.

Nobel Institute calls Imran's nomination a political stunt

OSLO: The Nobel Institute has dismissed reports of former prime minister Imran Khan's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize as a political maneuver. In an article published in a leading Norwegian newspaper, the institute's director, Kristian Berg Harpviken, expressed strong reservations over the nomination claims.

Harpviken stated that discussing a nomination before an official announcement was an attempt to influence Pakistani voters in Norway. He emphasized that this was the first time a political leader's nomination had been used in such a way, potentially affecting the credibility of the Nobel Prize.

Recently, Norway's Centre Party had announced Imran Khan's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, sparking strong reactions from various quarters. The Nobel Institute clarified that the nomination and selection process follows a strict protocol and should not be exploited for political purposes. — Agencies

FO flays Israel's military actions in Gaza

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday denounced Israel's latest military offensive aimed at establishing new security corridors, including the illegal seizure of the Morag Corridor and further annexation of Palestinian land.

"The deliberate targeting of a UN-run clinic in Jabalia, which sheltered over 700 displaced civilians, demonstrates Israel's blatant disregard for international law and humanitarian principles. These actions, coupled with Israel's clear intent to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from their homeland, constitute war crimes under international law," Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in a statement.

He strongly condemned the continued aggression and atrocities committed by Israeli occupying forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza. He said that the indiscriminate violence had claimed thousands of innocent Palestinian lives, including women, children, medical personnel, and humanitarian workers, marking yet another dark chapter in Israel's brutal occupation.

Sindh CM urges PM to announce termination of proposed canal plan

F.P. Report

GARHI KHUDA BUX: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah today took a decisive stance against the proposed construction of Marot Canal, emphasizing that the canal will not be constructed as long as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) remains influential. He also announced that the Sindh government will not set wheat prices this year, allowing the market to dictate them.

Addressing the media in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, Shah questioned the canal's progression without formal approval. He criticized political parties for protesting against the PPP rather than opposing the canal project directly.

Shah was joined by provincial ministers Saeed Ghani and Nasir Shah during the briefing. The Marot Canal, which is planned to extend from the Sulemanki Barrage to Fort Abbas in the Cholistan Desert, has sparked controversy. Shah clarified that only preliminary profiling was

conducted in July, refuting claims of construction commencement. He urged media outlets to report responsibly and avoid spreading misinformation.

Shah reiterated the PPP's commitment to safeguarding Sindh's rights, referencing past unfounded claims against the party, including accusations against former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto related to the Kalabagh Dam. He stressed the constitutional requirement for provincial consultation on water-related issues and revealed that the federal government has yet to respond to requests for a Council of Common Interests meeting on the canal project. "They cannot evade this issue," he remarked.

The Chief Minister said that the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has approved Punjab's request for 0.8 million acre-feet (MAF) of water for the Cholistan Canal project, a decision that has generated strong opposition in Sindh, and his government has opposed it strongly. He highlighted

Sindh's stance on the essential water flow needed to maintain the Indus Delta ecosystem.

The chief minister warned of potential political ramifications if the project proceeds without Sindh's consent, noting the federal government's reliance on PPP support. Shah called upon Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to promptly announce the termination of the Marot Canal project, noting that both the federal and Sindh governments have opposed it in the Central Development Working Party (CDWP). He stressed the importance of provincial harmony and cautioned against actions that could worsen inter-provincial tensions.

On agricultural matters, Shah mentioned that the market would determine wheat prices this year, although the Sindh government plans to ensure fair compensation for farmers. The CM reaffirmed his firm opposition to the Marot Canal, citing constitutional mandates, the need for provincial consultation, and possible political consequences of ignoring consensus.

50 Afghan families return to Afghanistan via Torkham

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Second phase of Afghan nationals' repatriation started as fifty Afghan families carrying Afghan Citizens Card (ACC) arrived at Torkham on Thursday to move across the border to their homeland, official informed.

It is to be mentioned here that in first phase initiated in 2023 information shared by home and tribal affairs department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 0.469, 879 millions Afghanis illegally residing in Pakistan have returned to Afghanistan.

Official in Torkham said that all the fifty Afghan families were displaced from the province of Punjab. Abdullah, one of repatriated Afghanis said that after expiring of the deadline, the Punjab police kicked off crackdown against ACC holders and number of them were apprehended to forcefully sent them to their motherland. On the other hand arrangements had been facilitated in the Holding Center in Landi Kotal to facilitate possible repatriated Afghan refugees, NADRA official said.

According to available official data almost 0.880000 Afghan nationals having ACC will return to Afghanistan in the second phase of repatriation. It's to be stated here that the Federal Government of Pakistan had set up 31st March 2025 as deadline to ACC holders to voluntarily go back to their country otherwise they will be forcefully expelled of the

country.

The second phase of repatriation of illegal foreigners started through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's border points after an end of deadline given to holders of Afghan Citizen Card to leave Pakistan by March 31, 2025.

The Home and Tribal Affairs Department statement here Thursday said that 153 illegal foreigners (IF) were repatriated under phase-II so far. On Wednesday last, a total of 27 IF were repatriated under Phase-II and 850 under Phase-I through Torkham border as so far 477,434 illegal foreigners repatriated under continued Phase-I program through Torkham, Angoor Ada, Kharlachi border points besides one through Sost Border China.

On April 2, 2025, a total of 850 IFs returned under Phase-I and 27 IFs under Phase-II while 8,953 IF deported through KP border points under Phase-I. Under Phase-I, 470,722 IF were repatriated through Torkham, 5,983 through Angoor Adda and 698 through Kharlachi border point.

The Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Program (IFRP) has been implemented since November 1, 2023. Similarly, a total 2,953 IFs received from other provinces of Pakistan under Phase-I were deported including 1,561 from Islamabad, 1,309 from Punjab, one from Gilgit Baltistan, 38 Azad Jammu and Kashmir and 44 from Sindh through KP border points.

Through three transit points of KP, 4940 IFs were

deported from Peshawar, 1059 IFs through Landi Kotal and one from Kohat Jail under Phase-I, raising total deportation to 6000 IFs. PDMA KP was tasked to make operational the transit point at workers welfare board colony Nisarbagh Peshawar and Hamza Baba Mausoleum Landi Kotal before April 4, 2025 as per the decision taken during the 2nd and final meeting of the provincial steering committee for the preparation regarding repatriation of illegal foreigners.

Migrant shipwrecks kill 16

ISTANBUL (AFP): Two migrant shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea on Thursday claimed the lives of 16 people, with seven killed when a vessel capsized off the coast of Greece and nine others in a shipwreck off the coast of neighbouring Türkiye.

Seven people, including two children, died and 23 others were rescued on Thursday when an inflatable boat carrying migrants capsized off the Greek island of Lesbos, the coast guard said. The coast guard initially said four bodies had been discovered in the Aegean Sea but after a search by patrol boats, three others were found, a spokeswoman told AFP. The boat was carrying about 30 people and capsized in mild weather a short distance from the coast of neighbouring Türkiye.

No new task assigned to anyone: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, has stated that media outlets are broadcasting news about negotiations with the establishment under the guise of anonymous sources. He clarified that the leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan, has not assigned any new task to anyone regarding talks with the establishment.

Barrister Dr. Saif urged the media to avoid publishing unverified reports. He further shared that discussions during a recent meeting revolved around governance matters, terrorism, and Afghanistan. According to him, Imran Khan directed the Chief Minister to focus on governance issues, while he himself was tasked with handling matters related to terrorism and Afghanistan.

Imran Khan has categorically stated that he will not engage in any negotiations with the establishment or any other entity for his release or personal gain. He reaffirmed that his top priority is the economic development and political stability of the country.

Barrister Dr. Saif further conveyed that, according to Imran Khan, economic progress is impossible without political stability. The PTI chairman emphasized that political stability requires the recognition of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf as a legitimate political force and an end to attempts to sideline it. Imran Khan reiterated that PTI is a political reality that must be acknowledged.



KARACHI: A view of stall holders occupies road area at Karimabad, creating problems for commuters and visitors.

Strengthening Pakistan’s global academic influence in technology management

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Alina Kiran, a pioneering researcher and scholar in the field of Technology Management, is on the cusp of completing her Ph.D. at Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), marking a significant milestone in her distinguished career. With expertise in transformational leadership and digital transformation, Dr. Kiran's work is already shaping global discussions in academia and industry, reinforcing Pakistan's growing presence in high-impact research and corporate leadership.

A Scholarly Journey with Global Recognition

Dr. Kiran's academic journey is one of exceptional dedication and international recognition. Holding an MSc in Economics from Pakistan and an MS in Management & Finance from Birmingham City University, UK, her academic foundation is robust and globally respected. As a Senior Lecturer and Research Supervisor at Bahria University, Islamabad, Dr. Kiran mentored countless students, reinforcing Pakistan's academic strength.

Her Ph.D. research at UTeM focuses on transformational leadership practices within multinational corporations (MNCs) in Malaysia, offering valuable insights into leadership dynamics that are highly relevant to Pakistan's evolving corporate and technology sectors. Dr. Kiran's contributions have not gone unnoticed; her research has been extensively covered in prestigious international journals, including Frontiers in Psychology and International Journal of Emerging Markets. These publications have acknowledged her work as groundbreaking, highlighting her as an authority in leadership, corporate



governance, and digital transformation.

A Rising Star in Global Academia
Dr. Kiran's recognition in leading academic and professional publications underscores her impact on global discussions regarding leadership practices and corporate governance. As an expert in ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility, and digital transformation, she has authored several high-impact research papers that are frequently cited by scholars and practitioners alike. Her work has influenced global trends in leadership, entrepreneurship, and innovation, especially within multinational corporations.

In addition to her academic achievements, Dr. Kiran has served as a peer reviewer for several respected international journals, contributing her expertise to the advancement of global research in technology management. Her role as a mentor to the next generation of scholars has solidified her reputation as a thought leader, especially for aspiring female scholars and professionals in Pakistan.

A Role Model for Women in Leadership

Dr. Kiran's journey exemplifies the growing influence of women in academia and leadership roles, both in Pakistan and abroad. As a Pakistani woman excelling in a traditionally male-dominated field, she is a beacon of inspiration, proving that dedication, intellect, and passion can break barriers and drive positive change.

Her success also highlights the importance of fostering diversity and inclusion within academia and industry, encouraging more women to pursue careers in leadership and innovation. Dr. Kiran's story is one of resilience, intellect, and perseverance, and she continues to serve as a role model for aspiring leaders worldwide.

Contributions to Pakistan's Knowledge Economy

As Pakistan embraces digital transformation, Dr. Kiran's research offers critical insights into the future of technology-driven leadership and management. Her work on AI-driven decision-making, agile project management, and digital leadership is shaping the way organizations and governments are approaching modernization. Dr. Kiran's research holds the potential to significantly impact Pakistan's corporate governance frameworks and policy development, enhancing the country's competitiveness in the global economy.

By contributing to international collaborations and mentoring future leaders, Dr. Kiran is actively helping to position Pakistan as a hub for intellectual growth, innovation, and thought leadership. Through her academic achievements and media recognition, she continues to demonstrate the power of education and research in driving global progress.

BMG, KCCI hails PM’s electricity tariff relief

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The leadership of the Businessmen Group (BMG) and Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Thursday appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement to significantly reduce electricity tariffs.

The reduction of Rs7.59 per unit for industrial consumers and Rs7.41 per unit for domestic consumers is hailed as a crucial step to ease the financial burden on citizens and businesses struggling with high energy costs.

In a joint statement, prominent figures from BMG and KCCI, including Chairman Zubair Motiwalla, highlighted the relief package's impor-

ance. They consider it a historic intervention that will support millions of households and businesses, contributing to economic growth and a more competitive business environment in Pakistan. The leadership acknowledged the efforts of the Taskforce on Energy Sector, praising Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaish Ahmed Khan Leghari and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Power Muhammad Ali for their roles in achieving this relief.

Motiwalla emphasized the tariff reduction's potential to revitalize local industries and boost exports, addressing long-standing productivity challenges due to high energy costs. He noted the particular benefit for Karachi's industrial sector, commend-

ing the government for its decisive action.

President KCCI Jawed Bilwani stressed the need for sustained government efforts to maintain stable electricity rates. He reiterated KCCI's commitment to working with the government to foster a favorable business climate, expressing optimism for continued reforms to strengthen Pakistan's industrial base.

As the nation faces economic challenges, this decision represents a pivotal moment in the government's strategy to support businesses and reduce consumer financial pressures. BMG and KCCI leaders anticipate ongoing collaboration with the government to ensure lasting economic prosperity.

Young girl shot dead on her wedding day in Lahore

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A 24-year-old girl was killed when unknown motorcyclists sprayed her with bullets at her home in Sundar area of Lahore on Thursday, the day of her marriage. Police said that the bullet, Ayesha, daughter of Habib, received in her head proved fatal. The Force said it had collected evidence from the crime scene and was investigating the incident from different angles.

On Tuesday, a speeding car crushed to death two girls, aged between 18 and 20 years, on the motorway near Thokar Niaz Beg in Lahore. However, the identity of the girls could not be established 24 hours after their deaths.

On the other hand, Hanjarwal police said they were still looking for the car driver, responsible for the deaths of the girls. Soon after the accident, police shifted the bodies to Jinnah Hospital. The Force said it is investigating the incident from different angles. It did not rule out the possibility of a murder.

Route of Karakoram Express changed

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Railways has decided to change the route of the Karakoram Express for specific days in light of the Tablighi Congregation in Raiwind.

According to a statement issued by Pakistan Railways, on April 7, 2025, the 41 Up Karakoram Express will reach Raiwind via Sahiwal from Khanewal. This route includes a 15-minute stop at Raiwind.

The 42 Down Karakoram Express will reach Raiwind from Lahore. There will be a 15-minute stop there, after which the train will proceed to Khanewal via Sahiwal. This decision has been made in accordance with the Tablighi Congregation taking place in Raiwind, to facilitate travel for the participants.

Tessori acknowledges Islamic scholars’ role

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Governor, Kamran Khan Tessori, met Mufti Abdul Raheem, administrator of Jamia-tur-Rasheed, at the Governor House. Mufti Abdul Raheem extended Eid greetings and conveyed his best wishes, according to a news release on Thursday.

The meeting focused on the contributions of religious scholars, religious and social affairs, and the promotion of higher education. The Governor acknowledged the role of Islamic scholars and paid tribute to the educational services of Jamia-tur-Rasheed.

Sindh CM sets deadline for Jam Sadiq Interchange completion

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah today directed authorities to complete the Jam Sadiq Interchange within two months, shortening the original three-month timeline to address traffic issues in the area.

During an inspection visit to Shahrah-e-Bhutto, the Chief Minister reviewed progress on key infrastructure projects including the Jam Sadiq Interchange, Quaidabad Interchange, and the Shahrah-e-Bhutto expansion. He was accompanied by Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon, Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani, and Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab.

He instructed the project director to accelerate work

post-Eid and emphasized strict adherence to the new timeline for completion of the Jam Sadiq Interchange. He also visited a roundabout near the Causeway and asked for its early completion while urging officials to find ways to improve traffic flow towards DHA and Ayesha Masjid.

The chief minister announced a plan to link Shahrah-e-Bhutto to the Karachi Seaport over the next three years. The proposed connection between the Karachi Port Trust and Shahrah-e-Bhutto aims to improve transportation of goods.

He also inspected the Yellow Line Jam Sadiq Bridge and instructed Sharjeel Memon to ensure its completion within two months. Officials were

directed to prepare detailed traffic solution drawings for discussion in an upcoming meeting later this week. Before reaching the Quaidabad Interchange site, the chief minister personally paid the toll at Shahrah-e-Bhutto Toll Plaza.

At the Quaidabad Interchange, officials informed him that the entry and exit ramps had been completed, with the interchange expected to open by the end of April or the first week of May. He urged quick operationalization to ease travel for commuters. He further ordered the expedited construction of a four-kilometre elevated road from Quaidabad to Samo Goth, noting its importance for residents in the area.

Traders disappointed with sales during Eid

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi's traders have expressed disappointment over the sluggish sales during the Eid ul Fitr 2025 season this year, saying that despite bustling markets, the sales failed to meet expectations.

President All Karachi Traders Union Atiq Mir said that the sales this year were 25 to 30 percent lower as compared to last year. He said that despite a 40 to 50 percent increase in goods available for sale

during Eid ul Fitr 2025, only around Rs. 15 billion worth of goods were sold.

Atiq Mir said that 60 to 70 percent of the Eid ul Fitr 2025 season goods remained unsold and were left in warehouses. He recalled that 2015 was the best year for Eid sales in Karachi, with traders selling goods worth around Rs. 70 billion. The President of the All Karachi Traders Union lamented that Karachi's Eid sales potential is around Rs. 100 billion, but

over the past decade, sales have dwindled from Rs. 70 billion to a mere Rs. 15 billion.

Atiq Mir attributed the decline in sales to low purchasing power, resulting in limited spending on essential items such as ready-made garments, shoes, artificial jewelry, and affordable decorative items. Over 200 markets in Karachi's commercial areas and city districts had been eagerly awaiting the traditional Eid shopping spree.

Karachi to experience above-average heat in April

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi is expected to experience unusually high temperatures in April, according to the Meteorological Department. Meteorologist Anjum Zeigham has forecasted that the temperature in the city will rise to between 38 to 40 degrees Celsius in the coming days. He also confirmed that there is no likelihood of rainfall in the city during this period.

A trough of westerly wave is present over the western parts of the country and may affect the upper regions in the next 24 hours. The heatwave is expected to continue for the next several days, making the city hotter than usual for this time of year. Friday Weather Outlook: Dry weather will prevail in most areas, with hot conditions in the plains. Isolated rain, wind, and thunderstorms are likely in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, and the Potohar region. Past 24-Hour Weather: Light rain occurred at isolated places in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, while dry weather prevailed in most parts of the country. Hot conditions were observed in the plains. Thursday's highest recorded temperatures: Chhor, Shaheed Benazirabad, Tando Jam, Turbat 42°C, Hyderabad, Lasbella, Mithi, Padidan, Rohri, Sakrand, Thatta 41°C.

Police nab five robbers in separate encounters

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In two separate encounters, Karachi police apprehended five robbers and recovered weapons during encounters in different areas of the city.

The Karachi police spokesperson said here today, the first encounter unfolded at Bakhtawar Goth near Bheans Colony, where police engaged in a shootout with a group of robbers. One suspect,

identified as Sameer, son of Riaz, was captured in an injured state, while his accomplices managed to escape. Authorities recovered a pistol, ammunition, and mobile phones from the scene. The injured suspect was transported to a hospital, with an investigation currently in progress.

In a separate encounter at Nazimabad Block T near Tanki Ground, police arrested four robbers following the exchange of

gunfire. Among the arrested were Arsalan, son of Mohammad Aslam, and Yasir, son of Mohammad Akmal, both of whom sustained injuries. The other two suspects, Ahmed, son of Allah Rakha, and Danish, son of Mohammad Yousuf, were also taken into custody. Police seized two pistols, ammunition, and a motorcycle. The injured suspects were taken to a hospital, and further investigations are ongoing.

Sharjeel Inam Memon

WHEN we say "Zinda Hai Bhutto Zinda Hai," some people mock it due to their biased and narrow-minded thinking, oblivious to their own absurdity. These individuals are ignorant about history. They do not know that in political history, there have been several great leaders who have gained a lot of popularity, leading revolutions that altered the course of time. History has, however, discredited some of their political ideologies, rendering them politically irrelevant.

These leaders rallied popular support on the basis of extremism and provocation, but the anarchy they created ended up destroying them and their parties and followers. They included right-wing and left-wing politicians, nationalist and religious leaders, and even military opportunists. There are some political figures in the past whose ideologies continue to thrive and are very relevant today. They included right-wing and left-wing politicians, nationalist and religious leaders, and even military opportunists.

There are some political figures in the past whose ideologies continue to thrive and are very relevant today. It can be said that they continue to exist spatially and temporally through their political thinking and approach. One such leader is Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He possessed a deep understanding of history and shaped his political vision based on historical experiences.

Shaheed Bhutto's political vision

rests on three fundamental principles. The first is that a nation's foreign policy should always prioritize the interests of its country and people. The second principle emphasizes resolving fundamental issues internally by ensuring the rights of deprived and oppressed classes, nationalities, and groups. This includes recognizing their right to resources, strengthening them economically, and granting them all basic human rights, including civil liberties.

The third fundamental principle asserts that achieving the first two principles requires a long and patient democratic struggle—one that is peaceful, sustainable, and serves as a precursor to gradual progress and victories.

The path of democratic struggle is superior to the path of destructive adventure or chaos. Adventure and chaos serve the interests of imperialist and anti-people forces, as they deprive the people of the gains achieved through peaceful democratic struggle. This is why such forces always fear those who choose the path of peaceful democratic resistance and make them the target of their oppression.

The unparalleled sacrifices of the Bhutto family, along with the leaders and workers of the PPP, stand as proof of this struggle. The PPP's commitment to peaceful democratic resistance and sacrifice continues to this day. If Pakistan today has a federal parliamentary democratic constitution, a functioning democracy, and federal units with certain rights, it is due to Shaheed Bhutto and the Pakistan Peoples Party, which upheld

Bhutto is alive!

his political vision. According to Shaheed Bhutto's vision, the PPP remains a people's representative party and continues its struggle. That is why Bhutto remains alive today.

In order to acquire a full appreciation of Shaheed Bhutto's political ideology and vision, it is necessary to read his writing, interviews, and speeches at length. On November 30, 1967, in the inaugural session of the Pakistan People's Party, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had laid out the "Basic Documents" he had written, which were later ratified by the party. These documents defined the party's key principles: Islam as religion, democracy as a political system, socialism as economic order, and the people as the final authority.

To further elaborate on these foundational principles, Shaheed Bhutto wrote a comprehensive program for the Pakistan People's Party in April 1968. In this document, he remarked: "Pakistan is caught in a whirlpool. When we look back on the last 20 years of our national life, we see a dangerous trend that has emerged alongside international and subcontinental challenges. It would be unreasonable to assume that this crisis is merely a routine issue of the present era or a result of a natural process. This dominant evil trend must be reversed."

A scholar and political leader like Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was born once in centuries. He viewed situations through an international and

historical lens with a deep and insightful approach rather than a superficial one. When he founded the Pakistan People's Party, the global communist movement was at its peak, and socialist revolutions were unfolding. However, Shaheed Bhutto looked beyond the present—he foresaw the eventual outcome of these movements.

Instead of advocating for a communist dictatorship, he firmly declared democracy as his political path—a vision that socialist states themselves would later adopt, but only after enduring great upheaval. He situated socialism not as a political one but as an economic system, clarifying this difference in the party's program and founding documents.

Shaheed Bhutto had contended that capitalism in Pakistan was distinctly different from that of Europe and other developed countries. In all those nations, capitalism existed together with democracy and civil rights, while in Pakistan, wealth lay in the control of only 22 families that used the system for their exploitative ends. These elites resisted democratic rights, promoted dictatorship, and intentionally checked industrial development. They did not run their factories at maximum capacity, hindered future industrialization, and diverted state capital by way of loans, and averted the creation of jobs and drove the peasants to deep poverty.

The foundational documents of the

PPP did not oppose private investment outright but set clear conditions for it: "Private investment will be allowed only on the principles of ability, efficiency, and legitimate profit-making, not through the patronage of elite families or corrupt bureaucratic factions. Private investment will be profitable only to the extent that the working class is an equal partner in its benefits."

Shaheed Bhutto was a staunch proponent of socialism but rejected the notion that it could be imposed through mere orders or dictatorship. He believed that achieving a classless and socialist society, free from capitalist exploitation, required a gradual, historically guided process. This transformation, he argued, could only be realized through democracy under a people-centric political program.

Another great achievement of Shaheed Bhutto was not only providing Pakistan with a federal parliamentary democratic system through the 1973 Constitution but also addressing the sense of deprivation by granting maximum autonomy to the federal units.

He also established a neutral foreign policy for Pakistan, which he elaborated on in his book Myth of Independence. He opposed sacrificing Pakistan's interests for the sake of American policies and consistently advocated for stronger ties with China. However, he also emphasized that Pakistan's national interests should remain the priority in its relations with China.

Shaheed Bhutto provided each crisis with historically proven solution through emphasizing that people

indeed hold the power. Shaheed was a firm believer in that, for in times of crisis, it was the only way to use as a panacea to reference the people. This is Bhuttoism—an idea that other ideologies have failed to surpass thus far.

Unfortunately, Pakistan strayed from Bhutto's vision. Instead of strengthening democracy, the country was drawn into the power struggles of global forces, military regimes were imposed, and ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, and even so-called political extremism was deliberately promoted to counter the PPP. Today, Pakistan finds itself once again trapped in the same destructive cycle that Shaheed Bhutto warned about in his book If I am Assassinated.

After Bhutto's judicial assassination, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto carried forward his political philosophy, ultimately sacrificing her life to rescue the country from crisis. Now, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is advancing this philosophy, staying true to Shaheed Bhutto's words by forging connections with the people and aligning himself with their aspirations.

Shaheed Bhutto remains alive and continues to lead because he chose to die at the hands of a dictator rather than at the hands of history. His political philosophy has stood the test of time, proving its relevance and correctness. Given the challenges Pakistan faces today, it is imperative to once again turn to the vision of Shaheed Bhutto.

The writer is a Sindh Senior Minister & Minister for Information and Transport.



PESHAWAR: Pakistan Zindabad Movement and civil society stage protest demonstration against terrorist organizations targeting country outside at Press Club.

PM’s power relief package widely hailed

PESHAWAR (APP): People of all walks of life in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday highly appreciated the Prime Minister’s power relief package and termed it a significant step forward to promote industrialization and agriculture in the country.

Ikhtair Wali Khan, PM’s aide for Information in KP Affairs said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has won the hearts and minds of every Pakistani after announcing a historic relief package for the electricity consumers both domestic and industries of the country. He said that people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially traders, businessmen and industries besides agriculturists and farmers would be largely benefited from the package.

On Thursday, the Prime Minister announced a Rs7.41 per unit cut in power rates across the country in a major relief

package to reduce the burden on citizens facing exorbitant electricity bills. For industries, the prime minister declared that electricity prices would be cut by Rs7.59.

Ikhtair Wali while congratulating the entire nation especially the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile Fata here said that Prime Minister and his financial team deserved full credit and appreciation for the mega relief package for entire nation, adding it was not an easy task to convince the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for this power cut in per unit.

He said that the package would help promote industrialization in the country besides providing relief to domestic consumers from Chitral to Karachi and Waziristan to Gilgit.

The sick industries in KP would be revived while infant industries would be encouraged to achieve the much needed growth in an

era of perfect competition in the open market.

Muhammad Naem, former chairman economics department at university of Peshawar has welcomed the PM electricity package and termed it a fresh air for millions of domestic and industrial consumers in Pakistan.

He expressed the hope that people would realize the importance of electricity and will help the Govt in exposing the corrupt power stealers before the masses.

Misal Khan, a retired PST teacher, Abdul Wadood Khan, a farmer and house wife Taja Bibi have also welcomed the Prime Minister’s relief package and termed it historic. They said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan has put the country on the road to progress and development and deserved full appreciation for the massive relief for the entire nation.

PZM, civil society stage protest against BLA

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Zindabad Movement (PZM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and civil society organizations here Thursday staged a big protest demonstration against the terrorist organization of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and demanded strict action against it.

Gathered in front of Peshawar Press Club, the protestors were holding placards and banners inscribed with different slogans against BLA and demanded strict action against the terrorist organization involved in killing innocent people in Balochistan.

Civil society member, Malik Ishfaq Awan told the charged crowd that BLA was a terrorist organization having close nexus with India’s RAW. He claimed that BLA was involved in killing innocent Pakistanis and is making deep conspiracies against CPEC and development of Pakistan.

He said that BLA was trying to create chaos, panic and lawlessness in Balochistan through terrorism like that of Bolan train hijacking, however, its nefarious designs would be frustrated with unity.

He demanded strict action against facilitators and supporters of BLA and blocking of all their bank accounts and confiscation of their properties.

Another civil society member Malik Iqbal Ahmad said that BLA was involved in terrorist activities such as bomb blasts and suicide attacks by killing innocent people in Balochistan. He accused BLA for carrying out subversive activities on behalf of RAW in a bid to disrupt progress on CPEC in Balochistan.

He demanded expulsion of all the supporters, abettors and families of BLA’s terrorists from Pakistan and strict action against their accomplices.

The people also raised slogans in support of the Pakistan Army. The speakers said that the entire nation is standing with brave soldiers of Pakistan Army in the fight against terrorism and are ready to frustrate the nefarious designs of the enemy.

End to genocide of innocent Kashmiris sought

PESHAWAR: Al-Quds Day was observed with great religious fervor, devotion, and national and religious enthusiasm, as a religious duty. As in previous years, this year as well, a Quds Rally was organized in Peshawar District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the leadership of Tehreek-e-Azadi Quds. The rally commenced from the Central Shia Jamia Masjid Kocha Risaldar and passed through its designated route, culminating in a protest gathering at Qissa Khwani Bazaar near Khan Raziq Shaheed Police Station.

The rally strongly protested against the illegal occupation of Al-Aqsa Mosque by the U.S. and Israel, the brutal American atrocities in Gaza (Palestine), blasphemous acts against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), disrespect towards the

Prophets, Ahlul Bayt, the Companions of the Prophet, and sacred sites. It also condemned the oppression of innocent Kashmiris by the Indian government, the genocide of Muslims, and the elements fueling sectarianism among Muslims.

To express solidarity and love with the oppressed Palestinian Muslims and raise voices against global imperialism, prominent figures and responsible personalities from the Shia community, including representatives of Imamia Students Organization, Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh Jafariya Peshawar, Shia Ulema Council Pakistan Peshawar, MWM Peshawar, and other national organizations participated. Scholars from different sects, elders of Qissa Khwani Bazaar, and representatives of the Sadat Committee Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Syed Wajid Ali Shah, Syed

Baqir Imam Naqvi, Sardar Abid Ali Qizilbash (Imamia Rabita Committee Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Farzand Ali Bangash, Syed Faheem Zaidi, Syed Aamir Raza Kazmi, Syed Babar Naqvi, Syed Nasir Rizvi, Akhonzada Iqtidar Ali Mazhar, Akhonzada Athar Ali Shahbaz, and other scholars and community leaders took part.

Majlis-e-Aza speakers, including Akhonzada Afzal Ali, Zulfiqar Hussain Haidari, Arshad Ali Haidari, and others, along with Real Stakeholders of Imambargha Hussainia Hall Peshawar, Barrister Hashim Raza, Syed Tahir Abbas, and the prayer leader of the Central Shia Jamia Masjid Kocha Risaldar, Maulana Yawar Abbas Khalili, participated in the rally. Additionally, Allama Ehsanullah Mehsani, Allama Abid Hussain Shakri, and Wasim Abbas played an active role.

Training for Matric exams staff completed

PESHAWAR: The training of examination staff for the upcoming matriculation exams has been completed under the supervision of Commissioner Peshawar Division and Chairman Peshawar Education Board, Riyaz Khan Mehsud. The training covered staff from Peshawar, Charsadda, the tribal district of Mohmand, and District Khyber.

The attendance of both examination staff and students will be recorded using modern technology through a mobile app.

The staff working in Peshawar and District Khyber will perform their duties under the leadership of Inamullah Shah in the provincial capital of Peshawar, while those in Charsadda and the tribal district of Mohmand received training in Charsadda District.

To maintain transparency and curb cheating in the matriculation exams, sev-

eral measures are being implemented. These include the transfer of private examination halls to government schools and colleges.

Additionally, a ban has been imposed on the purchase and sale of pocket guides. Strict restrictions have also been placed on the presence of unauthorized individuals near examination halls and the use of photocopy machines.

Riyaz Khan Mehsud, Commissioner Peshawar

Division and Chairman of the Peshawar Education Board, reiterated his commitment to ensuring that students are provided with a peaceful environment during the exams, in line with provincial government directives.

He emphasized that no student would be harassed, and all measures are being taken to prevent cheating and ensure the integrity of the examination process, with all necessary resources being utilized.



Khizer flays removal of Arbab Niaz Stadium board

PESHAWAR: The Additional Secretary Information of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Arbab Khizer Hayat, has stated that the removal of the historic Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium board and replacing it with a board bearing Imran Khan’s name is an insult to the people of Peshawar. He further expressed that despite clear instructions from Imran Khan himself, the removal of the Arbab Niaz board is incomprehensible. Arbab Khizer Hayat accused Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur of resorting to underhanded tactics to save his position. He warned that the people of Peshawar will not remain silent over the removal of the Arbab Niaz board. He demanded that the provincial government immediately take down Imran Khan’s board from the stadium, or else the public will forcibly remove it themselves.

Core inflation still above 8%; no productive growth in country: Muzzammil

‘PML-N economic vision as outdated and ineffective’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance & Interprovincial Coordination Muzzammil Aslam has criticized the economic vision of PML-N/PDM, calling it outdated and ineffective. He pointed out that the party’s approach to address economic issues has remained unchanged, despite the changing circumstances.

Aslam noted that the government lacks a clear strategy to address the country’s economic challenges, with Ishaq Dar and Ahsan Iqbal, who are stuck in old ideas, leading the PML-N’s survival efforts.

During the National Economic Council meet-

ing, Aslam said that Shehbaz Sharif was informed about the growth rate, and the five-year estimate shows an average growth rate of less than 4%, with a negative forecast for major crops next year. Aslam questioned how this vision would control unemployment and poverty, but no one had an answer, and Shehbaz Sharif passed the buck to the Chairman Planning Commission of Pakistan.

Advisor on finance emphasized that Pakistan has been experiencing recession for the past year, with agriculture and industry sectors in negative territory, but the government insists on calling it stability. He criticized Shehbaz Sharif’s team for having limited ability to read data

and celebrating a reduction in inflation, which is still above 8%.

Aslam stated that the reduction in inflation is not due to productive growth, but rather a result of decreased demand and purchasing power due to unemployment and poverty. He added that if imports are decreasing while exports remain stable, it indicates that growth is not progressing, resulting the jobs are not adding.

Mr. Aslam expressed concern that remittances if coverage into investment then there is reason to be jubilant but if it’s barely enough to cover household expenditure then its a matter of concern.

He noted that over 2 million people have left

Pakistan in the past two years, which will have a negative impact on the country’s Gross National Product (GNP).

KP advisor on finance criticized the government for lacking focus on global development and being unaware of how Trump’s tariff has weakened economic fundamentals. He accused the government of being preoccupied with political maneuvering.

Aslam concluded that the government has wasted three precious years, and both local and international trust in the government is near zero. He emphasized that the Shehbaz Sharif government lacks a clear plan to address the country’s economic challenges, amidst new security challenges.

KPFA releases Ramadan performance report

Over 112,000 Kgs of hazardous food seized, Rs15m in fines imposed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety & Halal Food Authority has released its performance report for Ramadan 2025, detailing an extensive crackdown on substandard and unsafe food products across the province. Over 10,000 inspections were carried out during the holy month, resulting in the seizure and disposal of 112,000 kilograms of hazardous and non-compliant food. Additionally, 883 inspections in Mardan, 559 inspections in Abbottabad, 593 inspections in Bannu, 596 inspections in Swat, 556 inspections in Mansehra, and 512 inspections in Haripur led to the

destruction of 49,485 kg, 10,715 kg, 1,099 kg, 7,578 kg, 2,460 kg, and 4,030 kg of hazardous food, respectively.

Additionally, during the operations, 2,201 food samples, including milk, beverages, cooking oil, ghee, spices, and other food items, were tested using the Mobile Food Testing Lab. The results showed that 1,904 samples met the required standards, while 297 samples failed.

In addition to the inspections, 2,477 food business licenses were renewed and issued, generating approximately Rs 9.64 million in revenue. Furthermore, 1,147 businesses received improvement notices, urging them to comply with food safety regulations.

During Ramadan, the Food Safety teams also took steps to educate food businesses and consumers. The Authority organized 8 training sessions and 155 awareness programs throughout Ramadan to raise awareness about food safety and hygiene.

KP Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru praised the KP Food Authority’s successful operations and reiterated the government’s commitment to eliminating substandard and unsafe food practices in the province.

"We will ensure the eradication of all businesses involved in selling unsafe food, and there will be no compromise when it comes to the health and safety of our citizens," said Toru.

image of Pakistan and its regions on the global stage.

The three-day seminar will feature distinguished speakers and policymakers.

The first day’s sessions at the Governor’s House will see eminent personalities sharing insights, while the second day at Serena Hotel will bring together provincial officials, experts, and stakeholders to discuss strategies for

Peshawar gears up for seminar on CPEC’s Second Phase

PESHAWAR (APP): Preparations for an international seminar on the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Peshawar have reached their final stages.

Organized by China Window in collaboration with the leading educational institution IM Sciences and the Higher Education Commission, the seminar

aims to promote peace, strengthen regional ties, and enhance public awareness about CPEC.

China Window Director, Naz Parveen emphasized the significance of CPEC’s second phase, stating that it is vital to Pakistan’s economic growth and long-term prosperity.

She highlighted that such seminars play a key role in projecting a positive

CPEC’s success.

Participants will not only address challenges from the past decade but also propose innovative solutions to maximize the project’s potential.

Moreover, students, literary figures, and intellectuals will be actively involved to ensure that the event fosters a broad-based, constructive dialogue.

Survey discovers rare, elusive Western Tragopan pheasant in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): A recent research survey has revealed presence of the stunning and elusive Western Tragopan (Tragopan melanoleucus) in the Allai Valley of Battagram district, marking the first-ever recorded population of this rare pheasant species in the area.

Mohibullah Naveed, a dedicated wildlife conservationist and member of the survey team, shared the exciting discovery.

"Finding the Western Tragopan in Allai is a significant breakthrough for conservation as this magnificent bird was previously known only in isolated pockets of Kohistan and a few other regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," Naveed told APP.

The presence of the Western Tragopan in Allai Valley signals hope for biodiversity conservation in the region.

Known for its striking plumage and shy nature, this endangered species is highly sensitive to habitat loss, making its discovery in a new location a crucial development for wildlife experts, he believed.

Mohibullah said the Western Tragopan is a globally threatened bird species and this finding will expand the known range of the species, offering new opportunities for research and protection efforts.

The first ever prelimi-

nary survey for Western Horned Tragopans and other Himalayan Pheasants was conducted in 2024 under the supervision of Himalayan Wildlife Foundation with the collaboration of KPK Wildlife Department (Battagram Wildlife Division) & Wildlife Ecology Lab, University of Haripur, Mohibullah added.

The aim of the survey was to collect baseline population data of the Himalayan pheasants within the study area, primarily focusing on highly threatened Western Horned Tragopans for the effective management and conservation of this vulnerable species facing severe threats to its survival, he added.

The survey team conducted line transect surveys throughout the potential habitats and used local hunting dogs to flush the pheasants during line transect sampling.

Furthermore 20 camera traps were installed at potential sites. Total 8 Western Horned Tragopans were directly sighted during survey and feathers of male Western Horned Tragopans were also found.

Mohibullah apprised that Allai Valley is located in the Western Himalayas in District Battagram of KPK province and spans over an area of approximately 56,081 hectares. It is surrounded by the Kohistan

Valley to the north, Chaur’s pasture meadows to the east, Nandiar Valley to the south, and the Indus River to the west.

During the survey five teams were deployed in different sites for line transect surveys and each team surveyed a minimum of 5 km transect in potential habitats selected based on the ecological preferences of the species.

Teams comprised two observers, a trained pointer dog, and a local guide with extensive knowledge of the terrain and wildlife.

Indirect signs of pheasant presence, such as feathers and droppings, were also recorded along the transects to provide additional evidence of species occurrence.

The population densities of three Himalayan pheasant species—Western Horned Tragopan (Tragopan melanoleucus), Himalayan Monal (Lophophorus impejanus), and Koklass Pheasant (Pucrasia macrolopha)—were estimated in a 37.25 km² surveyed area.

The estimated population density of Tragopans was 0.27 individuals/km², indicating a sparse distribution. The low density suggests that Tragopans may be present in fragmented patches, possibly due to habitat specificity or human-induced pressures such as habitat degradation

and hunting.

The population density of Monals was recorded as 1.61 individuals/km², the highest among the three species. This relatively higher density aligns with the species’ known adaptability to diverse elevations and habitat conditions. However, localized threats such as poaching and habitat encroachment may still impact their population.

While the density of Koklass Pheasants was estimated at 0.94 individuals/km², indicating a moderate presence in the area. The species prefers dense forest cover, and its population density could reflect habitat suitability and availability.

The survey team made a recommendation of conducting further surveys across different seasons to capture population fluctuations. Investigate habitat conditions and anthropogenic threats affecting these species.

It also emphasizes the need for community involvement and stricter anti-poaching measures to protect this rare bird. Further studies will assess the population size and habitat conditions to guide long-term conservation strategies.

Implementation of conservation strategies to protect key habitats, especially for the Western Horned Tragopan is also suggested.



In brief

Pabbi Bar polls scheduled on 8th F.P. Report

PABBI: Tehsil Bar Association Pabbi annual election has been scheduled for 8th April 8 while all necessary arrangements have been finalized in this regard. According to details, senior lawyer Asif Zia Advocate has been appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner along with two members, Rab Nawaz Khattak Advocate and Misbah ullah Advocate as election committee. The elections will take place on April 8 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, during which time lawyers will cast their votes. There are a total of 57 registered votes for the Tehsil Bar Association Pabbi. Chief Election Commissioner Asif Zia Advocate emphasized that all arrangements have been made to ensure fair and transparent elections. Lawyers will be able to cast their votes freely, and the elections will be conducted in a democratic manner. This is the third time the Tehsil Bar Association Pabbi is holding its annual elections.

Police arrests alleged culprit Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Police arrested a man allegedly involved in spreading of false news on social media about a bomb blast at the Ziarat Kaka Sahib shrine in Nowshera on 1st April. The news caused widespread panic, especially since the shrine was crowded with devotees. However, after investigating, authorities found that no such incident had occurred. District Police Officer Abdul Rashid tasked a team led by SDO P Cantt Circle and SHO Badrashi to arrest the person responsible for spreading the false news. The team used modern investigative techniques to track down the culprit, identified as Azam Khan resident of Pir Sabaq area of Nowshera district. A case was registered against Azam Khan under the PECA Act 2025, and he was taken into custody for further investigation. The public is warned to refrain from spreading false news on social media that can cause panic and chaos, or face legal action.

Vehicles impounded F.P. Report

SARGODHA: The district administration imposed hefty fines on transporters involved in overcharging and overloading during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. According to Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Malik Muhammad Tahir, a thorough inspection of 1,265 vehicles was carried out during Eid days. He said that 70 vehicles were fined for overcharging and overloading, with 43 passenger vehicles being impounded in addition, a total fine of Rs. 153,500 was imposed. The RTA secretary said the authority also succeeded in recovering Rs. 24,160 in excess fare from transporters, which was returned to passengers. Special monitoring squads were formed to oversee the situation during the holidays, with full support from the traffic police and assistant commissioners, he added. Meanwhile, Punjab food Authority (PFA) foiled an attempt to supply unhygienic meat and confiscated a vehicle near Bahal check post carrying 140 kg of unhealthy and foul-smelling meat in Bhakkar. According to a PFA spokesperson here on Thursday, the seized meat had no certification from any authorized slaughterhouse and was being transported from Layyah to Bhakkar.



QUETTA: A drug addict taking nap along roadside needs attention of government.

Separate exam halls for private schools sought

Anees Takar

CHARSADDA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government's recent order to relocate private school examination halls to government institutions has sparked outrage among parents, who have warned of widespread protests if the decision is not reversed. Concerned parents, along with civil society representatives, held a press conference in Charsadda, urging the Chief Secretary and the Commissioner of Peshawar Division to reconsider the move, citing serious logistical and security concerns.

The government issued an order mandating that all private school students sit for their board examinations in designated government school halls. Officials argue that this step ensures transparency and standardized exam conditions. However, parents strongly oppose the decision, stating that it creates unnecessary difficulties for students and puts their academic future at risk.

At the press conference, parents raised several con-

cerns, particularly regarding transportation difficulties, security risks and the psychological impact on students. Many parents from remote areas expressed their inability to arrange transport for their children to far-off exam centers. "How can we send our children miles away when there are suitable facilities nearby?" asked one frustrated parent.

Parents argued that deploying security personnel inside examination halls would create undue stress for students. "Our children should focus on their exams, not on the presence of armed personnel around them," said one concerned parent.

The decision has disproportionately affected female students, making it harder for them to access safe and conducive examination environments. "Many parents are hesitant to send their daughters to distant exam centers. The government is making it harder for female students to appear in their exams,"

remarked another protester.

Parents accused the administration of unfairly labeling certain private schools as problematic, tarnishing the reputation of their students. "Our children have worked hard for years and now their credibility is being questioned. This is unacceptable," they stated.

Protesters emphasized that bureaucratic control over educational boards is detrimental to students' academic progress. Instead of abruptly enforcing such decisions, they urged authorities to consult all stakeholders and explore alternatives, such as establishing additional exam centers closer to private schools.

The parents made it clear that if their demands were not met, they would escalate their protests, taking to the streets with their children. "We want a solution, not more problems. If the government does not listen, we will have no choice but to intensify our movement," they warned.

DPO blamed for misusing power

F.P. Report

WANA: District Police Officer (DPO) South Waziristan Asif Bahadur has been accused of serious misconduct, including abuse of power, illegal sale of non-custom-paid vehicles, and withholding police officers' salaries. It has also been revealed that he is involved in a car-lifting scandal.

Former Wana police DSB in-charge, Zabihullah, was issued an authority letter by the DPO office for the use of a Honda Accord vehicle for court appearances. However, when the vehicle reached Dera Ismail Khan, customs authorities seized it.

According to sources, when officials contacted DPO Asif Bahadur for verification, there was no response for 24 hours. Eventually, when customs

authorities reached out again, instead of confirming the details, the DPO ordered the immediate seizure of the vehicle. This incident has raised several questions about the alleged illegal activities of the DPO.

Police sources, speaking on the condition of anonymity, claim that DPO Asif Bahadur has earned Rs. 37 million through the illegal trade of non-custom-paid vehicles. Police officers have disclosed that due to the DPO's corruption, serious issues have emerged in police stations. The monthly diesel supply for all stations has been halted, and funds allocated for the polio campaign have been embezzled, leading to non-payment of police personnel for their polio duty.

Police officers have declared that they will not

negotiate with DPO Asif Bahadur and will only meet with DIG Dera Ismail Khan. They have warned that if their demands are not met, they will hold a press conference on April 5, 2025, where they will present all evidence of corruption against the DPO to the media.

Sources reveal that DPO Asif Bahadur has been absent from his office for the past two months, causing a standstill in police affairs. His absence and misuse of power have severely disrupted the police system across the district. Both police personnel and the public are urging higher authorities to launch an immediate investigation against DPO Asif Bahadur and remove him from office to restore the effective functioning of the police system.

SHC orders to resume flights from Mohan Jo Daro Airport

Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: Sindh High Court (SHC) Larkana bench has directed the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to ensure immediate implementation of its previous order issued on March 9, 2022, under which it had ordered the resumption of flights at Mohun Jo Daro Airport, and to submit a report on its implementation.

Three similar constitutional petitions filed between 2017 and 2019 were scheduled to be heard. The petitioners filed sepa-

rately by lawyer Sajid Hussain Mahesar, lawyer Imdad Ali Mashori and lawyer Rafiq Ahmed Abro had asked the court to order the restoration of PIA flights at Mohan Jo Daro Airport.

The flights have been suspended which have not yet been restored, on March 9, the court ordered to submit a report on the implementation of the order to restore the flights within a month. Before the hearing, the petitioner's lawyers pleaded with the court to order 2 PIA flights between Larkana and Karachi daily

& to allow private airlines to operate on the Mohan Jo Daro-Larkana route.

House burnt to ashes: The house of Zeeshan Khokhar, a resident of Waleed Mohalla Larkana city, caught fire due to a short circuit of electricity, due to which the family members broke the doors and windows to escape to save their lives. Protesting, he said that due to the incompetence of the WAPDA staff, the electricity wires are passing over the house, on this occasion he appealed for financial help in this regard.

Police deployed for public convince during Eid

F.P. Report

MARDAN: District Police Officer (DPO) Mardan performed duties for the convenience and safety of the public on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Police officers and jawans performed their duty to secure the happiness of the public without caring about

their own happiness. Traffic police played a key role in maintaining traffic flow on the city's main highways and markets, while police personnel on security duty ensured law and order by taking all possible measures. Senior police officers from across the district visited various locations and supervised the

security arrangements and encouraged the personnel on duty.

Police would like to thank the general public, business community, media representatives, scholars and all respected citizens who fully cooperated with the police and helped maintain a peaceful environment.

DPO Abdul Salam assumes charge in Lower Dir F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: District Police Officer (DPO) Salem Abbas Kulachi visited the injured officer at the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Timergara. He extended his best wishes for Sajjad's speedy recovery and directed hospital authorities to provide him with the best possible medical care.

The DPO assured that those responsible for the attack would be arrested soon and brought to justice. Later, the injured officer was shifted to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) in Peshawar, where his condition was reported to be stable.

Meanwhile, three people were killed, and 23 others were injured in road accidents on the second and third days of Eid. Following the ceremony, DPO Khalid paid tribute at the Martyrs' Memorial by laying a floral wreath and offering prayers for the departed heroes. He later held an introductory meeting with the police officers and office staff, discussing key departmental affairs and strategies for enhancing law enforcement in the district.

During his visit, the DPO inspected the Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) office, where he commended the council members for their role in facilitating swift and amicable conflict resolution. He emphasized the importance of the DRC in delivering prompt justice to the public and pledged to implement further improvements to enhance its effectiveness.

DPO Khalid also toured various police offices, including the state-of-the-art Command and Control Room, and engaged with administrative staff. At the Service Center, he reviewed the facilities available to the public. DSP Headquarters Syed Ahmad Khan briefed him on the license issuance process and other citizen-focused initiatives aimed at improving police services.

Addressing police personnel, DPO Khalid stressed the need for greater efficiency, transparency, and professionalism in public service. He reiterated that police stations should serve as accessible and secure avenues for justice, ensuring that all complainants receive fair treatment without discrimination.

Furthermore, he underscored a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and misconduct within the force, warning that strict action would be taken against any individuals compromising the integrity of the police department.

MSAT pays tribute to late Abdul Aleem F.P. Report

KOHAT: Mohabbate Sada Adbi Tolana (MSAT) Gulabad Chorlaki Kohat organized a grand ceremony in memory of the former president of the organization and renowned poet and writer Abdul Aleem Ghamgin which was presided over by the president of MSAT, Ishraq Khattak, while the general secretary of Nilab Adbi Tolana Zerha Kohat, Laeq Shah Laeq, was the chief guest. Syed Masoom Shah Masoom, secretary of the organization, performed the overall arrangements of the event.

The event has two parts, the first one was for the eternal peace of Abdul Aleem Ghamgin and other deceased poets and recovery of the sick poets. Syed Masoom Shah, Ishraq Khattak, Laeq Shah Laeq, Riyaz Qail, Matul Haq Shinwari, Rehmat Bitab and Kamal Anan highlighted the literary and social services of Abdul Aleem Ghamgin.

Three killed in road accidents and firing incidents in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Three people lost their lives, and 24 others sustained injuries in separate road accidents and firing incidents across the Lower Dir district during the first three days of Eid, official sources reported.

A police officer, identified as Sajjad, was injured when unidentified attackers opened fire on him within the jurisdiction of Munda police station on the second day of Eid. District Police Officer (DPO) Saleem Abbas Kulachi visited the injured officer at the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital in Timergara. He extended his best wishes for Sajjad's speedy recovery and directed hospital authorities to provide him with the best possible medical care.

The DPO assured that those responsible for the attack would be arrested soon and brought to justice. Later, the injured officer was shifted to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) in Peshawar, where his condition was reported to be stable.

Meanwhile, three people were killed, and 23 others were injured in road accidents on the second and third days of Eid.

According to sources, a double-seater vehicle plunged into a ditch at Chinara Kot in Maidan, resulting in the deaths of two individuals and injuries to twelve others, including women and children. Rescue 1122 teams, along with ambulances and disaster response units, arrived at the scene, provided first aid, and transported the injured to Lal Qila Hospital.

The injured included 5-year-old Fahad, 28-year-old Shoaib, 8-year-old Zaid, 6-year-old Tariq, 10-year-old Haris, 11-year-old G, 10-year-old F, 11-year-old H, 33-year-old G, and 11-year-old Z. The deceased were identified as 11-year-old Abu Hurraan and the wife of Sher Zaman. The ill-fated vehicle was en route from Kumbhar Maidan to Taran village.

In another incident near the Teri area on the Timergara-Bajaur Bypass, a collision between a coaster and a motorcycle left six people injured. Separately, a car overturned due to speeding in Munda Rahim Abad, injuring several passengers. All the injured were shifted to DHQ Hospital Timergara by Rescue 1122

teams.

Furthermore, a youth identified as Muhammad Yasin, son of Bashir and a resident of Shamalai, lost his life when a rickshaw plunged into a deep gorge in Shamalai, within the jurisdiction of Chakdara police station. Four others sustained injuries in the accident. The deceased and injured were shifted to the Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital in Chakdara.

Rescue 1122 responds 79 emergencies during Eid: Rescue 1122 Dir LOWER provided rescue facilities to 74 injured and patients in a total of 79 emergencies during Eid-ul-Fitr. The Spokesman said on Thursday that rescue facilities were provided in 36 medical emergencies, 08 road traffic accidents, 04 fire incidents and 04 other incidents during Eid-ul-Fitr. Under the ambulance referral service, 27 patients referred by doctors were shifted to various hospitals within and outside the district under the supervision of trained staff of Rescue 1122. The Rescue 1122 control room received 789 calls on the occasion of Eid, most of which included unnecessary and fake calls.

DC inspects prison, DHQ hospital & city cleanliness

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner visited district headquarters hospital, central jail and different areas of city Hafizabad to review standard of cleanliness in the city. He distributed sweets among sanitary workers of Waste Management Company.

During the visit of DHQ hospital, DC Abdul Razzaq inspected different wards and reviewed provision of treatment facilities to patients in the hospital. He inquired after health of patients and distributed sweets among them. He appreciated services of doctors and other staff who were serving the patients and spending Eid with patients instead of their families despite holy day.

Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Zaheer Ahmad, Medical Superintendent DHQ hospital Dr. Razwan Ali Tabish also present on this occasion accompanied by the DC. DC checked standard of cleanliness on Eid Day and distributed sweets among sanitary workers of Waste Management Company. He also visited district jail and gave away sweets to jail inmates along with Superintendent Kamran Haider.

Meanwhile, special price magistrates visited Hafizabad, Pindi Bhattian, Sukheki Mandi, Jalalpur Bhattian, Veniki Taran and other areas to check prices of beef, Moten, chicken and other essential commodities during Eid Days and imposed one lakh, ninety-three thousands of rupees

on profiteers and booked two shopkeepers to sale Moten, beef, chicken on arbitrary prices.

Two killed in road mishaps: Two people were died in two different road accidents in district Hafizabad. According to details, two people Qamar and Tamoor were on its way to Hafizabad from Faisalabad on motorcycle. When they reached near village Hakeemwala, a speedy driven carry van hit them. As a result of which, Tamoor was died on the spot while Qamar injured critically. Qamar shifted to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital Pindi Bhattian. In second incident, Shahbaz resident of Nankan Sahib was coming from Harmal Sharif to Hafizabad. On the way he fell down from motorcycle and lost his breath on the spot.



QUETTA: Leader of Jhalawan Awami Panel, Nadeem-ur-Rehman addressing a press conference.

Commander Bannu visits orphans for Eid greeting

F.P. Report

BANNU: Brigadier Naveed Ahmed visited Bannu and adjoining areas on the fourth day of Eid. The people were happy to see the officers of the Pakistan Army mixed with the people. Commander Bannu welcomed the police personnel posted at the police posts, check posts, regional elders and the people on the occasion of Eid.

On the occasion of Commander Bannu's arrival in Domel, the people, orphans and school

children warmly welcomed him. Meanwhile, under the auspices of the Orphan Welfare Organization in Tehsil Domel, the Pakistan Army distributed food packages to orphans, widows, poor and needy people.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Orphan Welfare Organization, Mirza Jan Wazir, briefed Commander Bannu about welfare works and assistance provided to orphans, while Rescue 1122 personnel saluted Commander.

Addressing the ceremo-

ny held on the occasion, Brigadier Bannu Naveed Ahmed said that the heart feels peace with the help of orphans, widows, poor and needy people. With the help of orphans, not only can a person be happy, but it can also make a better life. Society can be formed when a person helps others, then he can achieve success in this world and the hereafter. He said that the army and the people are on the same page. The people and the army have made great sacrifices together to restore peace.

Pedestrian died in road accident

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: A pedestrian died in a road accident on Thursday near Havelian Interchange, when an unidentified vehicle hit him approximately two kilometers from the interchange.

According to Rescue 1122 Abbottabad, the medical team swiftly responded to the incident upon receiving the information. However, the victim had already succumbed to injuries on the

spot. The rescue team later transferred the deceased's body to Type D Hospital Havelian for further procedures. Police is investigating the incident to identify the vehicle.



SOFIA: The first of 16 new F-16 fighter jets from the US landing in Bulgaria at Graf Ignatievo airbase.

China urges US to lift tariffs, vows retaliation

BEIJING (Reuters): China urged the United States to immediately cancel its latest tariffs and vowed countermeasures to safeguard its own interests, after President Donald Trump declared sweeping levies on all US trading partners around the world.

The US move disregards the balance of interests reached in multilateral trade negotiations over the years and the fact that it has long benefited greatly from international trade, the Chinese Commerce Ministry said in a statement. "China firmly opposes this and will take countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests," the ministry said, as the world's largest economies look set to spiral deeper into a trade war that stands to upend global supply chains.

Trump announced China would be hit with a 34% tariff, on top of the 20% he previously imposed earlier this year, bringing the total new levies to 54% and close to the 60% figure he had threatened while on the campaign trail. Chinese exporters, as with those from every other economy, will face a 10% baseline tariff, as part of the new 34% levy, on almost all goods shipped to the world's largest consumer economy before the remaining, higher "reciprocal tariffs" take effect from April 9.

Trump also signed an executive order closing a trade loophole known as "de minimis" that has allowed low-value packages from China and Hong Kong to enter the US duty free. Trump had ordered the US Trade Representative to determine whether China was living up to its commitments under the 2020 "Phase 1" US-China trade agreement by April 1. The deal had required China to increase purchases of US exports by \$200 billion over a two-year period, but Beijing failed to meet its targets when the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

China bought \$153 billion in US goods in 2017, before the trade war began, Chinese customs data shows, and that fig-

ure rose to \$164 billion last year. "Arguably, President Trump's tariffs elsewhere will cause the most headaches," said Ruby Osman, a China expert at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change.

"Chinese firms have been rerouting trade through places like Vietnam and Mexico to avoid US sanctions, but these markets are now being hit with significant tariffs of their own." "China+1" strategies caught on among Chinese exporters and multinational companies that had made the production powerhouse central to their supply chains during Trump's first term. But with India, Mexico, Vietnam and Malaysia - the countries that benefited most from this shift - facing tariffs of between 24% to 46%, the cost advantage of relocating manufacturing out of China is significantly diminished.

Trump's tariffs could encourage China to step up its trade with alternative markets, but no other country currently comes even close to US consumption power, where Chinese producers sell more than \$400 billion worth of goods annually. "Trump's tariffs certainly won't help Chinese firms and will cause some real pain in some sectors, but they don't make any definitive mark on the Chinese economy," said William Hurst, Chong Hua Professor of Chinese Development at the University of Cambridge. "US exports are of declining importance to China. The American tariffs will spur more Chinese trade with other places, from Europe to Southeast Asia and Africa," he added.

But Chinese producers have described shifting to alternative markets as a "rat race", resulting in price wars among exporters that risk fanning deflationary forces in the world's second-largest economy as firms continue to squeeze shrinking margins. China has kept its economic target for this year unchanged at "around 5%" despite Trump's tariff salvos which could halt a largely export-led recovery underway since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two Chinese Communist Party officials swap jobs

BEIJING (Reuters): Two members of China's Politburo, the Communist Party's elite decision-making body, have swapped jobs, state media reported, without giving a reason for a reshuffle that analysts called unprecedented at this level of the Chinese hierarchy.

Shi Taifeng was named head of the party's Organisation Department, responsible for all internal personnel decisions, while Li Ganjie was named chief of the United Front Work Department, which projects party influence over religious and ethnic minorities, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan. Top party officials and ministers are occasionally appointed to new positions to prevent them from building up local factions or power bases, analysts say.

However, the job swap among Politburo members was unprecedented in the history of China's Communist Party, said Alfred Wu, associate professor at National University of Singapore. "It is not unusual for government ministers, but these two Politburo positions are very important heavyweights in the party." Both men were promoted to the 24-member Politburo in 2022, but are not on the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee, the apex of power in China's political system.

President Xi Jinping has spearheaded a wide-ranging anti-corruption campaign targeting party officials and the military since coming to power in 2012. But there was no suggestion the latest move was linked to corruption allegations concerning the two men. "This reshuffle is a sign that Xi thinks the Central Organisation Department has not been doing a good enough job at vetting candidates for top leadership positions in light of chronic leadership purges over the last two years," said Wen-Ti Sung, fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub. Shi, 68, is considered a close ally of Xi, having worked with him at the Central Party School where Xi served as president between 2007 and 2012.

From 2010, he ascended the political ranks in Jiangsu province and became the top party official in Ningxia and Inner Mongolia, two regions with a high proportion of ethnic and religious minorities. He also did a stint as president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the country's leading social sciences research body, before being appointed head of the United Front Work Department in October 2022.

A wary Europe awaits Rubio with NATO's future on line

WASHINGTON (AP): US Secretary of State Marco Rubio travels this week to a gathering of top diplomats from NATO countries and is sure to find allies that are alarmed, angered and confused by the Trump administration's desire to reestablish ties with Russia and its escalating rhetorical attacks on longtime transatlantic partners.

Allies are deeply concerned by President Donald Trump's readiness to draw closer to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who sees NATO as a threat, amid a US effort to broker a ceasefire in Ukraine. Recent White House comments and insults directed at NATO allies Canada and Denmark - as well as the military alliance itself - have only increased the angst, especially as new US tariffs are taking effect against friends and foes alike. Rubio arrives in Brussels for two days of meetings with his NATO counterparts and European officials, and he can expect to be confronted with questions about the future US role in the alliance. With him on the trip will be newly confirmed US ambassador to NATO Matt Whitaker.

For 75 years, NATO has been anchored on American leadership, and based on what they have seen and heard since Trump took office in January, European officials have expressed deep concerns that Trump may upend all of that when he and other NATO leaders meet for a June summit in the Netherlands. As Rubio did last month at a meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of 7 industrialized democracies, America's top diplomat, who is regarded by many overseas as a more pragmatic and less dogmatic member of Trump's administration, may be able to salvage a watered-down group consensus on the war in Ukraine.

That's even as Trump said this week that Ukraine "was never going to be a member of NATO" despite leaders declaring at last year's summit that the country was on an "irreversible" path to join. But Rubio will be hard-pressed to explain Washington's unprovoked verbal attacks on NATO allies Canada, which Trump says he wants to claim as the 51st state, and Denmark, whose territory of Greenland he says the US should annex. Both have been accused of being "bad allies" by Trump and Vice President JD Vance. "It's pretty clear neither territory has any interest in joining a Trumpian America," said Ian Kelly, US ambassador to Georgia during the Obama and first Trump administrations and now an international studies professor at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

"There's going to be a lot of very anxious Euros about what Trump is going to call for and what announcements he's going to make," he said. "If he isn't already, Rubio is going to be in a mode of trying to reassure European allies that we are not, in fact, not dependable." Yet, in just under two months, NATO has been shaken to its core, challenged increasingly by Russia and the biggest land war in Europe since 1945 from the outside, and by the Trump administration from within, breaking with decades of relatively predictable US leadership. Trump has consistently complained about NATO members' defense spending and even raised doubts about the US commitment to mutual defense in the alliance's founding treaty, which says an attack on one NATO member is considered an attack on all.

Since Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned last month that US security priorities lie elsewhere - in Asia and on its own borders - the Europeans have waited to learn how big a military drawdown in Europe could be and how fast it may happen. In Europe and Canada, governments are working on "burden shifting" plans to take over more of the load, while trying to ensure that no security vacuum is created if US troops and equipment are withdrawn from the continent. These allies are keen to hear from Rubio what the Trump administration's intentions are and hope to secure some kind of roadmap that lays out what will happen next

and when, so they can synchronize planning and use European forces to plug any gaps. At the same time, NATO's deterrent effect against an adversary like Russia is only credible when backed by US firepower. For the Europeans and Canada, this means that US nuclear weapons and the 6th Fleet must remain stationed in Europe.

"America is indispensable for credible deterrence," a senior NATO diplomat told reporters on condition of anonymity to speak ahead of the meeting. Around 100,000 US troops are deployed across the continent. European allies believe at least 20,000 personnel sent by the Biden administration after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine three years ago could be withdrawn. Another priority for US allies is to understand whether Trump believes that Russia still poses the greatest security threat. In their summit statement last year, NATO leaders insisted that "Russia remains the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security."

But Trump's receptiveness to Putin and recent favorable remarks by some US officials have raised doubts. The question, diplomats say, is why allies should spend 5% of their gross domestic product on their defense budgets if Russia is no longer a threat. At the same time, the Europeans and Canada know they must spend more - not least to protect themselves and keep arming Ukraine. At their next summit in June, NATO leaders are expected to raise the alliance's military budget goal from at least 2% to more than 3%. Rubio "is in a very difficult position," said Jeff Rathke, president of the American-German Institute at Johns Hopkins University. Trump "has tried to convince allies that a US realignment with Russia is in the best interests of the US and presumably Europe, and at the same time tell them that they need to double their defense spending to deal with threats posed by Russia," he said. "The logical question they will ask is 'why?'"

Mexico forms an elite force to take on drug cartels

MEXICO CITY (AP): Six years ago Mexico's president disbanded the country's Federal Police and handed security responsibilities fully to the military. Now, his successor has quietly begun to build an elite civilian investigative and special operations force to fight the drug cartels.

President Claudia Sheinbaum had already shown a willingness early in her presidency to move away from former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's oft-criticized "hugs, not bullets" strategy. It focused on addressing the social roots of crime rather than directly confronting Mexico's powerful cartels.

Sheinbaum's security chief, Omar García Harfuch, is drawing on his law enforcement contacts - mostly from the former ranks of the Federal Police - to claw back security capabilities from the armed forces with a civilian force under his direct command. The government has yet to formally announce the new National Operations Unit, known by its Spanish initials UNO, but its existence is an open secret among former members of the Federal Police, where García Harfuch started his career.

Three Mexican officials, all of whom requested anonymity to speak about the still unannounced force, confirmed its existence to The Associated Press. Security analyst David Saucedo, who has spoken with people who have joined the force, said he believes García Harfuch's main objective is to have an armed force that allows him to meet demands from Washington.

The unit began to form shortly after Sheinbaum took office and it hopes to have 800 members by the end of the year, said one federal official, who is familiar with many of the unit's details. While García Harfuch was in Washington meeting with the Trump administration, the security ministry published a call for college graduates to make up "the first generation of investigative and intelligence agents," saying only they would be part of a specialized group to strengthen the country's security. UNO will have three branches distributed geographically across Mexico, as well as a high-impact team that will be the "elite of the elite," the federal official said.

Its current members are mostly former Federal Police and members of the special operations team García Harfuch created when he was Mexico City's police chief. Most have previously received training from security forces from the United States,

Colombia, Spain or France. His challenge is rebuilding the trust of his US counterparts after López Obrador limited US agents' movements in Mexico and do it as President Donald Trump pressures Mexico to step up the fight against fentanyl trafficking. Shortly after taking office, López Obrador replaced the Federal Police with a new force, the National Guard, that he sold to the public as civilian, but that was always led by and made up of the armed forces.

He lambasted the Federal Police as too corrupt to save and made Mexico's former security chief Genaro García Luna, then facing trial in the US and eventually convicted of working for the Sinaloa cartel, the poster child. He cut funding for training and equipping local police. What followed were six years of what critics decried as militarization that effectively concentrated unprecedented authority in the hands of the armed forces.

Despite that, levels of violence remained stubbornly high and critics said the cartels grew stronger, fueled by soaring revenue from fentanyl. One of the main criticisms of the National Guard and military was that while they had numbers and fire power they did not have the investigative skills needed to dismantle large criminal organizations. García Harfuch was initially a "toothless tiger," who was frequently denied resources, information and investigative files by other security entities, said Saucedo, based in Guanajuato state, Mexico's most violent. The Mexican federal official denied that UNO's objective was to satisfy Trump, but noted the unit was involved in the unprecedented delivery of 29 high-profile cartel figures to the United States at the height of negotiations between the two countries to suspend threatened tariffs. They were pulled out of prisons all over Mexico, assembled and sent to the US without incident.

Special operations forces, be it from the Navy, Army, Federal Police or state police, have a checkered history in Mexico, having been involved in many scandals and abuses of power, extrajudicial killings and infiltration by cartels. "There have been a lot of cases that were bad," said the previously quoted federal official, who added that there were also honest police. He said the security ministry is emphasizing stricter screening, exhaustive background investigations and better pay once they're in. García Harfuch's influence also extends to states where Sheinbaum's party holds power.

Eleven more Ukrainian children return home

KYIV (Reuters): Eleven more Ukrainian children have been brought home from parts of Russia and Russian-occupied Ukraine where they had been taken without permission, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff said. "Today we have one more piece of good news," Andriy Yermak, the chief of staff, wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

"Within the framework of the president of Ukraine's Bring Kids Back UA initiative, another 11 Ukrainian children were brought back from temporarily occupied areas (of Ukraine) and the territory of the Russian Federation." Among the children, Yermak said, were brothers aged 10 and 12 whose father died after being tortured for expressing pro-Ukrainian views. Also brought home, Yermak wrote, was a pregnant mother who had been prevented from leaving occupied Ukraine because she had refused to take out Russian identity papers and her 2-year-old toddler. The mother gave birth to another child in Ukrainian-held territory.

Yermak thanked the office of Ukraine's ombudsman for its help in arranging the return of the children. There was no immediate comment from Russian authorities. Ukraine says more than 19,500 children have been taken to Russia or Russian-occupied territory without the consent of family or guardians during the war, calling the abductions a war crime that meets the UN treaty definition of genocide.

Germany sees Ukraine truce efforts as deadlocked

KYIV (AP): Germany's chief diplomat described US President Donald Trump's efforts to secure a truce in the three-year war between Russia and Ukraine as deadlocked, while China's foreign minister said that it was encouraging that the talks between Washington and Moscow on finding a settlement are continuing.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, arriving in Kyiv for an unannounced visit, said that "due to the deadlock" between the US and Russia on forging a ceasefire deal, European allies' continued support for Ukraine in the war is "absolutely crucial." Trump scolded Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, expressing frustration at the continued fighting in a war that he had pledged to swiftly stop.

Trump insisted progress was being made in the negotiations, but said that he would consider imposing further sanctions to put pressure on Moscow and accused Zelenskyy of trying to back out of a deal with the US on access to mineral resources. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said that the latest version of the mineral deal remained under discussion and that Ukraine had conducted its first round of consultations on that version. Putin has effectively refused a US proposal for an immediate and full 30-day halt in the fighting, despite Trump's prodding. Also, a partial ceasefire in the Black Sea that could allow safer shipments has fallen foul of conditions imposed by Kremlin negotiators.

"We consider the models and solutions proposed by the Americans quite seri-

ously, but we can't just accept all of them as they are," Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said. Moscow is holding out on a deal to ease shipping in the Black Sea in order to "stall efforts toward a general ceasefire and extract additional concessions from the West," according to an assessment by the Institute for the Washington-based Study of War think tank. Trump has signaled that he could consider new oil sanctions on Russia - a development Ukraine would view favorably. "I believe we have reached the point where stronger sanctions are needed, because I believe the Russians are breaking the promises they made to America," Zelenskyy said during a joint press conference with Baerbock in Kyiv. "For us, decisive action is crucial. Words are not enough," Zelenskyy added.

Republicans want US to focus on ceasefires in Ukraine and Gaza

WASHINGTON (AP): While most Americans disapprove of President Donald Trump's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the conflict is not weighing as heavily on his public perception as it did on President Joe Biden, a new poll shows.

That's because of Trump's solid support from his base on this issue. The survey of US adults from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that about 8 in 10 Republicans approve of Trump's handling of the conflict. Only about 4 in 10 Democrats approved of Biden's handling of the conflict last June, shortly before Biden dropped out of the presidential race.

"During Trump's first administration, we did not actively start any wars. And there's a stark difference between his history and his first term versus the Biden presidency. And I think Trump is just trying to fix things that Biden let get out of hand," said

Patrick Vigil, a 60-year-old Republican from New Mexico who voted for Trump in November's election. The poll suggests Republicans are growing more satisfied with the country's foreign policy actions as Trump pulls back US support for Ukraine and puts new pressure on allies - notably with his talk of annexing Canada, Greenland and the Panama Canal.

Trump has warned Hamas that there would be "hell to pay" if Israeli hostages weren't returned immediately and urged Israel to wrap up their offensive and "get it over with." He has supported ceasefire talks in both conflicts and said he'd end the war between Ukraine and Israel within "24 hours" - or even before taking office. Since becoming president again, Trump has publicly torn into Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy but also tried to pressure Russia's Vladimir Putin to accept a

peace deal. Broadly, Republicans are more content with the US on solving global issues now that President Trump is in office. About half of Republicans say the US's current role in world affairs is about right, up from about 2 in 10 last February when Biden was president.

There's a greater consensus that the US should be focused on ceasefire negotiations in Israel and Ukraine than there was last year too. About 6 in 10 US adults say it's "extremely" or "very" important for the US to negotiate a permanent ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, up from about half in an AP-NORC poll conducted in February 2024, with a similar uptick on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Republicans have grown more committed to both foreign policy goals since Trump took office, according to the poll. For instance, about 6 in 10 Republicans now think it's highly important for the US to negotiate a

permanent ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, up from about 4 in 10 last year.

"I think we really need to step back and figure out a way just to bring everybody to the table so that they can use their own resources and figure out what they need to do to compromise," said Lisa Major, 61, a registered Republican from Kentucky who voted for Trump in November. Keith Willey, a Republican-leaning registered independent from Florida who voted for a third-party candidate for president, said peace deals in Ukraine and Gaza have become more important to him over time amid mounting death and destruction.

But Willey said he doesn't support a deal that allows Hamas to stay in control in Gaza and he doesn't support a ceasefire in Ukraine that divides it up with Russia or hinges on the US taking control of Ukraine's rare earth minerals. He still supports strong American

intervention on Ukraine's behalf against Russia, supports strong US backing of Israel and doesn't like Trump's friendly relationship with Russia or Russian President Vladimir Putin. "I'm not tired of giving weapons to Ukraine. I think we should support where we can to have them fight for their own country. But, generally speaking, I would like to see a ceasefire," Willey, 63, said.

Many Republicans don't want more investment in Ukraine, though - only about 2 in 10 think providing aid to Ukraine's military to fight Russia is "extremely" or "very" important - and not all of Trump's voters are satisfied with Trump's ceasefire efforts. Michael Johnson, a 36-year-old registered independent from North Carolina who voted for Trump, isn't happy with Trump's handling of Israel's war in Gaza or the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Johnson said Trump had held him-

self out as a president who could bring the wars to an end quickly but hasn't. "I don't think he went through with what he said he would do," Johnson said. "He said he would stop it, but it's still going on. There's a lot of people losing their lives out there, young kids and stuff."

And many Republicans want Trump to continue shrinking American involvement abroad. About 4 in 10 Republicans now say the US should take a less active role in world affairs. That includes Major, who supports Trump, likes how he's handling foreign conflicts and sees him trying to reduce the role the US plays in the world, as she wants him to do. "For one, it takes our attention off of the citizens of America, but also it may be sending a really negative message where we keep involving ourselves in other people's issues when we can't figure out our own issues," Major said.

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Bullying tariffs will scar US too

THE simplistic slogan "America First" has a long and storied, politically charged history in the United States. But its enduring appeal has found fertile ground amid the festering disillusionment with the American Dream, as wage stagnation, job insecurity and automation have eroded trust in traditional pathways to personal prosperity.

While the US leader's political ideology has been shaped by a variety of influences, including his own experiences in business and entertainment, the influence of figures such as the paleoconservative Pat Buchanan, who campaigned for the presidency on an "America First" platform at the turn of the century, cannot be discounted.

Buchanan's nationalist, protectionist, and anti-globalist views have strongly resonated with the US president, who has tipped his hat to their shaping of his own political agenda.

Timing is everything, of course. And the US leader rebranded Buchanan's message at a time when the US economy was reeling from the impact of a new wave of technology and the cost of the US' ignominious military adventurism.

And with the limitations of US military power projection evident, the US leader — whose political brand prioritizes economic nationalism as the salve for popular and personalized grievance at the country's perceived loss of status — has enthusiastically embraced the weaponization of tariffs as the means to "Make America Great Again", prioritizing national identity and sovereignty over the rules-based trade system the US was a primary architect of.

Thus the US president has, in his bombastic way, designated April 2 as "Liberation Day" — the day when "reciprocal tariffs" on countries that impose duties on US goods are introduced. But the aggressive move will not free the US from its reliance on foreign goods as he predicts. Rather, it will reinforce the cage the US has erected around its economy.

The reciprocal tariffs come after similar recent announcements of additional 25 percent taxes on auto imports, punitive levies against Chinese, Canadian and Mexican imports, and steep new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. As of the time of writing, it remains unclear how the latest tariff attack will be implemented. But economists have warned the tariffs could plunge the US into a recession because of inflationary pressures, declining consumer confidence and volatile stock markets.

While the US president lauds tariffs as a "beautiful" panacea for all the US' ills, their downsides, which he dismisses, are not negligible. The US leader has argued that his tariffs will raise money for the federal government, claiming "you're going to see billions of dollars, even trillions of dollars coming into our country very soon in the form of tariffs". But many economists have said his estimates are overblown and the tariffs are "a hidden tax on Americans".

And while the White House insists tariffs will help to revitalize domestic industries and bring back manufacturing, it remains to be seen how effective the tactic will be in exerting pressure on companies to move production to the US to avoid hefty tariffs on foreign imports. Not to mention whether the US is ready to accept the environmental toll that will have to be paid for large-scale, heavy manufacturing.

The indiscriminate use of tariffs also risks exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Many US companies have already reported lower profits as a result of weaker demand, slower deliveries and tariff-induced cost pressures. The Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index fell 1.3 points last month to 49, lower than expected and below the 50 mark that signals contraction. "Prices growth accelerated due to tariffs, causing new order placement backlogs, supplier delivery slowdowns and manufacturing inventory growth," said Timothy Fiore, chair of ISM's Manufacturing Business Survey Committee.

Some may argue that the US administration is just using tariffs as a transactional tool to maximize the US' interests in dealmaking. Yet the move will inflict long-term damage on global faith in the US as a responsible power, especially when the world sees how readily the US president runs roughshod over World Trade Organization rules and the trade agreements the US has signed with other countries.

China has repeatedly warned that there is no winner in a trade war. The Foreign Ministry has made clear that it will continue to take measures to firmly safeguard its legitimate rights and interests as necessary, while calling on the US administration to resolve the trade issues through equal consultations on the basis of mutual respect.

At a time when the global economy is continuing to rapidly evolve, finding a balance between protecting domestic interests and engaging in international trade cooperation remains a paramount challenge for all countries.

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Canceling the Palestinians is Israel's next play

Osama Al-Sharif

THOSE waiting for a ruling from the International Court of Justice on South Africa's claim that Israel is guilty of committing genocide in Gaza will have to wait for many more months and even years. And those who believe that the International Criminal Court will step up and charge more Israeli officials and military officers with war crimes may never be vindicated. The war on Gaza has become a test of the veracity and durability of a world order that is slowly crumbling.

In this lopsided world, delivering justice is a matter of opinion, perspective, bias and power. In the heart-wrenching reality of today's world, the Palestinians have no sponsor and, in geopolitical terms, they have no cards to play.

Israel resumed its war on Gaza last month, first by cutting off all humanitarian aid to more than 2 million people and second by launching missiles and sending tanks into the beleaguered Strip. The reasons for this are now clear. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided to pull out of the ceasefire agreement because he did not want to end the war. For him, perpetual war on Gaza extends the life of his coalition government and cushions him from accountability for the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks. But he now sees an opportunity to achieve a more sinister goal.

It is not about securing the release of the remaining Israeli captives.

That goal would have been achieved if Netanyahu had honored his commitments under the ceasefire deal. The goals of the war have changed: aside from destroying Hamas — an objective that his military admitted had already been largely achieved — he now wants

to have complete control of Gaza while facilitating the displacement of its inhabitants. Genocide has transcended into ultimate cancellation.

Call it ethnic cleansing or anything else, Israel is acting with complete impunity and the Trump administration has given it the go-ahead. The outcome in less than two weeks: more than 1,000 dead, including no less than 300 children. Imminent starvation is now the next chapter of this renewed military campaign; the end game being forced expulsion.

A glance at the West Bank depicts a picture just as gloomy. Israel has virtually destroyed the biggest refugee camps in the occupied territory, unleashing with vigor a new wave of settlement building and land expropriation, while allowing extremist settlers to terrorize the indigenous population. The Israeli army has sent tanks into civilian areas, killing innocent bystanders and arresting thousands.

This is no longer extended genocide but the deliberate extermination of the Palestinians to colonize all of historical Palestine. Nothing in the past 75 years of this bloody conflict compares to what is happening today. And it is no longer about acquiring territory by force, reclaiming an alleged ancestral land or even annexation. It is the deliberate cancellation of the Palestinians.

It is mind-boggling that the reaction to this second phase of the war on the Palestinians has been bland, if not nonexistent. Starving millions of people is now "troubling" and "a cause for concern" for most world governments. The killing of children, medics and aid workers barely merits a reaction from government spokespeople. The declaration that Israel is actively seeking to displace Gazans — and soon even West

Bankers — no longer triggers worldwide condemnations.

Gaza is now a slaughterhouse and the West Bank a relentless bloodbath. Palestinians are killed every day. Their killings have been normalized. Palestinian detainees are subjected to torture, inhumane treatment and even summary executions. More than 50,000 Palestinians in refugee camps in the West Bank are now homeless. The refugee camps there have become ghost towns. Israel's extermination of the Palestinians is reaching a climax. But the world is looking the other way.

Acting with impunity, Israel is pushing its extermination campaign to new limits. Annexation is now only a matter of time. Pushing Gazans to despair amid starvation, disease and death is a given.

Israel has used the Oct. 7 attacks to carry out its most egregious plans — once thought so far-fetched that they could never be implemented. The evolution of this conflict over the past 100 years is simply shocking and hard to digest.

European Jews arrived as immigrants in Palestine seeking to escape persecution. Aided by the colonial powers of the day, they soon established a foothold in a land that had for centuries been inhabited by Arabs, a Semitic people, of all denominations — Muslims, Christians and Jews. Instead of coexisting with the natives, European Jews sought to establish a home on lands that did not belong to them.

Today, coexistence is not an option for the ultra-nationalist and ultrareligious Jews. With no historical or archaeological evidence to back their claim, today's declared aim is to conquer all of historical Palestine — and beyond — while uprooting the natives.

Unless the world wakes up to the cruelty of what is happening to the Palestinians today, the crime of complete displacement and even extermination may well be committed. Israel today is a regional superpower that is backed by the Western world, in particular the US. The fact that the Palestinians are Semitic people with unshakeable links to their ancestral lands is not even an issue for debate.

What is true is that Israel is a colonial settler state that has managed to make it into the 21st century against all odds. The Palestinians do not need to prove their ties to the Holy Land. It is the Israelis who have never been able to establish ties to this piece of land.

In the 15th century, the Sephardic Jews of Spain found refuge in Muslim Spain in what Jewish scholars describe as a "Golden Age," during which Jews flourished as politicians, philosophers and merchants. Even when they were expelled from Spain by the Christian Reconquista, they found sanctuary in Muslim North Africa.

It is pathetic that today's Zionists would turn their backs on history and seek to expel Palestinians from their homeland by committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against the people who received them and were willing to share their land with them.

The wholesale extermination of the Palestinians is not a fantasy but a realistic project that Israel's leaders appear to be bent on carrying out. This could become the most heinous affront to humanity in today's world. Without outside intervention, such a sinister scheme could take place. The fact that such an occurrence could trigger cataclysmic regional war notwithstanding, it could also bring chaos and mayhem to today's world.

Palestinians need a political reset

Ray Hanania

THERE is absolutely no doubt that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has exploited the Oct. 7 Hamas terrorism to advance his long-term agenda to destroy any chances of peace with the Palestinians. His war on the Gaza Strip has resulted in the worst massacre of Palestinians since the Nakba of 1948.

Netanyahu and his extremist predecessors, such as the late Ariel Sharon, have continued the terrorism that was started in Palestine in the 1920s by Jewish extremists under the banner of Zionism.

But instead of being smart by pursuing a strategic response to defeat these Zionist extremists and their racist violence, Palestinians have too often allowed their emotions to control their actions. This has exposed the just Palestinian cause to Western animosity, driven by media bias.

One journalist who contributed to this narrative was the American Freda Kirchwey, the editor of The Nation magazine from 1933 to 1955. During her editorship, The Nation falsely portrayed Arabs and Muslims as the drivers of violence in Palestine, while closing its eyes to the Jewish attacks of the 1940s.

The Arab world had very little influence over the Western media, which dominated public information. The racist portrayal of the Arab world to disguise the violence of the new state of Israel was broadened into all aspects of communications, including the publishing world.

This was a strategic, unemotional plan that was embraced by Israelis, Jews and Christian Americans, who viewed the Palestine conflict as a modern-day revival of the Christian-led Crusades against the Muslim "hordes." Such Islamophobia in the West continues to this day, although now it is veiled by more diplomatic expressions and less confrontational rhetoric.

Instead of understanding this historical dynamic, the Arab and Islamic worlds and pro-Palestinian activists tend to embrace a policy of anger and outrage. This has resulted in several wars that have only weakened the image of the just cause of the Palestinians.

Anger also led to the rise of an evil hatred embodied by the violence of Hamas, which in 1994 launched a campaign of suicide bombings against Israeli targets, both military and civilian. This

wave of suicide bombings undermined confidence in the Oslo I Accord signed the year before by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. As hopes of peace deteriorated, a disciple of Likud's rising star at the time, Netanyahu, assassinated Rabin and threw the entire process into cardiac arrest.

I attended the White House ceremony at which Rabin and Arafat signed the Oslo I Accord. But it was just too much for the extremists in Israel and the pro-Israel movement to accept. Hamas walked right into the hands of the Sharon and Netanyahu fanatics, giving them exactly what they needed to tear the Oslo Accords to pieces and advance the absorption of the lands occupied in the 1967 war.

However, despite the damage caused by the pro-Israel manipulation of the truth, Palestinians can reverse this decimation of their image. Palestinians need to accept that Israel is and will always be more powerful militarily. It can also better disguise its violence by using distortions of international law and media bias. The proper response is to reject all forms of violence, contain one's anger and pursue

legal challenges to Israel's violations of international law.

Mahatma Gandhi, the anti-colonialist peace activist, did that when confronting widespread British oppression in India. He turned the other cheek in the face of British violence and resisted any desire for revenge attacks. Palestinians need to make a clean break from Hamas and define a new leadership, even in the face of Israel's brutal violence. They cannot wait until Israel's carnage is concluded, because it will not be concluded any time soon.

They need to commit to an entirely nonviolent response to Israel and the growing anti-Palestine movement in America. The horrible Gaza genocide naturally fuels pain, suffering and anger, but these emotions need to be contained in order to effectively neutralize Israel's fanaticism and its increasing violence. An eye-for-an-eye response will not work amid today's trauma.

Palestinians need to show the strength of their compassion for all human beings — Christians, Muslims and Jews alike — in every expression and in every action. To do otherwise only gives Israel a platform to ratchet up its violent oppression.

France rocked by cases against conservative politicians

Khaled Abou Zahr

IN the last week, France has been hit by two corruption scandals within its political system, both targeting conservative leaders.

The first was prosecutors requesting a seven-year prison sentence, a 300,000 (\$329,000) fine and five years of ineligibility for former President Nicolas Sarkozy. He is accused of receiving up to 50 million in illegal Libyan funding for his 2007 election campaign. The prosecution portrayed him as the mastermind behind a corruption pact with Muammar Qaddafi. Jail time was also requested for some of Sarkozy's former ministers: six years for Claude Gueant, three years for Brice Hortefeux and one year for Eric Woerth. Prosecutors argued that only firm prison sentences could protect society from such corruption.

Sarkozy denied the charges, calling the prosecution's case exaggerated and based on speculation. He has vowed to prove his innocence, with his defense set to present its arguments next week. This is Sarkozy's fifth trial in five years and he is already serving a one-year sentence under electronic surveillance following a separate corruption case.

The second scandal and the one with the biggest impact concerned Marine Le Pen, the head of the National Rally party. She was sentenced by a criminal court to four years in prison (two to be served under electronic surveillance and two suspended), a 100,000 fine and five years of ineligibility with immediate effect.

The case concerns the alleged misuse of 2.9 million in public funds to finance her party through

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a system involving European parliamentary assistants between 2004 and 2016. The court found her guilty of playing a "central role" in this scheme during her time as a Member of the European Parliament. There were 24 other individuals convicted, including key political members and the political formation itself. These back-to-back cases forced French President Emmanuel Macron to address the issue for the first time at the Council of Ministers on Wednesday. The president declared that the judiciary was independent and highlighted the necessity that judges be protected. He also made it clear that all defendants have the right to appeal. This is nevertheless a little troubling and a sign of the impact these decisions will have on a European country.

This has already become a hot political topic for several reasons. The fact that these rulings only concerned right-wing politicians has raised suspicion on social media, especially as many leftist political leaders had called for the boycott and blocking of the National Rally after its good performance in last year's elections. In short, and a little like in the US, this is being interpreted as a political condemnation and not a judicial one.

One point to which Macron did not respond to is the question of Le Pen's ineligibility to run for office taking effect immediately, which has caused the biggest stir in France and Europe as a whole. Even Prime

Minister Francois Bayrou's initial reaction was to express concern about the immediate ineligibility clause in the ruling. As Le Pen and the National Rally have appealed, the Paris Court of Appeal declared it will review the case by summer 2026. This means that it will be considered before the next presidential election, which is a positive sign. Nevertheless, the party has called for rallies in protest, which is not unusual in France. Some looking to minimize the situation are referring to the now more than a dozen politicians who have been condemned.

Indeed, over the past two decades, France has seen numerous high-profile political corruption cases. The most significant early case was that of Jacques Chirac, who was convicted in 2011 for embezzlement during his time as mayor of Paris. Accusations against Francois Fillon in 2017, involving fictitious jobs, severely hit his presidential campaign. He was convicted in 2020.

Other well-known figures to have been convicted include Patrick Balkany, the former mayor of Levallois-Perret, who was found guilty of tax evasion, and Jerome Cahuzac, the former budget minister, who was sentenced for tax fraud and money laundering. However, the fact that most of these cases involve conservative politicians tends to fuel the social media narrative of all this being pure political manipulation.

This is why there has also been a strong reaction from conservative political leaders across Europe and the US. Hungary's Viktor Orban posted on X, "Je suis Marine," while Italian Deputy Prime Minister

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Matteo Salvini framed Le Pen's sentence as a declaration of war by the EU.

Dutch Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders criticized the "incredibly tough verdict." In the US, President Donald Trump described it as "a very big deal" and Donald Trump Jr. asked, "are they just trying to prove J.D. Vance was right about everything," referring to the US vice president's views on an authoritarian left-wing drift in Europe. Elon Musk stated on X that this would "backfire" and US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce stated that the "exclusion of people from the political process is particularly concerning."

It is undeniable that these legal events and the subsequent reactions are contributing to the erosion of institutions in France and Europe. And in these times of global geopolitical tensions — especially as the risks of a broadening war from Ukraine rise — they could lead to a breach of the stability and safety of the continent.

As everyone is in wait-and-see mode, one remembers that large protests are not the forte of conservative movements and are usually more impactful when organized by the left. Yet, as a French friend of mine sometimes prepares what is called a "salade fourre-tout," made with whatever ingredients are available in the kitchen and that is usually delicious, these protests might become a "fourre-tout" for all current grievances that will be sour and explosive.

— Arab News

Two years of war in Sudan: A humanitarian disaster that needs global attention

In conclusion, two years of war have left Sudan in ruins. Millions have been displaced, thousands have been killed, and an entire nation has been pushed to the brink of collapse. The suffering of the Sudanese people cannot be ignored any longer. The international community must step up, not just with words but with concrete actions. A ceasefire must be reached, humanitarian aid must flow, and diplomatic efforts must be intensified to end this brutal conflict. Sudan cannot afford another year of war. It is time for world leaders, aid organizations, and regional powers to prioritize peace and human dignity for the people of Sudan.

This pace of technological change is another thing that rattles our brains.

And ultimately it's precisely because the world is so full of such uncertainty that we looked to Ghibli — to briefly let us inhabit a simpler, more comforting one.



SCCI hails govt for massive reduction in power tariff

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fazal Moqem Khan hailed the government over massive reduction in power tariff and stated that the move will give a boost to industries and generate employment opportunities for many people across the country.

He has given credit to Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and SCCI for the huge cut in power tariff by the government.

In his prompt reaction after announcement by Prime Minister Mian

Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif during a ceremony about reduction of 7.59 per unit for industrial and 7.41 per unit for domestic consumers in power tariff, Fazal Moqem on Thursday said SCCI, since long, demanding that low-cost supply of energy to industries was essential, and with this regard, we have struggled, now eventually, we got success.

The SCCI chief went on to say that the government decision will bring improvement and swiftness of industrial growth generally in the country and particularly in the terrorism-affected and most back-

ward Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. He added the country' economy, industries and trade will fly high.

Moqem reminded that SCCI had initiated constant struggle against wrong contracts with IPPs from 2023 to onward, as a result of that today, the government has announced cancellation of contracts and renegotiation with IPPs, which is a major achievement for the business community.

Furthermore, he termed contracts with IPPs are venomous for the country economy, because IPPs are getting billions of rupees without any production which is sheer unjust with

people and business community of this country and also huge burden of national kitty and demanded complete abolishment of contracts with all IPPs.

The chamber president welcomed the elimination of Rs800billion subsidy, which is massive burden on the economy.

Similarly, he lauded government actions over increasing line losses, thefts, faults of transmission lines of power distribution companies (DISCOs), and notice of billions of rupees payment to GENCOs and stated the business community highly appreciated it.



SIALKOT: A vendor selling umbrellas at his road side setup.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships, Maersk Cairo, CMA CGM Cendrillon and Spruce-2 carrying Container and Gas oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal and FOTCO oil Terminal respectively Wednesday. Meanwhile four more ships, Kastos, Titan Unikum, Al-Kheesah and Yasa Neptune scheduled to load/offload Fuel oil, Chemicals, LNG and Coal are also arrived at outer anchorage on during last 24 hours.

A total of five ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, CMA CGM Cendrillon, Maersk Cairo and Asia Liberty were expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 111,256 tonnes, comprising 81,370 tonnes imports cargo and 29,886 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,688 Containers (1,930 TEUs Imports 1,758 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 11 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Watasumi, Sinar Malahayati, Titan Unikum, Al-Kheesah and Yasa Neptune & two more ships, Wan Hai-501 and Torrente carrying Chick Peas, Palm oil, Chemicals, LNG, Coal and Container are expected to take berths at MW-1, LCT, EVT/L, PGPC/L, PIBT and QICT were respectively on Thursday, while another containers ship 'MSC Roberta-V' due to expected arrive at outer anchorage on Friday.

SBP injects over Rs2t in market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Thursday, injected Rs 2,016.15 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase Open Market Operations (OMO).

The SBP conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 4-day tenor on April 03, 2025 and accepted a total Rs 2,016.15 billion at 12.09 percent rate of return.

The central bank received 13 bids for the 4-day tenor cumulatively offering Rs 2,016.15 billion at the rate of return ranging between 12.09 to 12.17 percent.

The SBP accepted all the 13 quotes with the entire amount at the lowest rate offered.

MCCI hails reduction in power prices

MULTAN (APP): Multan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) termed incumbent government's decision to reduce electricity tariffs for industries by Rs7.59 per unit, a good omen for national economy.

Multan Chamber of Commerce & Industry President Mian Bakhtawar Tanveer Sheikh praised the initiative, stating that lower electricity costs will ease the financial burden on industrialists, enhance business activities, and boost exports.

He emphasized that reducing production costs will make Pakistani goods more competitive in international markets, ultimately strengthening the national economy.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 1,131 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,131.36 points, a nominal positive change of 0.96 percent, closing at 118,938.11 points as compared to 117,806.75 points on the last trading day.

A total of 422,702,593 shares were traded during the day as compared to 329,990,527 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 28.211 billion against Rs 19.775 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 452 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 247 of them recorded gains and 154 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 51 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Sui South Gas with 53,236,136 shares at Rs 39.71 per share, Cnergycio PK with 20,023,874 shares at Rs8.17 per share and Pak Elektron 15,764,924 shares at Rs 46.41 per share.

Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 81.16 per share closing at Rs

892.71 whereas runner-up was Siemens (Pakistan) Engineering with Rs 69.32 rise in its share price to close at Rs 1,583.82.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 81.06 per share price, closing at Rs 22,920.05, whereas the runner-up was Services Industries Limited with Rs 51.44 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,197.56.

Rupee sheds 40 paisa against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 40 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 280.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs 280.16.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 280.40 and Rs 281.90, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs5.62 to close at Rs 307.94 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.42, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen went up by 04 paisa and closed at Rs 1.90, whereas an increase of Rs 5.68 was witnessed in the exchange

rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 368.64 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 362.96.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal also increased by 11 and 09 piasa to close at Rs 76.38 and Rs 74.78 respectively.

Gold prices up by Rs500 to Rs325,500 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed increased by Rs500 and was traded at Rs. 325,500 on Thursday against its sale at Rs. 325,000 the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs428 to Rs.279,063 from Rs.278,635 whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs.393 to Rs.255,817 from Rs.255,424.

The prices of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs3,580 and Rs.3,069, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$ 5 to \$3,089 from 3,084 whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$34.10, association reported.

Low power price to cut industrial input cost: Malik

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chambers of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik has said that low electricity tariffs will reduce the overall cost of production for industries, making Pakistani products more competitive in global markets.

Talking to the media here on Thursday, he said high energy costs had long been a burden on manufacturers, limiting their ability to expand and compete internationally.

With reduced tariffs, industries can enhance productivity, attract investment, and generate employment, ultimately boosting economic growth.

He said, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to reduce electricity tariffs is a significant step towards economic relief for both industrial and general public.

Hailing the government decision, he said, this move can contribute to economic stability by increasing consumer purchasing power and reducing financial stress across all sectors. It may also help control inflation, as energy costs directly impact the prices of goods and services.

Malik said in the long run, the reduction in elec-

tricity tariffs could prove to be a game-changer, fostering industrial growth and providing much-needed respite to the people of Pakistan, he added.

Former SAARC-CCI president said that for domestic consumers, this decision brings much-needed relief, especially amid inflationary pressures that have strained household budgets. Many families struggle to afford basic necessities due to high utility bills. Lower electricity tariffs will ease this burden, allowing consumers to allocate their earnings to other essential expenses.

Karachi traders hail PM's relief package

KARACHI (APP): The representative bodies of the trade and business community of Karachi, Thursday, highly appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his timely and impactful "historic intervention" to provide substantial power tariff relief to domestic and industrial consumers.

The PM Shehbaz Sharif has announced a per unit reduction of Rs7.59 for industrial consumers and Rs7.41 for domestic consumers and the leadership of Businessmen Group (BMG) and Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) termed it as a much needed critical move to alleviate the financial pressure on both citizens and businesses.

Chairman BMG Zubair Motiwala, President KCCI Jawed Bilwani, and Tahir Khaliq, Anjum Nisar, Mian Abrar Ahmed, Zia ul Arfeen and other leaders, in a joint statement, recognized the Prime Minister's initiative as a "historic intervention," a bold step towards providing much-needed relief to millions of households and thousands of businesses across the

country.

They noted that the tariff reduction would have far-reaching positive effects, not only easing the financial burden on consumers but also revitalizing the industrial sector, fostering economic growth, enhancing exports, and ultimately contributing to a more competitive business environment in Pakistan.

While commending the Task force on Energy Sector constituted by the Prime Minister, they particularly appreciated the efforts made by Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaish Ahmed Khan Leghari and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Power Muhammad Ali that resulted in providing a huge relief to the entire nation.

Chairman BMG Zubair Motiwala remarked, "We wholeheartedly commend Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for this landmark decision. Reducing electricity tariffs is not just a welcome relief for millions of domestic consumers and businesses, but it is also an essential catalyst for spurring the growth of local

industries."

Highlighting the benefits of reduced tariff for manufacturing and exports, which are key drivers of Pakistan's economy, Motiwala added that Karachi's industrial sector has long been weighed down by soaring electricity prices.

He praised the government for taking decisive action in addressing the challenges faced by the private sector, acknowledging their concerns, and responding with a practical and effective solution that will help rejuvenate industrial activity and fuel economic progress.

President KCCI Jawed Bilwani also welcomed the electricity tariff reduction, stressing the importance of continued government efforts to ensure that this relief is sustained over time.

"This announcement is a step in the right direction," Bilwani stated, adding that the decision marks a turning point in the government's efforts to support businesses and ease the financial burden on consumers.

Pakistan Pavilion for Expo 2025 Osaka officially unveiled

F.P. Report

KOBE: The Pakistan Pavilion for Expo 2025 Osaka officially unveiled at a soft launch event in Kobe, attended by 120 guests, including dignitaries, cultural enthusiasts, members of the Pakistani diaspora in Japan, academia, and media representatives.

The event provided a first glimpse into the pavilion's design, theme, and vision, highlighting its role in promoting cultural diplomacy and showcasing Pakistan's heritage on the global stage. As the countdown to Expo 2025 begins, Pakistan looks forward to welcoming the world to experience "Universe in a

Grain of Salt."

Raza Bashir Tarar, Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan, expressed his appreciation to the attendees and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to global collaboration. He spoke about the pavilion's potential to bring people together and create lasting cultural and economic partnerships. The Ambassador also encouraged the Pakistani diaspora in Japan to actively support the pavilion's promotion, making it a symbol of national pride and international engagement.

Mr. Muhammad Naseer, Project Director stated "This pavilion belongs to all of you. Your stories, contributions, and connec-

tion to Pakistan are part of this journey. Over the next months, this space will be a place of discovery, dialogue, and celebration, where we invite the world to experience Pakistan's culture, innovation, and aspirations."

Ms. Noorjehan Bilgrami, Principal Curator, briefed the attendees on the design concept and theme 'Universe in a Grain of Salt.' Inspired by Pakistan's Khewra Salt Mines, the pavilion's design features a "salt garden" that offers visitors an immersive and tranquil sensory experience.

Closing the event on a high note, the band 'Alif' captivated the audience with Pakistani cultural

songs and milli nagmas, celebrating the nation's rich musical heritage. The gathering underscored the crucial role of community involvement, inspiring Pakistanis in Japan to take pride in and actively promote the pavilion.

More than just an exhibition, the Pakistan Pavilion serves as a platform for deeper cultural exchange, stronger friendships, and new business collaborations between Pakistan and Japan. With its seamless fusion of tradition and modernity, the pavilion is set to attract global attention, reaffirming Pakistan's legacy of heritage, innovation, and connectivity on the world stage.

Team encountered a pocket of underground gas while drilling

F.P. Report

KARACHI: During a preliminary site investigation at development near Korangi Creek, team encountered a pocket of underground gas while drilling a test well for water exploration. Initial technical evaluations as well as independent views expressed by industry experts indicate that the gas may be shallow biogenic methane, a naturally occurring gas resulting from organic material

decomposition. Since this area is not part of a known natural gas reservoir, and based on similar occurrences elsewhere, this gas pocket is expected to dissipate naturally over time provided the flame is allowed to burn.

The recent test was part of a series of extensive studies conducted over the past two years to reinforce our commitment to responsible and well-planned development. These assessments - carried out in col-

laboration with leading national and international consultancy firms - include geotechnical studies, soil composition and contamination tests, Electrical Resistivity (ER) surveys, a comprehensive Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and other baseline studies. All field investigations, including the recent hydrological study was conducted with the necessary approvals from relevant authorities and in full compliance with

regulatory standards.

We remain committed to maintaining highest standards of transparency, safety, health, and sustainability in all our projects and will continue to provide regular updates as our assessments progress on this matter. We appreciate the support and patience we have received from the local community, the regulatory authorities, and other key stakeholders as we manage this unexpected yet potentially beneficial discovery.

Regional exports increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries increased by 6.64 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) compared to the corresponding months of last year.

The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$3.101 billion, which is 14.21 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$21.820 billion during July-February (2024-25), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Pakistan carried out its border trade with farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives.

Pakistan's exports to China witnessed a decrease of 10.54 per cent from \$1895.959 million last year to \$1695.941 million this year whereas exports to Afghanistan surged to \$592.840 million from \$321.754 million.

The country's exports to Bangladesh also increased by 26.48 per cent to \$525.133 million this year from \$415.167 million whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 4.63 per cent to \$279.295 million from \$266.930 million.

The exports to Nepal decreased to \$1.693 million from \$2.160 million in the previous year.

Pakistan exports to Maldives increased by 2.15% to \$6.127 million from \$5.998 million while exports to India increased to \$0.404 million from \$0.230 million, it added.

Stocks and dollar sink, havens rally

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Equity markets tumbled Thursday after Donald Trump delivered a "haymaker" blow with sweeping tariffs against US partners and rivals, fanning a global trade war that many fear will spark recessions and ramp up inflation.

Tokyo's Nikkei briefly collapsed more than four percent, while US futures plunged with oil prices, safe haven gold hit a record high and the dollar retreated amid worries retaliatory measures will batter economies.

The panic came after the US president unveiled a blitz of harsher-than-expected levies aimed at countries he said had been "ripping off" the United States for years.

Against a backdrop of US flags, Trump said that "for decades, our country has been looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike".

The measures included a 34 percent tariff on rival China, 20 percent on key ally the European Union and 24 percent on Japan.

A number of others will face specifically tailored tariff levels, and for the rest, Trump said he would impose a "baseline" tariff of 10 percent. Auto tariffs of 25 percent meanwhile kicked in Thursday.

Investors are bracing for retaliatory measures, with governments making their anger clear. China vowed "countermeasures" and urged Washington to cancel the tariffs, while calling for dialogue.

Japan said the move was "extremely regrettable" and could contravene World Trade Organization rules, while Taiwan described the levies as "highly unreasonable".

European Union chief

Ursula von der Leyen called Trump's announcement a "major blow to the world economy" but vowed the bloc was "prepared to respond".

And France said Brussels was "ready for a trade war" and plans to target online services in response.

Thailand said it had a "strong plan" to handle the new US measures and hopes to negotiate a reduction, while Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney warned "we are going to fight these tariffs with counter measures".

"We are going to protect our workers," Carney said.

Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said: "President Trump walked into the Rose Garden and detonated the most aggressive trade shock the market's seen in decades. This isn't a jab -- it's a full-on haymaker."

Wall Street "had talked itself into a softer, more symbolic move. Instead, Trump carpet-bombed the global supply chain."

"This was a 'shock and awe' tariffs campaign, dressed up in 'reciprocity' language but designed to throttle the trade deficit through brute force."

He said the measures meant inflation risks had surged and economic growth expectations would be cut, with the Federal Reserve "pinned between a hawkish rock and a deflationary hard place".

Tokyo pared its hefty drop but still ended down 2.8 percent, while Hong Kong, Sydney, Seoul, Manila, Mumbai, Shanghai and Singapore also fell. However, Wellington managed to eke out a small gain as New Zealand faced smaller tariffs.

London, Paris and Frankfurt all tumbled more

than one percent, while Vietnam's stock exchange dived 7.8 percent after the country was hit with levies of almost 50 percent.

Wall Street futures were also battered, with the Dow dropping two percent, the Nasdaq plunging more than three percent and the S&P 500 off 2.8 percent off.

Safe havens rallied as traders sought to dump risk assets.

Gold hit a new peak of \$3,167.84 and the Japanese yen strengthened to 147.04 per dollar from 150.50 the day before.

Among other currencies, the euro and pound both jumped more than one percent against the dollar on fears about the US economy and bets that the Fed will have to cut interest rates to deal with the impact on growth.

US Treasury yields hit five-month lows -- yields and prices go in opposite directions. Oil also suffered big losses, with both main contracts down at least three percent on fears that the shock to economies would hit demand.

Among the big corporate losers, Japanese tech giant Sony shed 4.8 percent, while its South Korean rival Samsung was down 2 percent.

Car titan Toyota was off more than five percent, Nissan lost 3.7 percent and Honda was down 2.3 percent. Tokyo-listed tech investment firm SoftBank was off close to four percent.

Hong Kong-listed e-commerce giants fell after the removal of a duty-free exemption for small parcels from China. Alibaba and JD.com shed 5.0 and 5.2 percent respectively. Tai Hui of JP Morgan Asset Management said the scale of the measures raised concerns about growth.



Liverpool extends lead with win against Everton

LONDON (BBC): Liverpool claimed bragging rights on Merseyside with victory over rivals Everton and edged closer to lifting the Premier League title.

Arne Slot's men require only 13 points from a possible 24 available to guarantee a deserved and record-equalling 20th top-flight triumph.

The Red were being frustrated by Everton's backline sitting deep, but claimed the three points courtesy of a moment of magic from Diogo Jota.

The Portugal forward was on the periphery of the game but collected Luis Diaz's cute backheel before showcasing dancing feet by jinking past challenges and slotting home.

Replays showed Diaz had been standing in an offside position earlier in the build-up to the goal, but he was deemed not to be interfering with play and it was allowed to stand.

Before the deadlock was broken, there was another moment of controversy with Everton defender James Tarkowski incredibly fortunate to stay on the pitch.

Tarkowski received only a yellow card early on

when he won the ball with a sliding challenge but caught Alexis Mac Allister on the knee with his studs with the follow-through.

The video assistant referee (VAR) decided not to upgrade the tackle to a red card and Dominik Szoboszlai curled the resulting free-kick narrowly wide, while the in-form Mohamed Salah headed straight at Jordan Pickford at the back post.

Beto had the Liverpool backline rattled and saw a goal ruled out for offside after outmuscling Virgil van Dijk.

The striker got the better of the Reds captain again, but this time could only hit the post when one-on-one with Caoimhin Kelleher.

Liverpool and their supporters looked to up the ante in the second period and Ryan Gravenberch's stinging drive from range was pushed away by Pickford, but Jota's 56th-minute strike made the difference.

Red smoke billowed from the Kop End and chants of "we're gonna win the league" echoed around from the home supporters at full-time knowing a second Premier League title is

within grasp after moving 12 points clear at the top with eight games to play.

Slot has seamlessly taken over the Anfield hot-seat from the much-vaunted Jurgen Klopp and the Dutchman's side have lost just once in the league.

Liverpool have impressed both in attack and defence - not only have they scored more goals than any other team with 70, they have also managed to keep a joint-high 13 clean sheets this term.

The Reds were left convalescing during the international break after being knocked out of the Champions League by Paris St-Germain then losing the Carabao Cup final to a hungry Newcastle side. The ball didn't quite seem to fall their way for much of Wednesday night, with Everton defenders diving in to make crucial blocks, but Liverpool showed why they are champions elect following Jota's twinkling of inspiration.

His delightful goal came at the right time as it was just his sixth in the league this term and ended a barren run of 10 games without scoring.

With Manchester City dropping away this season and Arsenal failing to mount a serious challenge, the title is in sight for Liverpool and the earliest they can put red ribbons on the trophy is 20 April at Leicester, if results were to go their way.

Defeat for Everton on Wednesday evening ended Everton's nine-game unbeaten run and extended manager David Moyes' misery at the venue.

The veteran Scot will be sick at the sight of the stadium having now gone 22 matches, including 20 in the Premier League, without winning here.

It could have been a very different story had Beto converted the gilt-edged opportunity that fell to him in the first half, doing well to sneak ahead of Van Dijk but then being unable to finish.

The major point of contention came in the 11th minute when centre-back Tarkowski somehow managed to escape a red card for a wild lunge on Mac Allister.

The referee gave only a caution and VAR agreed, but ultimately it did not make a difference on the result.



PLUMPTON, ENGLAND: Odds on favourite Blacksamssenorita and jockey Brendan Powell clear the last on the first circuit on their way to 2nd place in the HotToTrotRacing Supports Jamie's Farm Mares' Novices' Hurdle at Plumpton Racecourse on Thursday.

Wimbledon's iconic Hill set for makeover ahead of 2027 C'hips

LONDON (Reuters): One of the most atmospheric locations at Wimbledon is set for a makeover with the All England Club announcing plans on Thursday for redevelopment works to the grassy hillock outside Court One known among other nicknames as Henman Hill and Murray Mound.

Often the preferred loca-

tion in the past for fans without showcourt tickets to catch British greats Tim Henman and Andy Murray on big video screens, the Hill will be transformed after the 2026 Championships.

The project, which promises far greater accessible viewing opportunities and better wheelchair access to various tiers, is

expected to be completed in time for the 2027 edition, which is the 150th anniversary of the first Championships.

Plans also include more seating through a number of new low retaining walls, which will improve visibility of the big screen by reducing the slope of the existing tiers.

"The redevelopment of

our world-famous Hill ... will allow even more tennis fans to enjoy its unique atmosphere and vantage point," All England Club chair Deborah Jevans said. "I am particularly pleased that these plans will increase the accessibility of The Hill for our guests using wheelchairs or who have additional accessibility requirements.

Olmo and Victor allowed to play for Barca until end of season

BARCELONA (Reuters): Spain's National Sports Council (CSD) on Thursday upheld an appeal filed by Barcelona players Dani Olmo and Pau Victor which will allow them to play for the club until the end of the season.

LaLiga had lowered Barcelona's wage cap on Wednesday after it said the club's recently revised accounts do not match the end-of-year figures from its previous auditor.

The previous accounts included proceeds from the

sale of VIP seats in the renovated Camp Nou which allowed Barca to comply with LaLiga's Financial Fair Play rules and extend the registration of Olmo and Victor. LaLiga said Barca did not have the capacity to register the two players based on their accounts, but the CSD annulled the agreement between the Spanish top flight and the country's football federation (RFEF).

The CSD said the two players' registrations remain valid as the RFEF

acknowledged that "there is no federation resolution that agreed to the cancellation of the licences" and their decision not to grant a licence is "null and void".

"In any case, the professional careers of Dani Olmo and Pau Victor have been protected since January 8 by the urgent precautionary measure granted by the CSD, with the sole aim of avoiding irreparable harm until this procedure is resolved," it said.

"In short, for reasons of incompetence, for not hav-

ing followed the appropriate procedures established in the regulations, and for not being the body authorised to make decisions, the agreement of the Monitoring Committee of the RFEF-LaLiga Coordination Agreement must be considered null and void, and all effects derived from it invalidated."

In January, the CSD had allowed Barcelona to provisionally register the pair, four days after Spanish football authorities rejected their requests.

Mourinho grabs Galatasaray boss's nose in post-match clash

ISTANBUL (BBC): Galatasaray have accused Fenerbahce boss Jose Mourinho of "physically attacking" their manager Okan Buruk after he appeared to grab his nose following a fiery derby in the Turkish Cup.

The incident occurred after the final whistle at Sukru Saracoglu Stadium, when both managers were interacting with the match officials in the centre circle.

Mourinho approached Buruk from behind and appeared to pinch his nose, causing the Galatasaray manager to fall to the floor with his hands covering his face.

"Our manager Okan and

Mourinho congratulated the referees. After that, while Okan was continuing, Mourinho first verbally and then physically attacked him," Galatasaray's vice-president Metin Ozturk said.

"Where else in the world can he do this? What does he think of Turkey?"

"I believe that Fenerbahce's management will impose the necessary sanction before the federation does."

Galatasaray won the Turkish Cup quarter-final tie 2-1 with Victor Osimhen scoring twice for the visitors. BBC Sport has contacted Fenerbahce for a response.

Buruk, who enjoyed two

spells at Galatasaray as a player before returning as manager in 2022, played down the incident at his post-match news conference.

"There was nothing between me and Mourinho," Buruk said. "He pinched my nose from behind. There was a slight scratch. Of course, it wasn't a very nice or elegant thing to do."

"We expect managers to behave more appropriately in such situations. I won't exaggerate this issue, but it wasn't a classy move."

Fenerbahce substitute Mert Yandas and Galatasaray substitutes Kerem Demirbay and Baris Yilmaz were shown red

cards for their part in a melee between the two benches during stoppage time.

Following a goalless draw between the two clubs in the Turkish Super Lig in February, Galatasaray said they would "initiate criminal proceedings" against Mourinho after claiming he made "racist statements".

The Turkish Football Federation also handed Mourinho a four-game ban and a fine of £35,194 for two separate disciplinary matters. Mourinho responded by launching a lawsuit against Galatasaray "due to the attack on the personal rights" of the Portuguese.

Hamilton has '100% faith' in Ferrari after disqualification

SUZUKA, Japan (Reuters): Lewis Hamilton has expressed his total confidence in Ferrari after the Italian Formula One team's double disqualification in China.

The cars of seven times world champion Hamilton and teammate Charles Leclerc failed post-race technical checks at the second round of the season in Shanghai after they finished sixth and fifth respectively.

"I saw someone said something about whether I'm losing faith in the team, which is complete rubbish," Hamilton, winner of the Shanghai Saturday sprint race, told reporters on Thursday ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix.

"I have absolute 100%

faith in this team," added the 40-year-old Briton, who joined in January from Mercedes.

"There was obviously a huge amount of hype at the beginning of the year. I don't know if everyone was expecting us to be winning from race one and winning the championship in our first year. "That wasn't my expectation. I know that I'm coming into a new culture, a new team and it's going to take time."

Leclerc was disqualified after his car was found to be 1kg below the 800kg minimum weight while Hamilton's had excessive skid wear.

Ferrari team boss Fred Vasseur suggested a leaking water bottle could have

accounted for some of Leclerc's problem, which had initially been attributed to excessive tyre wear from a one-stop strategy.

"The tyres are only part of the explanation. We also lost a litre of water with Charles's drink (bottle) leaking. The loss of weight is always an addition of many small factors," he told L'Equipe. The Frenchman



NBA investigating Ja Morant over finger gun gesture

NEW YORK (Reuters): The NBA is investigating a gesture made by Memphis Grizzlies star guard Ja Morant that could be construed as mimicking shooting a gun, ESPN reported on Wednesday.

Morant extended his left arm and was seen using the finger gun gesture to taunt the members of the Golden State Warriors during Tuesday's game.

Golden State's Jimmy Butler sank a free throw to boost his team's lead to 132-125 with 20 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter.

After Memphis called a timeout, Morant made the gesture as the players on the court were walking to their respective benches. Warriors forward Draymond Green appeared to approach an official

after Morant made the gesture.

Golden State's Buddy Hield made a similar gesture from the bench prior to Butler's free-throw attempt. Hield and Morant were both whistled for technical fouls. The Warriors won the game 134-125.

Morant, 25, has been suspended on two occasions by the league for

showing a handgun on social media.

The two-time All-Star was banned eight games without pay in March 2023 for brandishing a firearm in an Instagram Live video. A video of Morant posing with a firearm surfaced online, leading to the NBA conducting an investigation which resulted in a 25-game suspension to start the 2023-24 season.

Farhan Ahmed: Playing for England with my brother is the end-goal

L O N D O N (ESPNcricinfo): It comes as no surprise to hear that Farhan Ahmed's favourite bowler is Nathan Lyon.

The offspinner grew up watching videos of Lyon on YouTube, and spent this winter consuming as much as he could live, particularly during the five Tests of the Border Gavaskar Trophy. Ahmed, like the Australian, is a twirler who is tall in his action, coming over the top of the ball to impart more overspin than your traditional "door-knob" offie.

Modelling yourself on a bowler who has 553 Test wickets can only be a good thing. But Farhan aimed to go one better last season by trying to meet the man himself. With Lyon playing in Lancashire's County Championship campaign through to July, the 17-year old spotted that his club Nottinghamshire would come up against him twice.

Through restrictions imposed by Cricket Australia, Lyon sat out the first meeting at Trent Bridge, but that meant he would definitely play in

the return fixture. Farhan circled that as the chance to finally meet his idol. Alas, life got in the way in the form of a Mathematics exam. "I was going to, and then I had a GCSE exam that week," Ahmed recalls, still a little disappointed. "Notts played Lancashire in Southport and that was his last game. He didn't play at Trent Bridge. I didn't get to catch up with him."

"I've watched Nathan Lyon bowl so much and he's the offspinner that I always look up to. I see how threatening he is from around the wicket on a first day of a Champo game when it's not spinning. You're always looking at how to get the guy out and I worked on it quite a bit last year: changing the angle up and it's helped me so much already."

He ended up getting a 6 in Maths - a B in old money - and further studies will get in the way of his 2025 plans on a cricket field. But as you can tell by how he talks about the game, and the 25 wickets he took at 23.92 in his opening five first-class

appearances last year, time in the classroom won't stymie the progress of one of the most exciting youngsters in English cricket. Farhan's name has been doing the rounds for a while, around the same time the precociousness of his brother, Rehan (three years older) was talked up ahead of a surprise Test debut at the end of 2022. That Farhan is an orthodox fingerspinner and Rehan a legspinner is no accident, by the way.

"Dad said: 'Rehan's going to be a leggie so you're going to be the offie, that's how you're going to play in the same team in the future - you can't be two leggies and one misses out. I want you all to play together in the same team'."

Farhan beams when talking about Rehan, who now has 11 England caps across all formats. "I've always said that he's a role model. We live together and we eat together and everything. He's already a role model that I'll always look up to."

Two years after Rehan became the youngest man

to play Test cricket for England against Pakistan (where their father, Naheem, was born), and then the youngest to take a five-wicket haul on debut, in the second innings at Karachi, Farhan emulated big bro with his own pair of red-ball records.

In his maiden County Championship appearance last August against eventual champions Surrey, Farhan's 7 for 140 in the first innings put him in the books as the youngest to take five or more in a first-class match in Britain. With three more wickets in the second, he dislodged WG Grace after 159 years as the youngest to take 10 or more in a first-class match on these shores.

"Last summer was a very important summer for me, I felt," he says. "I thought it was very good and I was very grateful to break into the team. Especially in the Champo, I didn't expect that."

"I thought I was going to be involved in the Metro stuff (One-Day Cup) and trying to get involved in that was basically the main aim for last year."

"I don't like to look too far ahead, I try to live in the moment. [This season] For me, it's trying to play as many Champo games as I can, hopefully perform well and see where that takes me."

The winter was spent honing his craft with the England U19s in South Africa. Further success included 11 dismissals across the two Youth Tests and four more in the 50-over leg in which he was the team's most misery bowler, with an economy rate of 3.59. As well as working on his batting - he has the capacity to be a handy lower-order batter - he had the opportunity to work with another hero, Graeme Swann. Mentality formed a key part of their discussions.

"Swanny's been very good. He's always helped me in whichever way. The main thing with Swanny is he's in the wicket-taking mindset. "It's not like if he gets hit for a six, he'd go defensive. It's always coming back. I've worked with Swanny more tactically, the different fields and

stuff like that."

What sets Farhan apart from his peers - and spinners - a few generations above - is his unerring accuracy. Developmentally, he is ahead of the curve. But he has stock deliveries to fine-tune and, taking inspiration from Saqlain Mushtaq - perhaps the first exponent of the "doosra", which turns away from off stump - tricks to hone. "I'd say at the moment I'm consistent with bowling different balls," he says. "I think, over time, it's just about working out what sort of pitch I need to bowl what kind of spin. I reckon that will come over time and with experience, hopefully. "I've got one coming," he says of a doosra-like variation. "It's been on display in the 19s, it's just about bringing it over to the Champo. I reckon it will take three or four months and hopefully it will come out. It's just the pace and the consistency of it."

Farhan carries a refreshingly practical outlook for what lies ahead this summer. At 17, he would be

forgiven for wanting it all right now. But he appreciates Liam Patterson-White and Calvin Harrison have their own claims to the No.1 spinner spot at Nottinghamshire. Nevertheless, he has formulated early-season plans, even at his home ground, which is hardly spin-friendly.

"Let's talk about the start of April: I reckon you get more natural variation and once you have the shape on it and the overspin. I don't know if it's going to spin, so the batter will have no clue himself how much it's going to turn," he says. "If it goes straight then he's already in two minds. In the early season, there's not much going for you with the weather conditions. Any advantage you get, like bounce, can help quite a bit. "It's always something as a professional cricketer you have to adapt to. You shouldn't just think spinners can't play at Trent Bridge because they always can, and they can always perform here as well. Especially on a green wicket, where they say the

seamers get the wickets... but the spinner comes on. If it's going to turn or not, the batsman's already in two minds."

Having started his first-class and List A careers in 2024, Farhan is angling for a chance to make his T20 bow with Notts Outlaws. Wherever they come, he just wants more first-team cricket on merit.

His long-term aims are just as clear. And it is not just playing for England but realising his dad's dream of representing his country alongside Rehan. Such is his ambition, he throws eldest brother, Raheem, into the mix - a 21-year-old batter currently unattached, who will trial for Notts and other counties this summer in search of a professional contract.

"It's definitely the pinnacle and the end-goal," Farhan says of a potential family affair at international level. "Hopefully that comes and we keep doing it for a while. Plus, there's my older brother Raheem to come and do that as well. All three of us - we dream!"



In brief

Three held for injuring a man

RAWALPINDI (APP): Three men were arrested for injuring a youngster by firing on the second day of Eid. According to a Police spokesman, the accused, Osama, Sharjeel and Wasif, had opened fire on a young man who was allegedly involved in hooting at their family. Bani Police registered a case on the information of the incident and arrested the accused.

Death anniversary

RAWALPINDI (APP): All arrangements have been completed to observe the 46th death anniversary of former Prime Minister and founder of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, at Jinnah Park (Old jail) on April 04. President Pakistan People's Party (PPP) city chapter Kamran Hussain Raja told APP that Quran Khawani will be held at 3 PM, and 'Dua' will be offered at 4 pm. The local leadership will attend the ceremony and highlight the achievements of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who struggled for democracy in the country and sacrificed his life for the people of Pakistan. Later, Bhutto Lungar will also be distributed on the occasion.

75,000 vehicles enter Murree

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police managed the influx of more than 75,000 vehicles entering Murree through Islamabad during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. An Islamabad Traffic Police spokesperson told APP that approximately 2.5 million vehicles entered Islamabad during the holidays, with an average of 850,000 motorcycles and cars heading towards various recreational spots. CTO Zeeshan stated that Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) ensured smooth traffic flow and provided comprehensive travel facilities to tourists. CTO Zeeshan added that more than 500 traffic officers were deployed to facilitate citizens and maintain order on the roads. CTO Zeeshan emphasized that due to strict traffic management, no untoward incidents were reported in the federal capital. "Islamabad Traffic Police remains dedicated to serving citizens and ensuring a hassle-free travel experience," he said.

57,300 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 57,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 68,900 cusecs. According to the data released by Indus River System Authority (IRSA), the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1411.03 feet which was 9.03 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 19,300 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1085.00 feet, which was 35.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 22,300 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 32,100, 30,300, 16,600 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Best medical facilities to be ensured: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday said that quality medicines and treatment facilities will be delivered to the doorsteps of the people with modern technology. Talking to media during visit to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), the minister said that negligence will not be tolerated in the health sector as it is not possible to rectify mistakes in this area.

He said that work is being done on the ongoing projects at PIMS at a fast pace. "We have always fulfilled our responsibilities like a challenge and medicines and treatment facilities

will be provided to the people at their doorsteps."

He said that there is a need to pay full attention to the health sector and assured that positive changes will be seen in this sector in the coming days.

He said that innovation and positive reforms will be introduced and basic health centers will be activated in a modern and complete manner.

He said that we have to move towards telemedicine and the government is working to introduce one patient one ID system.

He said that keeping the modern world in mind, people go to big hospitals due to the lack of a primary

health centers. "We will improve facilities at public hospitals and primary health system will be upgraded."

He said that our aim is to provide quality medicines and best doctors to citizens at all public hospitals.

He said that seven operation theaters have been built at a cost of Rs 2.1 billion. He added state-of-the-art facilities will be provided in such modern operation theaters.

He said that the plan to give the health sector on public-private partnership is not under consideration. He added the ministry will work on the health card in the coming days.

IG Rizvi vows foolproof security for PSL matches

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired a key meeting on Thursday to review security arrangements for the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches in Rawalpindi.

A public relations officer told APP that during the meeting, it was decided that foolproof security would be ensured for players at their hotels and during movement. All routes will be thoroughly checked by bomb disposal squads and monitored through security cameras. He said quick response teams will remain on high alert throughout the players' movement, while full-dress rehearsals will be conducted before their arrival.

He said a command and control center will be estab-

lished during the matches, and search and combing operations will be carried out in different areas. Close coordination will be maintained among all law enforcement agencies to ensure seamless security arrangements.

Similarly, a comprehensive security plan will be devised for various VVIP movements during the matches. A traffic management program will also be issued to ensure smooth traffic flow and facilitate the public.

IG Rizvi emphasized that security measures would be made foolproof during the PSL. He added that Safe City smart cars, mobile jammers, and surveillance vehicles would be deployed in the convoy to enhance security and ensure effective monitoring.

A team of police commandos equipped with modern gadgets will perform squad duty along with the convoy, while Islamabad Police, FC, and CTD personnel will be deployed for route security. Aerial surveillance will be conducted using advanced cameras. In collaboration with the Capital Development Authority (CDA), green belts along both sides of the route are being cleared of bushes to enhance visibility.

Islamabad Capital Police will utilize all available resources to ensure the security of both foreign and national players while maintaining law and order throughout the city. The protection of citizens' lives and property remains the top priority of Islamabad Police.

SSP directs enhanced crime control measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad, Muhammad Shoaib Khan, presided over an important meeting on Thursday regarding crime control with officers from Soan Zone, Industrial Area Zone, and the Anti-Robbery and Dacoity Unit.

A spokesperson told APP that the meeting focused on strategies to curb criminal activities in the federal capital. On the occasion, SSP Operations issued strict directives for enhanced vigilance against proclaimed offenders.

SSP Shoaib instructed officers to make patrolling

more effective and purposeful to ensure the arrest of those involved in street crimes, as well as motorcycle and car theft cases.

SSP Shoaib emphasized the need to utilize all available resources to eradicate criminal elements and conduct a crackdown against individuals involved in serious crimes and absconding offenders.

He further ordered targeted operations against land grabbers, drug dealers, and those possessing illegal weapons to ensure strict legal action against them.

SSP Shoaib also stressed that suspects involved in serious crimes must be

brought to justice through solid, evidence-based charge sheets. He directed all SHO's to effectively address public complaints at the police station level and resolve citizens' issues on a priority basis.

Additionally, SSP warned that complaints regarding corruption, misconduct, or inappropriate behavior would be dealt with strictly, as any abuse of authority would not be tolerated.

He reiterated that protecting the lives and property of citizens remains the top priority of Islamabad Police, and any negligence in this regard would not be tolerated.

MQM leader applauds PM for major power tariff cut

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zahid Malik, the Muttahida Quomi Movement (MQM) leader, commended Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif for reducing electricity tariffs, calling it a notable accomplishment of the coalition government.

In a statement, he said the cut of Rs 7.41 per unit for domestic consumers and Rs 7.59 per unit for industrial users has provided substantial relief to the public.

"This substantial relief for both domestic and

industrial consumers marks a turning point in our economic recovery," he stated.

Malik praised the government's successful measures in curbing inflation, which has sharply declined from 38% to just 1.5%, along with a significant reduction in the policy rate from 22% to 12%.

He emphasized that these economic improvements represent a pivotal phase in the country's growth and national development.

Malik noted that

Pakistan's difficult journey, which began on the brink of default, is now achieving key milestones in economic development. He particularly commended Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for their dedicated efforts in steering the nation toward stability and growth.

"The government's success in slashing power tariffs reflects its commitment to public welfare and economic revival," Malik added.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority Muhammad Ali Randhawa presiding over a meeting at CDA Headquarters.

HIU arrest husband for strangling wife

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a swift operation, the Islamabad Capital Police and Homicide Investigation Unit (HIU) arrested a man (husband) accused of strangling his wife with a dupatta and hiding her body inside a trunk at their residence in the Bhara Kahu area on Thursday.

An official told APP that the incident occurred on March 28, 2025, within the jurisdiction of Bhara Kahu Police Station. The suspect, identified as Ikhlq, allegedly killed his wife and concealed her body inside the house.

He said that upon receiving directives from DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq, police teams, including the Homicide Investigation Unit, utilized modern forensic and technical investigation methods to trace and apprehend the accused in a short span of time.

He said that a First Information Report (FIR) was registered at Bhara Kahu Police Station on the complaint of the victim's brother, Muhammad Iqbal. He added that the victim had entered into a love marriage with Ikhlq four months ago, which was her second marriage.

DIG Tariq said that the accused will be presented before the court with solid evidence to ensure strict legal action.

ANF recovers 209 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting seven operations across the country, recovered as many as 209 kg drugs worth more than Rs 87.2 million and arrested three suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that around 167 kilograms of Ice was recovered from spice packets in a shipment being sent to Dubai from the Karachi port.

In another action, 4.6 kg of Ice captivated in five books was recovered from a parcel being sent to Australia from a courier service office in Quetta.

One kg of heroin was recovered from a parcel being sent to the UK at a courier service in Rawalpindi.

As many as 1,887 kg of Ice was recovered from hidden parts in the sewing machine of a passenger's luggage going to Jeddah at Peshawar Airport.

In another operation at a courier office in Rawalpindi 996 grams of Ice were recovered hidden in two computers being sent to Doha.

30 kilograms of hashish were recovered from a passenger's trolley bag near the bus terminal on Multan Road.

Islamabad offices regain momentum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad returned to its routine on Thursday as the Eid holidays drew to a close, with capital employees flocking back to their offices and exchanging warm Eid greetings where normalcy was restored on the city's roads after a brief lull.

According to a report aired by media channels, Capital city's offices sprang back to life on Thursday, with employees returning to their desks and exchanging warm Eid greetings with their colleagues.

The atmosphere was filled with joy and camaraderie as coworkers shared stories of their holiday celebrations, exchanging well-wishes, report added.

With the brief lull of the holidays now over, the city's offices were once again abuzz with activity, marking a seamless transition back to normalcy.

A significant influx of passengers was witnessed at Islamabad's airports and bus terminals as people returned from their hometowns, with authorities

ensuring smooth operations to facilitate the travelers.

The city's markets, which had been closed for the holidays also reopened with shopkeepers busy arranging their merchandise and catering to the needs of customers who were out to catch up on shopping they had put off during the holidays.

"I am feeling refreshed and rejuvenated after spending quality time with my family," said a government employee, as she settled into her office.

"It is good to be back, but I have to admit, I am already missing my hometown," she added.

"I had a wonderful Eid, but I am happy to be back to my routine," added a software engineer.

"There's a lot of work to catch up on, but I am looking forward to tackling new challenges," said a banker in Islamabad.

Although attendance was low on the first day back, with many employees still on their way back to the city, the atmosphere

was lively as colleagues reunited and shared stories of their Eid celebrations, said a female Journalist.

As the day progressed, more employees trickled in and the offices slowly returned to their usual bustle. Despite the initial low attendance, it was clear that the city was gradually getting back to business as usual, said another Journalist male government employee.

Meanwhile, at the city's bus terminals, a rush of passengers was seen, with people eager to return to their daily lives.

"It is been chaotic, but we are managing," said PTDC official at local bus terminal. "We have had a huge influx of passengers, but our staff is working hard to ensure everything runs smoothly," said a bus terminal employee.

"It is good to see the city come alive again," said a local resident. "The Eid holidays were a welcome break, but it is nice to get back to normal," said a traffic warden.

Malaysian HC greets world communities on Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan has extended his greetings to the people of Pakistan, the Malaysian community living in Pakistan and diplomatic community in Islamabad on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, calling the day significant for mutual integration and harmony between communities of the world.

The Malaysian Embassy in Islamabad organized an Eid-ul-Fitr reception in the Malaysian Embassy in Islamabad, in which ambassadors, diplomats from different countries, business community, journalists and people from different walks of life, including the Malaysian community and students in Pakistan, participated and made the event a grand success.

Meanwhile addressing the Eid reception, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan said that such a celebration during Eid-ul-Fitr is part of the Malaysia culture in which the king of Malaysian, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, parliamentarians and common people of Malaysia welcome people to their home and all communities are involved in mutual happiness.

The Malaysian High Commissioner said that Eid-ul-Fitr teaches Muslims to come together and the

Spirit of Community, which aims to promote mutual human solidarity and strong human connections and relationships.

After the thirty-day month of Ramazan, which teaches us to sacrifice and strengthen mutual human relationships, the month of Shawwal begins with festivity in which Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated in Muslim communities including Malaysia, and in which all other communities besides Muslims also participate in the happiness. He said that on the occasion of Eid in Malaysia, ordinary people open their homes to all communities and share all people's happiness.

On the day of Eid, the King, Prime Minister and Cabinet members of Malaysia open their homes

to the general public and on this occasion of joy, different types of food and gifts are offered to each other.

Mohammad Azhar Mazlan said that on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, celebrations are held in open spaces in Malaysia and mutual friends from different communities participate in them without any distinction of religion, color or race and congratulate each other and celebrate.

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr repletion in the Malaysian embassy, ambassadors from different countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand and diplomats from different countries, attended this ceremony and cherished this ceremony of the Malaysian Embassy.

RCCI welcomes reduction in electricity tariffs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has welcomed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to reduce electricity tariffs for domestic and industrial consumers, calling it a much-needed relief for businesses and households.

In a statement issued on Thursday, RCCI President Usman Shaikat commended the initiative, highlighting that the reduction of Rs. 7.41 per unit for domestic consumers and Rs. 7.59 per unit for industries will lower operational costs, promote industrial growth, and boost exports. He emphasized that this measure will restore investor confidence, improve market competitiveness, and help Pakistani exporters meet global challenges.

"The RCCI and the business community had long demanded a reduction in power tariffs to lower the cost of doing business", he said adding that the decision by the prime minister marked a significant step in addressing their concerns.

Food allergy awareness crucial for public health, says expert

ISLAMABAD (APP): A health expert Thursday stressed that food allergies necessitate an immediate attention, emphasizing the critical need for public awareness for timely, cost-effective treatment which are entirely curable if proper precautions are taken.

"Neglecting it can have severe and potentially life-threatening consequences". Food Allergy Expert Dr Anwar ul Haq Roomi talking to a private news channel, explained food allergies can manifest at any

stage of life, from early childhood to adulthood and occur when the immune system mistakenly identifies certain foods as harmful, triggering a defensive response.

He further noted that food allergies can be inherited and alarmingly, adding, approximately 80% of food allergies manifest in children, making them significantly more prone to developing these allergies compared to adults and the elderly.

He emphasized that in South Asian countries,

including Pakistan, there is a growing need for holistic treatment approaches that not only address the physical aspects of food allergies but also provide rehabilitation and support for affected individuals.

Dr Roomi highlighted that common food allergens in Pakistan include gluten, wheat, chicken and nuts which can trigger severe allergic reactions in sensitive individuals.

He assured that the treatment for food allergies is not only effective but also

cost-effective, making it accessible to a wider population in Pakistan.

He emphasized the need for nationwide awareness programs to educate citizens about food allergies and their implications.

Additionally, he stressed the importance of conducting more extensive research on food allergies specific to Pakistan, highlighting the need for a better understanding of the prevalence, causes and consequences of these allergies in the local population.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters taking picture with portrait of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Foursuspects held in Kunar

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Four individuals have been detained in connection with the murder of a young man in eastern Kunar province of Afghanistan. According to a statement from the police headquarters in Kunar province of Afghanistan, the victim was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Manogi district. The police said the four suspects were currently under investigation. The motive behind the murder is yet to be determined.

Three detained in Panjsher

PARAKH (Pajhwok): Three individuals have been arrested on charges of immoral conduct in the capital of central Panjsher province, an official said on Thursday. Police spokesman Haqmal Saad told Pajhwok Afghan News the individuals were arrested while committing "sodomy" in Bazarak city. According to Saad, the suspects have confessed to their crime and have been referred to judicial authorities for further investigation.

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

IEA clarifies annual payout for victims of Afghanistan's 20-year war



KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has clarified reports of an annual payout for families of war victims saying the money is for the families of mostly all victims who died during the war with the United States. Mujahid said the annual payout of 12.5 billion afghanis (AFN) was not only for the families of

deceased Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan fighters but also for the families of deceased security force members from the former government, as well as orphans and widows of civilians killed, and disabled people.

Zabihullah Mujahid said that last year, 12.5 billion afghanis was budgeted and distributed to support these people.

This comes after a number of media outlets published reports over the past two days of an interview with Zabihullah Mujahid. The reports stated that 12 billion afghanis has been allocated annually to the families of the Islamic Emirate's fallen soldiers, who died during the 20-year war.

WFP: Over 9m received life-saving assistance

KABUL (Amu TV): The United Nations World Food Program said on Thursday that more than nine million people in Afghanistan received life-saving assistance in 2024, underscoring the country's continued humanitarian crisis.

In a message posted on X, the agency emphasized that "the people of Afghanistan are at the heart of all our operations."

The statement comes amid growing concern over the program's funding gaps. In an earlier report, the WFP warned it urgently requires \$555 million to maintain its operations in Afghanistan over the next six months.

Without additional funding, the agency said, key services—including emergency food distribution, malnutrition treatment, school feeding, and vocational training programs for women—will be at risk.

According to the United Nations World Food Program estimates, 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women in Afghanistan are currently suffering from malnutrition and require immediate support.

The agency also noted that eight in ten Afghan families cannot afford a nutritionally adequate diet, while three out of every four families rely on borrowing money just to purchase basic food.

In total, one-third of Afghanistan's population—around 15 million people—is now dependent on emergency food assistance for survival.

Afghanistan's humanitarian needs remain dire nearly three years after the return of the Taliban to power in 2021, a shift that led to the collapse of much of the country's international aid and the imposition of widespread restrictions on women and girls.

Farmers await canal water

MAIMANA (Amu TV): In the drought-stricken province of Faryab, farmers say their livelihoods are hanging by a thread as water scarcity and prolonged dry spells continue to devastate agriculture.

Dozens of farmers are now looking to the Qosh Tepa canal—a long-awaited irrigation project—as their last hope for salvaging the growing season. Without its arrival, they warn, thousands of acres of farmland will remain barren.

"The water in Andkhoy is salty. There's no flowing water here—only wells, and that water is bitter," said Nazar Mohammad, a local farmer struggling to maintain his crops. "Everyone is waiting for water from the canal. If it had arrived earlier, many of our problems would have been solved. This land only needs water—nothing else."

Faryab, a predominantly agrarian province in northern Afghanistan, has suffered repeated droughts in recent years. Farmers in the region say many agricultural lands have been left idle, and food insecurity is deepening in the countryside.

In addition to the lack of irrigation, farmers cite problems with the storage and sale of agricultural produce. Without infrastructure to preserve harvests, many are forced to sell their crops at a loss or let them go to waste.

Despite the hardships, farming remains a lifeline for many across Afghanistan's districts and rural villages.

However, economists warn that without government support, recurring droughts, poor irrigation systems, and insufficient market access will continue to push rural communities deeper into poverty.

"The only way to curb unemployment and foster economic growth in Afghanistan is to invest in agriculture and support local farmers," said one agricultural economist, calling for a national strategy to address water scarcity and food insecurity.

Afghanistan can't fight climate change alone

KABUL (TOLONews): A Japanese organization named Toda Peace Institute has analyzed and reported on Afghanistan's inability to effectively combat climate change.

Toda Institute stated that Afghanistan is one of the ten countries most affected by climate change but lacks the necessary resources to counter it.

The report states: "Afghanistan is among the ten countries that have historically received inadequate climate funding, alongside Chad, South Sudan, Somalia, Niger, Mali, Yemen, Ethiopia, Uganda and Iraq. These nations face acute climate

risks, yet international climate financing mechanism has largely failed to provide them required funding."

Citing the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), the Toda Peace Institute estimated: "Climate-related economic losses in Afghanistan amount to \$550 million in a normal year, and exceed three \$3 billion during severe droughts—equivalent to between almost 3.2% and more than 18% of the country's GDP. This is staggering when compared to Afghanistan's national budget of just \$2.7 billion in 2023, barely enough to sustain basic government functions.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) estimated that \$1.7 billion would be needed for adaptation and mitigation between 2021 and 2030."

After the Islamic Emirate's rise to power and the decline in international engagement, obtaining global financial support has become nearly impossible for Afghanistan, according to the report.

The Japanese institute concluded that Afghanistan cannot rely solely on its internal resources, as the mining sector is underdeveloped and the infrastructure and legal frameworks for extraction are lacking.

CNN: IE seeking US recognition, diplomatic ties



KABUL (TOLONews): CNN has reported in an article that officials from the Islamic Emirate, during a meeting with a US delegation in March—held to discuss the release of George Glazman—requested that Washington recognize the Islamic Emirate as the official government of Afghanistan.

According to the article, the Islamic Emirate also asked for the opening of an office in the United States to provide consular services to Afghans.

CNN wrote that since the return of Donald Trump to power, the Islamic Emirate has been actively seeking to establish better relations with the United States.

The article also referenced the removal of bounty offers for Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting interior minister, and two other members of the interim government, noting that the US has taken steps in this regard.

CNN added that one American official told the

'Taliban': "Unconditional releases [equals] great relations with Trump. Clear out your holding cells - Trump will be free to work with you."

Quoting sources familiar with the details of the meeting between the Islamic Emirate and the US delegation, the article stated that US officials told the interim government: "You need to be forthcoming and take a risk," and, "Do this, it will likely open up the door for better relationship."

Not a single dollar received in aid from Unites States: IEA



GARDEZ (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Energy and Water Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor says the United State (US) has not provided a single dollar in aid to the caretaker government so far.

He dismissed as mere propaganda claims that Washington continued to

extend financial support to the interim government, similar to the previous administrations.

He made the remarks at the closing ceremony of a marksmanship competition in the Zurmat district of southeastern Paktia province on Tuesday. Mansoor emphasised no

direct US aid had reached the Islamic Emirate and that any funds entering Afghanistan came solely from international organizations.

He elaborated: "Our enemies propagate the false narrative that just as dollars arrived during the republican era, the aid continues to pour in. In reality, the funds are directed towards NGOs and international organisations."

"The role the Islamic Emirate has played is in ensuring these donations are properly regulated. The US has suffered such a humiliating defeat that it would not dare to send us aid again."

He claimed that 80 percent of the financial aid brought in by NGOs was consumed by their own operational costs, including salaries and administrative expenses, while only 20 percent was allocated to

actual development projects such as the construction of irrigation canals and small bridges.

"The funds intended for this nation are largely used by the organisations themselves," he stated. "They spend 80 percent of the funds on their own salaries and other expenses, while the remaining 20 percent may be used for minor infrastructure projects. After that, they take photographs as proof of their 'achievements'."

The minister urged officials to listen with patience to public concerns and resolve them promptly, as their authority stemmed from the people.

He reaffirmed that every policy and decision of the Islamic Emirate was in line with Islamic teachings and Afghan traditions, calling on the public to support the current administration.

Kandahar rehabilitation center trains 600 recovering addicts



KANDAHAR (TOLONews): In Kandahar province, vocational training is being provided to 600 individuals recovering from drug addiction.

Officials at the rehabilitation center say these training programs are being implemented under the directive of the leader of the Islamic Emirate, with

the aim of creating job opportunities for those who have undergone treatment.

Abdul Shakoor Shakeeb, head of the rehabilitation center in Kandahar, said: "This center has been commissioned by the Amir al-Mu'minin, and food and hygiene supplies are provided for the addicts here."

Before falling into

addiction, many of these individuals played a vital role in supporting their families. However, bad company led them into the dark world of addiction, separating them from their loved ones.

Atiqullah, 22, who used to work as a tailor with his brother before becoming addicted, is now back behind the sewing machine alongside other recovering addicts, hoping to rebuild a brighter future. He said: "Because of addiction, we were separated from our parents. This is the result of having bad friends. A good friend brings benefit; a bad one brings harm."

Rahimullah, 32, is also receiving vocational training in motorcycle repair with a group of other recovering addicts. He claims that drug mafias distribute

narcotics freely at first to unemployed youth in order to expand their influence.

He added: "At the beginning, the mafia gives the drugs away for free, and once we become addicted, they start selling it to us."

Doctors say that vocational training has a positive psychological impact on patients, helping to reduce mental distress and feelings of isolation.

Dr. Habib ur-Rahman said: "Drugs severely affect the mental and physical health of individuals and, over time, damage all parts of the body."

According to the Kandahar rehabilitation center, in addition to treating at least 2,000 addicts annually, vocational training and work tools are also provided to help them reintegrate into society.

Rain, snowfall, thunderstorms predicted in 12 provinces

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Transport and Aviation has predicted snowfall, rain, thunderstorms, lightning and floods in twelve provinces of the country tomorrow.

The Ministry of Transport and Aviation said in a statement that snowfall, rain, thunder, lightning could likely hit Baghlan, Balkh, Ghor, Badghis, Daikundi, Sar-i-Pul, Bamyan, Maidan-Wardak, Ghazni, Samangan, Jawzjan and Faryab provinces tomorrow.

Rainfall in different areas is expected to be 15 to 25 millimeters and the snowfall 10 to 20 centimeters.

The ministry said strong winds could lash northern and central provinces, including Salang, with a speed between 50 to 80 kilometers per hour.

Girls barred from education says their futures fading

HERAT (Amu TV): With each closed classroom door, Afghan girls say they are watching their futures slip further into darkness.

Since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, education for girls has been steadily stripped away. Now, even the last remaining opportunities—such as mid-level health institutes—have been shuttered, leaving many girls with nowhere to turn.

"I feel like every door is closing in front of me," said Moaddesa, a former law student from Badghis who had hoped to become a prosecutor. When universities were closed to women, she enrolled in a medical institute, clinging to a final hope of continuing her education. But in December 2024, the Taliban extended their education ban to health institutes as well.

"After the university ban, I still had hope," she said in an interview. "Now, even the institutes are shut. This life feels stagnant and discouraging."

Rokhsar, a student from Kabul, echoed the despair: "Health institutes were our last hope. With their closure, the future for Afghan women is collapsing. We are devastated by this decision."

The Taliban's most recent education ban came in December, when the group's leadership prohibited women from studying in health-related institutions—an area previously seen as a narrow but crucial exception to their sweeping restrictions. Humanitarian groups had argued that female health workers were essential to providing care to Afghan women, who are often barred from visiting male practitioners.

Diwa, another student from Badghis, described the closures as a final blow. "First, they shut our universities. Now they've taken the institutes too," she said. "There's no path left for those of us who want to learn."

According to the United Nations, more than 400,000 additional girls were blocked from education at the start of the new academic year in March 2025. The total number of school-aged girls currently out of school has surpassed 2.2 million. The UN has warned that if current policies continue, that number could exceed four million by 2030.

Rights groups have condemned the Taliban's policies as a direct violation of international law and a devastating blow to Afghanistan's development.

Lack of roads, clinics biggest challenge

BADAKHSHAN (TOLONews): Kuran wa Munjan is one of the remote and border districts of Badakhshan province, with a population of over 8,000 people.

Some residents of the district say they face serious challenges due to poor road conditions, lack of medical centers, telecommunications networks, and access to clean drinking water.

Abdul Wakil, a resident of Kuran wa Munjan, said: "We have many shortages. A few days ago, an accident occurred in our village; since there is no road, a

vehicle overturned, resulting in 12 people being injured and 2 others losing their lives."

Other residents have also called on the caretaker government to address their problems.

Ahmad Shah, another resident of the district, said: "We request the Islamic Emirate to help us not only with building roads but also to provide more assistance. We have neither a proper telecom signal nor a well-equipped clinic."

However, local officials in Badakhshan say efforts are underway to resolve the issues of the people of

Kuran wa Munjan. Aminullah Tayeb, Deputy Governor of Badakhshan, said: "Issues related to clean drinking water and telecom towers will be resolved soon, God willing. The Islamic Emirate is aware of the situation."

Badakhshan, located in the northeastern part of the country, is a province where many districts face numerous problems, including damaged roads, lack of healthcare facilities, electricity, and telecommunications. Residents have consistently urged the authorities to take action.

Charamgari Alley: 700 years of history in Heart of Parwan

PARWAN (TOLONews): Charamgari Alley is one of the most renowned historic markets in Charikar city, the capital of Parwan province of Afghanistan. With a history spanning over 700 years, it still retains its traditional form.

Local residents say that although many local products and handicrafts are still made and sold in the market, it no longer has the same vibrancy it once did.

For centuries, professions such as carpentry, agricultural tool-making, knife-smithing, and bird trading have been active in this market.

Mohammad Mirza, one of the shopkeepers, said: "We've been running our business in this market for about fifteen years."

Many elderly residents, most of them from the old



part of Charikar, still visit this historic market and share memories of the past with one another.

Fazl Ahmad, a local resident, said: "In the past, this market had cobblers who made various kinds of boots and rubber sandals. There were also many

knife-makers here." Due to its rich historical background, Charamgari Alley in Charikar was registered as one of the official historical sites of Parwan province by the Department of Information and Culture under the previous government.



MASTUNG: Chief of Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M), Sardar Akhtar Mengal and other leaders holding a sit-in for acceptance of their demands.

KP Mines & Minerals Act 2025 draft discussed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chaired a consultative meeting on Thursday with a delegation from the Minerals Association to discuss the draft KP Mines & Minerals Act 2025. The meeting was attended by the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly, relevant cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), and other concerned officials.

The delegation was led by Afzar Muhammad, President of the KP Minerals Association. During the meeting, government officials briefed the delegation on various aspects of the proposed bill. Concerns raised by the association were addressed, and the delegation expressed full agreement with the draft act. They also thanked the Chief Minister for engaging stakeholders before presenting the bill in the provincial assembly, calling it a commendable step. Additionally, the delegation requested further consultation in the rule-making process following the bill's approval.

Speaking on this occasion, CM Gandapur emphasized that the primary objective of the new legislation is to protect and effectively utilize the province's valuable mineral resources.

He asserted that the proposed act is a provincial government initiative and can be amended if necessary. The law aims to promote legal mining while discouraging illegal practices and is expected to attract foreign investment in the province's mineral sector.

The Chief Minister assured the delegation that the rule-making process under the new law would

KP CM directed enforcement of anti-harassment laws in public universities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a decisive move to ensure a conducive educational environment and gender equality for female students in public sector universities of the province, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chancellor, Ali Amin Gandapur has ordered the immediate enforcement of anti-harassment laws across all public universities in the province.

A formal letter has been issued by the Chief Minister's Secretariat to the Higher Education Department in this regard. The letter reads that, while a framework of laws, guidelines, and policies exists to prevent harassment in educational institutions and workplaces, gaps and shortcomings in their practical implementation have been observed in some universities adding that to lack of effective enforcement has led to recent reports of alleged harassment incidents in certain universities, which have been highlighted in the media.

Taking strict notice of these incidents, the Chief Minister has termed such occurrences a serious violation not only of existing laws but also of ethical values, and reiterated that the provincial government follows a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of harassment, particularly in educational institutions.

It directs the Higher Education Department to ensure necessary measures to prevent harassment in all institutions under its jurisdiction. It further directs that female students and staff must be made aware and educated of existing anti-harassment laws. Universities are also required to establish harassment inquiry committees as per the existing legal framework and appoint focal persons, including at least one female member. Their contact details must be published on university websites for accessibility. Furthermore, universities must develop an effective mechanism for reporting and addressing harassment complaints while strictly adhering to the protocols and guidelines issued by the Higher Education Department. All institutions have been given ten days to implement these directives and submit compliance reports. Failure to comply within the stipulated time frame will result in action against responsible officials under relevant laws.

involve extensive consultation with the Minerals Association, ensuring their full representation in forums like the Mineral Investment Facilitation Authority. He reiterated that minerals are a valuable national asset and a trust for future generations, stressing the importance of their judicious utilization.

Gandapur further stated that instead of selling raw minerals at low prices, the

provincial government aims to encourage value addition within the province, which would increase government revenue and create employment opportunities. He assured that the interests of both the provincial government and the people of KP would be fully safeguarded, aligning mineral laws with national legislation while upholding provincial autonomy.

Trump must pay \$821,000 legal bill, UK court rules

LONDON (Reuters): Donald Trump must pay over 626,000 pounds (about \$821,500) in legal fees to a private investigations firm the US president sued over a dossier which alleged ties between his 2016 election campaign and Russia, a London judge ruled on Thursday.

Trump brought a data protection lawsuit against Orbis Business Intelligence (OBI) over allegations in a dossier written by its co-founder, former British intelligence officer Christopher Steele, but Trump's claim was thrown out last year. The so-called Steele dossier alleged ties between Trump's 2016 election campaign and Russia as well as other salacious accusations, all of which Trump strenuously denied.

Trump had been ordered to make a payment of around 290,000 pounds towards Orbis' legal fees but failed to do so, Orbis' lawyers said at a previous hearing in January. This meant Trump was barred from being represented at a further hearing this week to consider Orbis' total legal bill and whether its costs were reasonable.

Paul Arter, a costs lawyer for Orbis, said that Trump had very strong negotiating skills and was paying one of his own lawyers 750 pounds an hour. Arter said the case was very important to both parties, with Orbis having concerns about its survival should it lose, while Trump was seeking to protect his reputation.

Faced with an opponent "renowned as an aggressive litigator" who "has a history of pursuing vendettas, certainly legally", it justified the rates Orbis were paying for their lawyers, Arter said. Judge Jason Rowley ruled that Trump owed Orbis 530,615 pounds, less than the more than 680,000 pounds Orbis had sought, but more than the 452,000 Orbis offered to accept. He also said Trump should pay another 95,000 pounds relating to the dispute over costs, making a total of just over 626,000 pounds.

Israel steps up Syria strikes

DAMASCUS/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel stepped up airstrikes on the Syrian Arab Republic overnight, declaring the attacks a warning to the new Islamist rulers in Damascus as it accused their Turkish allies on Thursday of trying to turn the country into a Turkish protectorate.

The strikes, targeting air bases, a site near Damascus and the southwest, put renewed focus on Israeli concerns about the Islamists who deposed Bashar Assad in December, with Israeli officials viewing them as a rising threat at their border. The Israeli army, which seized ground in the southwest after Assad was toppled, said its forces killed several militants who opened fire on Israeli troops operating in that area overnight. Syria's state news agency SANA said that Israeli shelling had killed nine people in the area.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that the airstrikes late on Wednesday evening were "a clear message and a warning for the future — we will not allow the security of the State of Israel to be harmed." Katz said in a statement that Israel's armed forces would remain in buffer zones within Syria and act against threats to its security, warning Syria's government it would pay a heavy price if it allowed forces hostile to Israel to enter.

Israeli strikes on Gaza leaves 100 Palestinians dead

DEIR AL BALAH (AP): Overnight strikes by Israel killed at least 100 people across the Gaza Strip, hospital officials said Thursday, a day after senior government officials said Israel would seize large areas of Gaza and establish a new security corridor across the Palestinian territory.

Israel has vowed to escalate the nearly 18-month war with Hamas until the militant group returns dozens of remaining hostages, disarms and leaves the territory. Israel has imposed a month-long halt on all imports of food, fuel and humanitarian aid that has left civilians facing acute shortages as supplies dwindle.

Officials in Khan Younis, in the southern part of the strip, said the bodies of 14 people had been taken to Nasser Hospital — nine of them from the same family. The dead included five children and four women. The bodies of another 19 people, including five children aged between 1 and 7 years and a pregnant woman, were taken to the European hospital near Khan Younis, hospital officials said. In Gaza City, 21 bodies were taken to Ahli hospital, including those of seven children.

The Israeli military ordered the residents of several areas — Shujaiya, Jadida, Turkomen and eastern Zeytoun — to evacuate on Thursday, adding that the army "will work with extreme force in your area." It said people should move to shelters west of Gaza City. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Israel was establishing a new security corridor across the Gaza Strip to pressure Hamas, suggesting it would cut off the southern city of Rafah, which Israel has ordered evacuated, from the rest of the Palestinian territory.

Netanyahu referred to the new axis as the Morag corridor, using the name of a Jewish settlement that once stood between Rafah and Khan Younis, suggesting it would run between the two southern cities. He said it would be "a second Philadelphia corridor" referring to the Gaza side of the border with Egypt further south, which has been under Israeli control since last May.

Israel has reasserted control over the Netzarim corridor, also named for a former settlement, that cuts off the northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, from the rest of the narrow coastal strip. Both of the existing corridors run from the Israeli border to the Mediterranean Sea. "We are cutting up the strip, and we are increasing the pressure step by step, so that they will give us our hostages," Netanyahu said.

The Western-backed Palestinian Authority, led by rivals of Hamas, expressed its "complete rejection" of



the planned corridor. Its statement also called for Hamas to give up power in Gaza, where the militant group has faced rare protests recently. Netanyahu's announcement came after the defense minister, Israel Katz, said Israel would seize large areas of Gaza and add them to its so-called security zones, apparently referring to an existing buffer zone along Gaza's entire perimeter. He called on Gaza residents to "expel Hamas and return all the hostages," saying "this is the only way to end the war."

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining 59 hostages — 24 of whom are believed to be alive — in exchange for the release of more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli pullout. The group has rejected demands that it lay down its arms or leave the territory. Netanyahu arrived in Hungary early Thursday on his second foreign trip since the world's top war crimes court issued an arrest warrant against him in November over Israel's war in Gaza.

Based in The Hague, Netherlands, the International Criminal Court has said there was reason to believe Netanyahu and former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant used "starvation as a method of warfare" by restricting humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and intentionally targeted civilians in Israel's campaign against Hamas — charges that Israeli officials deny. ICC member countries, such as Hungary, are required to arrest suspects facing a warrant if they set foot on their soil, but the court has no way to enforce that and relies on states to comply. As Netanyahu arrived in Budapest, Hungary said it will begin the procedure of withdrawing from the ICC.

On Sunday, Netanyahu said Israel plans to maintain overall security control of Gaza after the war and implement US President Donald Trump's proposal to resettle much of

its population elsewhere through what the Israeli leader referred to as "voluntary emigration." Palestinians have rejected the plan, viewing it as expulsion from their homeland after Israel's offensive left much of it uninhabitable, and human rights experts say implementing the plan would likely violate international law.

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, most of whom have since been released in ceasefire agreements and other deals. Israel rescued eight living hostages and has recovered dozens of bodies. Israel's offensive has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say whether those killed are civilians or combatants. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.

The war has left vast areas of Gaza in ruins and at its height displaced around 90 percent of the population. Separately, Israeli strikes killed at least nine people in southwestern Syria, Syrian state media reported Thursday.

SANA said the nine were civilians, without giving details. Britain-based war monitor The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said they were local gunmen from the Daraa province, frustrated with Israeli military encroachment and attacks in recent months. Israel has seized parts of southwestern Syria and created a buffer-zone there, which it says is to secure Israel's safety from armed groups. But critics say the military operation has created tensions in Syria and prevents any long-term stability and reconstruction for the war-torn country. Israel also struck five cities in Syria late Wednesday, including over a dozen strikes near a strategic air base in the city of Hama.

PHC seeks response against excessive gas load shedding

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued another notice to the Chief Secretary, Secretary Petroleum, Secretary OGRA, Managing Director Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), and General Manager SNGPL, seeking their response on a petition filed against the excessive gas load shedding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Thursday.

PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Sabit Ullah while the counsel Malik Salman and Mufti Noorul Basar advocate appeared before the court.

During the hearing, the counsel for the petitioner argued that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa produces more gas than it needs, and therefore, the people of the province have the first right to its use. They pointed out that according to the Constitution, the province has the first right over its natural resources.

The counsel further argued that despite producing surplus gas, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are facing severe difficulties due to excessive gas load shedding, which is unjustified. They stated that the gas load shedding is

Court directs to submit report regarding uniform doctors and test fees

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Fazal Subhan and Justice Farah Jamshed has directed the Health Department and the Health Care Commission, among other authorities, to fix uniform rates for private clinics and laboratories in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within one month, on Thursday.

The court instructed the authorities to regulate the rates and take action against those violating the rules. The court also ordered the authorities to submit a report to the High Court. The petitioner, Saif Mohibullah was represented by Mehwish Mohibullah Kakakhel advocate. The counsel argued that private practitioners in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are charging exorbitant fees from patients, and there is no uniform rate for laboratory tests. The counsel also stated that the authorities have failed to implement the court's previous orders to fix uniform rates. The counsel pointed out that the Peshawar High Court had directed the authorities to fix uniform rates for laboratory tests in 2019 and 2023, but no action has been taken so far.

causing immense hardships to the citizens, who are only receiving gas supply for limited hours in the morning, afternoon, and evening.

The counsel also pointed out that the industries in the province are also suffering due to the gas load shedding, which is affecting their production and causing them significant losses.

The petitioner's counsel argued that the federal gov-

ernment should be stopped from imposing gas load shedding in the province, as it is the right of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to have access to the natural resources of their province.

The court has sought a response from the relevant parties, including the Chief Secretary, Secretary Petroleum, Secretary OGRA, MD SNGPL, and GM SNGPL, and adjourned the hearing until the next date.

India approves bill overhauling Muslim land boards

NEW DELHI (AFP): India's parliament passed a bill on Thursday to reform hugely wealthy Muslim land-owning organisations, with the Hindu nationalist government saying it will boost accountability while the opposition called it an "attack" on a minority.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government argues the bill will boost transparency to more than a dozen powerful Waqf boards, which control properties gifted by Muslim charitable endowments. There are around two dozen Waqf boards across India, owning some 900,000 acres (365,000 hectares), a multi-billion-dollar property empire that makes them one of the biggest landhold-

ers alongside the railways and the defence forces.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju, who tabled the bill on Wednesday, said it would check corruption and mismanagement and reduce the hold of a few entrenched groups. The bill was passed by the lower house of parliament after a marathon debate that stretched into the early hours of Thursday.

It is expected to be passed by the upper house of parliament later on Thursday, handing far larger powers to civil servants in the supervision of Waqf boards. Amit Shah, the interior minister and a close Modi aide, said the changes will help "catch the people

who lease out properties" for individual gains.

"That money, which could be used to aid the development of minorities, is being stolen," he said. Non-Muslims, who will be included in the boards as part of the new bill, will only be involved in "administrative" matters, Shah said. However, opposition parties accuse the government of pushing "polarising politics" at the expense of India's Muslim minority of 200 million.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill is a weapon aimed at marginalising Muslims and usurping their personal laws and property rights," opposition Congress Party chief Rahul Gandhi said.

Mirawas passes away



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Renowned Pashto comedian Mirawas breathed his last after a prolonged illness at a hospital in Mardan on Thursday.

According to hospital sources, Mirawas had been battling serious health issues for a long time and was undergoing treatment before he passed away today.

Mirawas, whose real name was Hayat Khan, was born in 1955 in Tehsil Tangi, Charsadda district. He was a well-known Pashto comedian, singer, and stand-up artist who carved a unique place for himself in Pashto dramas and stage shows through his distinctive humor.

His comedic talent became evident during his school days when people from neighboring schools would gather to watch his performances. Throughout his career, he worked in numerous radio, television shows, and stage dramas. He released over 500 cassette recordings and more than 800 Pashto comedy albums.

In 2018, Mirawas published his second book, *Gup da Mirawas*, which featured parodies of popular Pashto and Urdu songs, along with satirical and humorous poetry. In recent years, he suffered from severe health issues, including diabetes and high blood pressure. His condition worsened to the extent that one of his legs had to be amputated, and doctors feared for the other as well. He was receiving treatment at Mardan Medical Complex at the time of his passing. Mirawas' death has left his fans and the entertainment industry in mourning, with people from all walks of life expressing deep sorrow over his demise.