

Quake tremors hit Swat
F.P. Report
MINGORA: Earthquake tremors were felt in Swat and the neighboring areas of Mingora on Saturday. The tremors struck in the early hours, sending people rushing to the streets, while others sought shelter in open areas. Fortunately, no casualties or property damage have been reported as of now. The earthquake measured 4.2 on the Richter scale and occurred at a depth of 64 kilometers.



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WASHINGTON: Demonstrators gathered on the National Mall for nationwide 'Hands Off!' protest against US President Donald Trump and his adviser, Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

The Frontier Post

Anti-Trump protesters gather in Washington, US cities

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Some 1,200 demonstrations are planned across the US on Saturday in what organizers expect to be the largest single day of protest against President Donald Trump and his billionaire ally Elon Musk since they launched a rapid-fire effort to overhaul government and expand presidential authority.

Thousands were streaming into downtown Washington as the protests got underway under gloomy skies and light rain. Organizers told Reuters that more than 20,000 people were expected to attend the rally at the National Mall. The protests in the US will give Trump opponents an opportunity to demonstrate their displeasure en masse in response to Trump's raft of executive orders.

Some 150 activist groups have signed up to participate, according to the event's website. Protests are planned in all 50 states plus Canada and Mexico. Protesters were lining the busy thoroughfare of Connecticut Avenue in Washington, D.C., awaiting buses to take them downtown. They were carrying signs with slogans such as "No Kings in the USA" and "Deport Musk."

Terry Klein, a retired biomedical scientist from Princeton, New Jersey, was among hundreds who gathered early in front of the stage below the Washington Monument. She said she drove down to attend the rally to protest Trump's policies on "everything from immigration to the DOGE stuff to the tariffs this week, to education. I mean, our whole country is under attack, all of our institutions, all the things that make America what it is."

David Madden, a 75-year old Army veteran and retired trial lawyer, said he flew from Dayton, Ohio, to demonstrate against "the injustice that is dominating this country, the

institutions that are being stolen from the American people, the confusion in the courts, the fact that we have a population that I believe is essentially racist." With Trump's blessing, Musk's Department of Government Efficiency team has scythed through the US government, eliminating more than 200,000 jobs from the 2.3 million federal workforce. At times, the effort has been haphazard and forced the recall of needed specialists.

On Friday, the Internal Revenue Service began laying off more than 20,000 workers, as much as 25% of its ranks. Several hundred people gathered on Saturday outside the headquarters of the Social Security Administration, a top DOGE target, near Baltimore to protest against cuts to the agency which delivers benefits to the elderly and disabled.

The mood was angry and defiant, after the agency recently announced cuts of 7,000 staff and the ending of phone services to millions of claimants. Members of DOGE have been inside the building for weeks. Many in the crowd of mostly retirees held handmade signs, including "Where Has My Country Gone?", "FIRE DOGE!", "Send Musk to Mars," and "Hands off Social Security!"

Linda Falcao, who turns 65 in two months, told the crowd she had been paying into the Social Security fund since the age of 16. "I'm terrified, I'm angry, I'm pissed, I'm bewildered this could happen to the United States," she said. "I do love America and I'm heartbroken. I need my money. I want my money. I want my benefits!" In response, the crowd chanted, "It's our money!" White House assistant press secretary Liz Huston disputed the protesters' charge that Trump aimed to cut Social

Security and Medicaid. "President Trump's position is clear: he will always protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for eligible beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the Democrats' stance is giving Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare benefits to illegal aliens, which will bankrupt these programs and crush American seniors," Huston said in an email.

Much of Trump's agenda has been restrained by lawsuits contending he has overstepped his authority with attempts to fire civil servants, deport immigrants and reverse transgender rights. Trump returned to office on January 20 with a stream of executive orders and other measures critics say are aligned with an agenda outlined by Project 2025, a deeply conservative political initiative to reshape government and consolidate presidential authority. His supporters have applauded Trump's audacity as necessary to disrupt entrenched liberal interests. Hours before the protests were due to kick off in the United States, hundreds of anti-Trump Americans living in Europe gathered in Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris and London to voice opposition to Trump's sweeping makeover of US foreign and domestic policies. About 200 people, mostly American, gathered on Paris' Place de la Republique, listening to speeches and waving banners ranging from "Resist Tyrant", "Rule of Law" to "Feminists for Freedom not fascism" and "Save Democracy". "We have to show solidarity with all the demonstrations in a thousand cities today in the USA," Democrats Abroad spokesperson Timothy Kautz said in Frankfurt. Protester Jose Sanchez said Trump was a con man who was destroying US democracy.

President Zardari's health better: Asim

F.P. Report

KARACHI: "President Asif Ali Zardari's health has been better and nothing to be worried about," President's personal physician Dr Asim Hussain said here in a media briefing on Saturday.

He said that the social media and Indian news channels spreading fake and concocted news about President Zardari's health. "President Zardari suffered ill-health during Eid prayer, his state of health has improved, there is nothing to be worried," Dr. Asim said.

"When I reached Nawabshah, I found it better to bring the President to Karachi thus he was brought to Karachi," he said. "We brought him to Karachi on Monday night and conducted various tests". "We diagnose with tests that

President Zardari has contracted coronavirus," he said. "We begin coronavirus treatment. There are some medicines that are not available in Pakistan, which imported from abroad," President's doctor said. "With the Grace of God, his health condition improving," he said.

President Zardari is expected to be discharged from the hospital tomorrow or day after tomorrow, with this fake news would come to its end," he said. "It is wrong impression that coronavirus disease has ended, it is unlike the prime days of the disease, but the virus still exists in Pakistan and cases are coming to hospitals," Dr. Asim Hussain said. "It is another variant of coronavirus," he clarified.

The physician also expressed sorrow over "baseless reports" being

aired by Indian media and certain social media accounts. Asim slammed political opponents for twisting the facts and said that even ailing persons were not spared from such misinformation.

Earlier, Sindh Senior Minister Shehbaz Sharif refuted reports relating to Zardari's health and said that his health was improving. In a statement, Memon said that reports suggesting that President Zardari was being shifted to Dubai for medical treatment were not true and that the latter would soon recover completely. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif enquired about the health of President Zardari via a telephone call. The premier prayed for the early recovery of the president, adding that prayers of the entire nation were with the president.

BNP-M not allowed to protest in Red Zone: Govt

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Authorities asked the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) on Saturday to limit their protest to Quetta's Sariab Road and warned against violations of Section 144 imposed in the provincial capital.

Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind on Saturday said they had held two rounds of talks with the BNP-M, where the party expressed the wish to protest in the Red Zone. He said that the demand could not be allowed, and hence, the government offered the Sariab Road location as an alternative.

The BNP-M declared a "long march" from Wadh to Quetta last Friday, protesting the detention of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders and activists, including Dr Mahrang Baloch and Sammi Deen Baloch, alongside the police action against their sit-in in the provincial capital.

Sammi was freed on Tuesday, while BNP-M's sit-in has been going on for the last nine days. Rind mentioned that three main demands had been presented during the two meetings with Sardar Akhtar Mengal, including the release of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leader and rights activist Mahrang Baloch Baloch. However, the government refused to permit the protest in the Red Zone, maintaining that it should be held at Sariab Road.

The spokesperson added that the government continued to prioritise resolving the matter through political dialogue and that both sides need to show flexibility. "If Sardar Akhtar Mengal remains insistent on his demands, government has options available," Rind warned.

He said that everyone knew that the BYC started protests and sit-ins after the Jaffer Express attack, during which anti-state speeches were also made. Rind also spoke about the recent anti-government remarks made during the BNP-M rally, saying that the platform of a registered political party was used for anti-state speeches.

Repatriation of illegal Afghan citizens continue

F.P. Report

TORKHAM: After the government launched a large-scale operation against illegal Afghan immigrants on 3rd April 2025, repatriation of Afghan Citizens Card (ACC) holders and other Afghan citizens, illegally residing in Pakistan, was in progress through Torkham border on Saturday.

Sharing details of the repatriated Afghanis Home and Tribal Affairs Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that 350 Afghan families, comprising 155 and 195 from Gujrat

and Sargodha respectively arrived from Punjab on Friday and following necessary process, crossed to their home country.

In the same way 173 illegal families i.e. 142 families from Faisalabad and 31 families from Hafizabad moved to Afghanistan via Torkham on Saturday, it said. All the expected deported Afghan families directly arrived at Torkham from Punjab from where they were sent back to Afghanistan after necessary measures, immigration official in Torkham said.

Most of the unlawful

Afghanis were unhappy with the decision of sending them back to their country and declared it an initiative taken in hurry. They argued that the deadline should be extended for them to settle matters of their movable and immovable properties, left behind them. The unexpected repatriation disrupted our businesses and education of our children, they regretted.

Meanwhile, a Holding Center established in Landi Kotal to facilitate repatriation of Afghan families will be functioning next week, NADRA official said.

JUI-F to continue struggle against brutal forces: Fazl

F.P. Report

TAUNSA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the poverty of people is being exploited by some forces.

Addressing the 'Istehkam-e-Pakistan' conference in Taunsa Sharif, the JUI-F chief said that landlords are exploiting the poverty of masses. "Our

poverty is not our weakness," said the JUI-F chief. He added that the JUI-F will continue its struggle against the cruel forces.

He said that rebellion against slavery is our identity and we cannot beg for freedom from other countries. The JUI-F chief said that the ruling elite is exploiting the poverty of common people. Maulana Fazlur Rehman

said that we'll not accept the western civilization.

He added that Afghanistan, Syria and Arab countries are in flames. "As many as 60,000 innocent Muslims were martyred by the Israeli forces in Palestine," said the JUI-F chief. He urged the religious scholars to convene a national convention in Islamabad to devise a robust and unanimous strategy.

PM, JI Ameer discuss public relief

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from Ameer-e-Jamaat-e-Islami, Hafiz Naem-ur-Rehman, on Saturday, during which the latter thanked the Prime Minister for the recent reduction in electricity prices.

The Prime Minister welcomed the gesture and reiterated his government's commitment to prioritizing public welfare. "Despite challenges, we have given top priority to public relief, and this mission will continue," he said. "God willing, Pakistan's journey of development will continue," he added.

Both leaders also discussed the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, expressing deep concern over Israel's unprovoked bombings and atrocities on unarmed Palestinian civilians. They condemned the silence of the international community on the ongoing violence.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, vowing to raise the issue at every international forum.

Pakistan sending delegation to US for trade negotiations: Minister

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, while responding to the changing US trade policy and tariffs under President Donald Trump's administration, said here on Saturday that Pakistan intends to send a high-level delegation to Washington to convey its commitment to a long-term strategic partnership.

"In the next couple of days, we are going to finalize our recommendations to the prime minister and with approval of PM, we intend to send a high level delegation to Washington to get our views across and to ensure that we want to be a partner, which is a long term strategic partner," the minister said while addressing a press conference here.

He said, two committees were constituted including a steering group, led by Finance Minister and a working group, headed by the Secretary of Commerce, and there were meetings over the last couple of days and will continue with a view to transform challenges into opportunities.

"You should never let good crisis go to waste. We are looking it both challenge as well as opportunity," he

said adding the government was constructively engaged and was working on a package and when finalized, it can go forward for discussion with US administration. He said, Pakistan wanted to make sure to have win-win situation in medium to long terms for both the countries. He said US was very important strategic partner and was also the largest trading partner in terms of exports which go to the US.

Meanwhile, talking about the economic stability and sustainability, the minister said, Pakistan aims to drive growth through export-led, production-led, and private sector-led strategies, focusing on increasing foreign exchange reserves, promoting business confidence, and implementing structural reforms. He said, the country had achieved macroeconomic stability however adding it was not an end in itself rather it's a means to an end. "It's about basic hygiene. Any economy has to have these elements before it goes forward."

He said Pakistan on the external front have seen stability as it has witnessed rising foreign exchange reserves on the back of very strong remittances, citing 32% increase during first two months on year on year basis. The Minister added that exports were also holding firm and witnessing



about roughly 7% growth on that front as well. And on the back of that, we are quite confident that the foreign exchange reserves, by the time we get to end of June, will be a little over \$13 billion.

On the domestic front, he said, inflation was down to 0.7 percent, lowest of 6 decades. "We are moving in the right direction in terms of headline and the core inflation as well," he added. He said, an institutional mechanism was in place to monitor inflation and ensure its impact goes down. He said, the mark-up rate has also declined, bringing down the Kibor for the benefit of industry.

He was of the view that business confidence, the investor confidence, the consumer confidence has

increased as indicated by various reports. The Minister also discussed the government's efforts to promote structural reforms, including taxation, energy, and privatization. He said 24 state-owned enterprises have been handed over to the privatization commission, adding re-launch of PIA is going to be done this month.

He said, economic activity has increased as the economic spending increased to about 870 billion rupees compared to last year's 720 billion. However, the minister emphasized the importance of export-led growth, saying that every single sector of this country has to export, no matter what percentage they do. We have started seeing the auto sector starting exports. Talking about Staff Level

Agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said, it successfully concluded six-monthly review adding it happened because all our quantitative benchmarks were in a good place. The structural benchmarks also witnessed historic development, he said adding the agriculture income tax through the provincial assemblies was historic. So as the board approves it, we will get an additional \$1 billion in terms of the next tranche, which is there under the current EFF program. He said, negotiations on Resilience and Sustainability Fund also continued.

He said, the current programme with the fund was need of the country adding that it could be the last programme provided difficult policy choices are made. On structural reforms, the minister said these were going on. He said, on taxation side, the country was on track to hit 10.6% tax to GDP at the end of June compared to 8.8% of last fiscal year. The revenue target will be up by 32.5% year-on-year basis this year. The tax-base was also expanding as tax filers doubled from 2 million to 4 million by October 31. The number of returns have crossed 6 million.

Likewise, digital transformation in

enforcement in customs helped increase revenues by 16 percent while track and trace system has been now fully rolled out in fertilizer, sugar, tobacco sectors. Cement, beverages, cotton, is on the way. Filing returns is being simplified through people process technology and salaried class would be enabled to file taxes from homes, without consulting tax lawyers or consultants.

On energy side, he said one-third of electricity tariff was coming down for industry, which he said was significant change adding that industry also acknowledges this. He said, restructuring was being done in NTDC, DISCOS to ensure sustainability. Talking about structural reforms, he said there were 400 departments attached with ministries, we are taking gradually the ministries and departments to restructuring and rightsizing.

First two waves were approved by the government, next two ways are going to be presented to the cabinet while fifth wave is now coming through. We will have completed entire analysis by June this year to have quantitative impact on upcoming budget. On debt side, he maturity has gone up to 3.5 years while the government will be saving of Rs.1 trillion in terms of debt servicing loss.



KARACHI: Minister for National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal addressing the media at DRAP.

Mustafa Kamal commends PM and Cabinet on lower electricity rates

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal visited DRAP office in Karachi and addressed a press conference.

Addressing the press conference, Syed Mustafa Kamal felicitated the role of COAS, Prime Minister, Minister for Energy and whole task force in reducing the prices of Electricity. He said that renegotiating the deal with IMF and providing the relief to the domestic and commercial consumers in such an environment is commendable and should be appreciated. He also commended role of COAS and Prime Minister for their sincere efforts in reducing the circular debt. He hinted that soon IPPs and Distribution companies will be privatized. Privatization is

necessary but we need to liberalize the market to end monopoly.

Addressing the media persons, he declared that MQM-P opposes the new proposed amendment rules in SBCA which will allow commercial activities on residential plots. He termed these measures destructive for the city and demanded PPP to reconsider such moves.

Speaking about frequent road accidents in the city, he told the audience that due to corrupt system drivers are getting licenses and maintenance certificates, which result in frequent road accidents. He demanded that Sindh Government should immediately, issue 10 Millions to the each bereaved family and 5 millions to the injured. Moreover, he cautioned that these accidents are beyond ethnicity so one must be use caution while inciting ethnic clash as

victims are from every ethnicity.

Speaking of MoNHSR&C he said that efforts are underway reduce burden on tertiary care hospitals by initiating telemedicines. Moreover, he announced that soon in consultation with NADRA, his Ministry is underway to launch one patient one MR ID (Medical Record ID).

On a question of lack of Development projects for the Urban areas of Sindh, he said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, at the request of MQM-P, offered 15 Billion for Karachi and 5 Billion for Hyderabad. However, due to dissolution of PWD, these funds were not utilised. Now that PIDCL is efficient, soon this city will witness development, he added further. Later, he held a meeting with DRAP Officials directed that lacunas in system be erased for efficiency and quality.

Sharjeel: No compromise on canal construction amidst political turmoil

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon held a significant press conference in Karachi today, where he addressed in detail the death anniversary of the people's leader, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the issue of canals, and the prevailing political situation.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that yesterday, during the commemoration of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's death anniversary at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari delivered a historic speech. In his address, Bilawal Bhutto highlighted the country's key issues, especially the pressing matter of canal construction in Sindh.

He made it clear that the construction of canals would not be allowed under any circumstances. He also criticized the Punjab government's projects, stating that he stands with the people—not with Shahbaz Sharif.

Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized that the PPP will not compromise on the canal issue. He criticized the Punjab government, pointing out its failure to clarify the source of water



for the proposed canals.

He announced that a historic rally against the construction of canals and terrorism will be held in Hyderabad on April 18, aimed at mobilizing public support.

Sharjeel Inam Memon also recalled the NFC Award, the decision against the Kalabagh Dam, and steps toward provincial autonomy taken during the presidency of Asif Ali Zardari.

He noted that President Zardari not only put an end to the Kalabagh Dam project but also announced

a special package for Balochistan during his tenure. Sharjeel Inam Memon also expressed regret over the recent statement by Punjab Information Minister Uzma Bukhari, urging her to read the Constitution.

He alleged that the Punjab government's agenda is to create a rift between the PPP and the federation.

However, he asserted that the PPP is engaging in mature politics and remains committed to protecting the public interest.

Sharjeel Inam Memon

criticized the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government as well, urging it to focus on public order. He accused PTI of previously promoting friendly ties with the Taliban, which contributed to insecurity in the region.

Sharjeel Inam Memon concluded by reaffirming that the PPP's existence is rooted in the people, and it will go to any length to safeguard the rights of Sindh. He stressed that there will be no compromise on the canal issue and that the public struggle will continue.

CM orders fast-track establishment of 13 new Sahulat Bazaars across Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities concerned to expedite the establishment of 13 new Sahulat Bazaars across the province, with a firm deadline for completion set for August 13.

Chairing a meeting on Saturday, the chief minister instructed the launch of new markets in Nowshera Virkan, Burewala, Kabirwala, Sangla, and Jalalpur. She also called for expansion

of existing facilities in Bahawalpur, Attock, and Murree.

Stressing the need for swift action, she directed the district administrations to immediately allocate land and prepare comprehensive plans for the bazaars' establishment. Highlighting sustainability, she added, "Shifting to solar energy will reduce electricity costs by 70pc, and these savings must directly benefit the people."

A pilot project for solar

conversion has already been successfully completed at the Sahulat Bazaar in Township, Lahore. Following its success, the chief minister approved the release of over Rs 690 million to support the transition of other bazaars across Punjab to solar power.

She also ordered for immediate removal of any bureaucratic hurdles delaying the setup of markets in Jhelum, Muzaffargarh, and Narowal, and ordered for

swift identification and allocation of land for markets in Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar, Attock, and Murree.

"The primary goal of these Sahulat Bazaars is to provide affordable food to underprivileged communities," she said.

"In line with the vision of PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, we are committed to eliminating inflation and ensuring access to essential goods for all," she added.

Pak Navy ship Aslat undertakes counter-piracy patrols

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship ASLAT undertook counter-piracy patrols in the Arabian Sea, off the east coast of Somalia, in support of Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151), which is currently being led by Pakistan Navy.

Pakistan Navy-led CTF-151 is taking proactive measures to enhance its presence in the region, remaining vigilant of the piracy threat in the Gulf of Aden, the vicinity of Socotra Gap, and off the east coast of Somalia.

These efforts aim to deter piracy, armed robbery, and other illicit activities to ensure the safety of vital Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).



The deployment of PNS ASLAT reflects Pakistan Navy's firm resolve to

combat piracy and armed robbery, while also protecting global maritime

commons and ensuring the free flow of maritime trade in the region.

Four suspected robbers arrested in two separate encounters

KARACHI (PPI): Police have arrested four suspected robbers in injured condition following two separate alleged encounters in district West and South in the wee hours on Saturday.

The police said that in the precinct of Pakistan Bazaar police station, the police tried to stop suspects instead the suspects attempted to escape firing at the police. The police retaliated which ensued a shootout with armed suspects, resulting in the arrest of two in injured condition.

According to SSP West Tariq Ilahi Mastoi, after an exchange of gunfire

from both sides, the two suspects riding a motorcycle were arrested while injured.

The suspects have been identified as Muhammad Arsalan, son of Khalid Khan, and Kashan Hussain Turk, son of Liaquat Hussain.

Two pistols with ammunition, spent shells, snatched mobile phones, and cash were recovered from the arrested suspects. The motorcycle used by the suspects has also been seized, and its details are being obtained. The injured suspects were immediately transferred to the hospital for medical assistance.

Legal proceedings are underway,

and the suspects' previous criminal records are also being obtained, the spokesperson for SSP District West further stated.

Meanwhile, South District Police, they arrested two suspects in injured condition after an exchange of alleged gunfire in the Defense area.

According to the police, these suspects were involved in a murder of a citizen during Eid. Weapons and a stolen motorcycle were recovered from them, police added.

After receiving medical aid, the injured suspects have been handed over to the investigation department for further inquiry.

Woman opens fire on truck driver after car crash

KARACHI (INP): An enraged woman opened fire on a truck driver following a car collision in Karachi's Essa Nagri area. The altercation erupted when the truck collided with the woman's car. After the crash, the truck driver fled his vehicle and hid behind police officers to escape the woman's gunfire. Police later apprehended both drivers and took them to a police station, where a case was registered against them on a police officer's behalf. According to the FIR, both drivers were recklessly driving and trying to outdo each other, which led to the truck colliding with the car. The complaint, filed by ASI Shabbir, stated that an altercation ensued, during which the woman, identified as Aliisha Amir, pulled out a pistol and fired shots into the air.

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- Consultant Paediatric Oncologist
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Traders welcome PM’s power relief package

PESHAWAR (APP): The business community and traders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here Saturday warmly praised the Prime Minister’s recent electricity relief package that provided relief to the entire nation.

The announcement, made on Thursday, is being hailed as a significant move to foster industrialization, business, and agriculture across the country.

Haji Afzal, President of the Small Traders Association Peshawar, expressed that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had won the hearts and minds of every Pakistani with his historic relief package for electricity consumers.

He said KP was facing challenge of loadshedding and emphasized that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially traders,

businessmen, industrialists, as well as farmers, stand to gain immensely from the initiative.

Under the package, the Prime Minister has announced a reduction of Rs7.41 per unit in electricity rates nationwide, aiming to ease the financial burden on citizens grappling with high electricity bills. Notably, industries will benefit from a larger discount, with electricity prices reduced by Rs7.59 per unit.

Ashfaq Khan, President of the Pabbi Traders Association Nowshera, also congratulated the nation, particularly the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former FATA regions.

He commended the Prime Minister and his financial team for their efforts in securing this substantial power rate reduction, noting that convincing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for such a cut was no small feat.

Ashfaq Khan stressed that the package would boost industrial development across the country, providing relief to domestic consumers from Chitral to Karachi and Waziristan to Gilgit.

He added that the relief package would play a crucial role in reviving struggling industries in KP and promoting growth in nascent industries, essential for thriving in today’s competitive landscape.

Muhammad Zilakat Malik, former Chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Peshawar, also lauded the power relief initiative, calling it a breath of fresh air for both domestic and

industrial consumers.

He expressed hope that citizens would recognize the importance of electricity conservation and help the government in exposing electricity theft.

Business figures like Nusrat Khattak, a steel businessman, and Sajjad Khan, a general merchant, joined the chorus of support, describing the power relief package as historic.

Both praised the Prime Minister’s leadership, believing that the move would steer the country toward progress and development, earning widespread admiration for his commitment to the people’s welfare.



PESHAWAR: City president of PPP Zulfiqar Afghani addressing party workers on eve of 46th death anniversary of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Derajat festival kicks off with colourful activities



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Derajat Festival kicked off with colourful activities in Dera Ismail Khan on Saturday.

The opening ceremony, held at Ratta Kulachi Stadium, featured cultural games, traditional music, food items, art exhibitions, fireworks, puppet shows, Taekwondo competitions, information on provincial tourism and cultural heritage sites, and various other recreational activities.

The Mina Bazaar was also part of the gala that showcased products for women and children, musical performances, Saraiki Jhoomer, magic performances, and children’s games beside parades, cattle shows, PT shows, tent pegging, livestock exhibitions,

horse riding and march pasts.

To provide information and raise awareness among visitors, a Tourism Information Desk was set up by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority and the Department of Archaeology.

The desk displayed brochures about the province’s tourist destinations and 3D maps of Hazara and Malakand divisions. The archaeology desk offered brochures and books about historical sites.

At the inaugural ceremony, Member National Assembly Faisal Amin Gandapur visited the tourism and archaeology desks.

Deputy manager for Tourist Information Centres at the KPCTA Saeed Khan welcomed the guests and briefed them on various tourist destinations and ongoing projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Faisal Amin Gandapur said that the province held immense potential for tourism and that the authority was doing an excellent job.

About the Tirich Mir summit, he said that a summary had been sent for the waiver of royalty fees for mountaineers for two years.

This initiative, he said, was expected to significantly boost international-level tourism in Chitral and attract a large number of international climbers to the province.

The festival aims not only to preserve local traditions but also to connect the younger generation with their cultural heritage.

Child education in erstwhile FATA: A lingering crisis

Rahat Sher Khan

In Pakistan’s former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), now merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a long history of conflict coupled with chronic underinvestment in education has left a deep scar on the region’s future. According to UNICEF report 2022, A staggering 300,000 children were out of school in the erstwhile FATA region, highlighting the urgent need for educational reforms and infrastructure development. This alarming statistic is compounded by poor school infrastructure—many schools have been damaged or completely destroyed by conflict, with reports suggesting that over 300 educational institutions in the region were either partially or fully demolished over the past decade.

The impact of prolonged conflict on child education in former FATA cannot be overstated. For decades, security concerns and constant instability have forced families to withdraw their children from school, significantly lowering enrollment rates. The persistent threat of violence and the loss of safe learning environments have not only disrupted academic progress but have also contributed to an increase in child labor, as parents, faced with economic hardship, push their children into work to supplement dwindling incomes. Additionally, negative parental perceptions—fueled by years of neglect and the absence of functional schools—have further undermined the value placed on formal education. Gender disparities are particularly severe in this region. Cultural biases and security risks have resulted in girls being disproportionately kept out of school. While boys’ enrollment has slightly recovered in some areas, recent reports indicate that female enrollment in former FATA remains below 50%, a gap that significantly hampers the prospects for socio-economic advancement and long-term development.

A major contributing factor to these challenges is the failure to implement the promised merger plan effectively. Although the integration of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was expected to bring significant investments and policy reforms, delays and insufficient funding have left the region with persistent deficits. The government’s expenditure on education remains critically low—hovering around 1.7% of GDP—far below international benchmarks for developing countries. This fiscal negligence, combined with poor governance and administrative disputes, has further limited the construction of new schools and the rehabilitation of existing ones.

Researchers and academicians argue that a multifaceted approach is essential to improve child education in the conflict-affected region. Legislative measures enforcing compulsory education and stringent child labor laws must be prioritized, while significant increases in budgetary allocations should be directed toward rebuilding infrastructure. In addition, community-based initiatives that promote awareness of the long-term benefits of education are urgently needed. Researchers are also calling for incentive programs, such as conditional and unconditional transfers to improve school enrollment and attendance, to reduce the economic pressure that drives child labour.

The ongoing educational crisis in erstwhile FATA is a stark reminder of how prolonged conflict and policy failures can derail development. With targeted reforms and renewed investment, there is hope that the region can break free from the cycle of instability and build a future where every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute to national progress.

152 killed, 302 injured in terror attacks in KP

F.P Report

PESHAWAR: At least 152 people, including police officers, military personnel, and civilians, have lost their lives, while 302 individuals sustained injuries in terrorist attacks across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so far this year, according to a quarterly report issued by the Central Police Office.

The report reveals that civilians suffered the highest number of casualties,

with 45 killed and 127 injured in various incidents throughout the province.

Police forces also bore heavy losses, with 37 officers martyred and 46 wounded over the past three months.

Among military casualties, the Pakistan Army reported 29 personnel martyred and 74 injured. The Frontier Corps (FC) lost 34 personnel, with 43 others wounded.

Bannu district recorded the highest number of casualties, with 124 people - including security personnel and civilians - killed or injured in militant attacks.

In Khyber district, 42 casualties were reported, while North Waziristan accounted for 41, involving police, military and civilians.

Additionally, seven personnel from intelligence and other law enforcement agencies were martyred and 12 injured during the reporting period.

Commandant Scouts commended journalists role

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Commandant Tal Scouts, Alamgir Khan, met with journalists from Orakzai and Hangu Press Clubs to discuss the current situation in Kurram and other areas. Major Ahsan Afridi was also present at the meeting, on Saturday.

The Commandant Alamgir Khan praised the district administration, security forces, and local media for their collaborative efforts in maintaining peace. He com-

mended the positive role of journalists from Hangu and Orakzai districts in promoting peace and stability.

The Commandant emphasized the need for continued collaboration to ensure peace and stability in the region. Journalists expressed their commitment to playing a key role in promoting peace and prosperity in the area.

The meeting highlighted the importance of cooperation between authorities and local media in maintaining peace and stability.

By working together, they aim to restore normalcy and promote a sense of security among the local population. This joint effort is crucial in addressing the challenges posed by recent unrest and ensuring a peaceful future for the region.

The Commandant’s praise for local journalists underscores the significance of their role in promoting peace and stability. Their commitment to continuing this work is a positive step towards achieving this goal.



PESHAWAR: A worker knitting traditional bed at Dabgari Bazaar.

Screening of ‘Bol Utho’ short film held at PPC

PESHAWAR (APP): A special screening ceremony for the short film “Bol Utho”, focused on Nikkah Nama (marriage contract) reforms, was organized at the Peshawar Press Club (PPC) in collaboration with Shirkat Gah. The film advocates necessary reforms in the marriage registration process in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The event was attended by former Provincial Ombudsperson Rakhshanda Naz, Peshawar High Court Advocate Nasir Ghalezi,

members of the legal fraternity, civil society representatives, students, and Dr. Riffat Aziz, a member of the “Bol Utho” campaign.

Zeena Bibi, the journalist and filmmaker behind the short film, shared that the film focuses on key issues surrounding unregistered and unqualified Nikkah registrars, along with broader challenges tied to the marriage process in KP.

The film urges the provincial government to implement a standardized Nikkah Nama format

across the province.

She further emphasized the film’s core message: women must be given the right to read and fill out the Nikkah Nama themselves prior to the marriage ceremony.

The entire production of the short film and campaign was supported by Shirkat Gah.

Speaking on the “Bol Utho” movement, Rakhshanda Naz pointed out that the province still lacks a uniform Nikkah Nama, and that women are often not allowed to

read or fill in the marriage contract during the Nikkah process—something that needs urgent reform.

Advocate Nasir Ghilzai shared during his remarks that a petition has been submitted to the Peshawar High Court under the “Bol Utho” campaign.

The petition demand amendments to the Nikkah Nama to include mandatory Thalassemia and HIV testing, and measures to ensure the protection of women’s rights within the contract.

Poor higher education in KP: A matter of growing concern

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, once a province with rich potential for academic excellence, is now grappling with significant challenges in its higher education sector, mainly due to inadequate financial resources and a lack of qualified faculty, which hinders the province’s social and economic development.

Despite the efforts to improve educational infrastructure in recent years, KP’s higher education system continues to face a multitude of issues. From inadequate funding to a lack of qualified faculty, the provincial government and universities alike are struggling to provide quality education to students.

“A key issue affecting the quality of higher education in KP is the scarcity of resources. Public universities are particularly vulnerable, with limited budgets that fail to meet the growing

ing demand for modern facilities and high-quality teaching. This has led to overcrowded classrooms, outdated learning materials, and insufficient research opportunities,” said Professor Dr. Zilakat Malik, former Chairman of the Economics Department at University of Peshawar.

As a result, the students are often left with fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful academic pursuits or career development besides leading to poor performance of candidates in competitive examinations.

He said that many universities in KP are unable to attract top-tier educators due to uncompetitive salaries and poor working conditions. This has led to an increase in adjunct faculty, who may not always possess the necessary expertise or commitment to ensure high-quality teaching. Consequently, students are deprived of the mentor-

ship and knowledge needed to excel in their respective fields.

Additionally, he said that the lack of continuous professional development for existing faculty members limits their ability to keep up with evolving teaching methodologies and research advancements.

Dr Zilakat said this stagnation undermines the effectiveness of higher education in the region and reduces the prospects for innovation and academic growth.

While KP has made strides in increasing the number of institutions of public sector universities over the past few years, access to quality education remains unequal, especially in rural and remote areas of the province.

Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, former Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Department said the recent dismal performance of candidates in

various competitive examinations speaks volumes of the deteriorating standards of higher education in our universities.

He told APP that not a single candidate from the lawyer’s quota passed last year’s examination for additional sessions judges, adding only nine candidates qualified for the 80 seats of civil judges.

Out of the 598 candidates, 139 did not pass the English part and that only 408 candidates out of 28,024, a mere 2.96%, passed the written CSS exam.

“That means students graduating from universities have the degree but not the knowledge to do well in competitive exams.”

Akhtar said one reason for the poor performance of universities is the lack of good governance which requires adherence to the law set for universities in the constitution of the country, the HEC guide-

lines and the Act that governs them.

Though the preamble to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act, 2012 postulates reconstitution and reorganisation of “universities to further improve their governance and management by ensuring accountability, transparency and giving due representation to all stakeholders in decision-making, so as to enhance the quality of higher education in the province”, in reality the performance of universities declined.

Contrary to the set standards, he said that universities offer programmes, even MPhil and PhD, without regular faculty, hampering research work.

Although recent amendments to the KP Universities Act require registrars to be appointed from within the administrative cadre of universities, he claimed that this requirement is often overlooked to

accommodate hand-picked candidates.

He further claimed that appointments of vice chancellors against merit leads to poor governance and dismal administrative performance something that impacts the quality of education and research in universities.

Moreover, appointing scores of redundant teaching and non-teaching staff in universities creates unnecessary financial burden on universities. Such appointees resort to litigation seeking regularisation of their services despite the fact that there is no such provision in the laws of universities.

In view of the aforementioned observation, the right course is to follow the HEC guidelines, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa University Act, 2012, and the statutes made thereunder in letter and spirit and put an end to ad hocism. Universities

ought to have permanent vice chancellors and other officers in accordance with the laws of the universities.

Akhtar argued that stop-gap arrangements will only worsen the falling standards of education and governance in universities.

With a consistent permanent set-up, one can hope that universities in KP are likely to deliver some of the promises they make in their mottos. The experts said addressing the shortcomings of higher education in KP requires comprehensive reform, including increased funding for public universities, better faculty retention strategies, and the development of a more inclusive educational system.

Moreover, strengthening collaborations between universities and industries can help bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application, ensuring that students graduate with skills that are rel-

evant to the job market.

Additionally, the provincial government must prioritize investing in rural and remote education infrastructure, ensuring that no student is left behind regardless of their geographic location or economic background.

By focusing on quality, accessibility, and inclusivity, they said KP can work towards creating an education system that nurtures innovation, empowers youth, and contributes to the long-term prosperity of the province.

The experts said the poor state of higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa if left unaddressed, could have far-reaching consequences on the province’s development. However, with focused efforts and strategic reforms, there is still hope for transforming the higher education sector and ensuring a brighter future for the youth of KP.



In brief

Farewell party to honour DSJ F.P. Report

BANNU: District and Sessions Judge (D&SJ) Bannu Muzammal Khan has said that without a lawyer, a judge cannot truly reach justice. Only the strong arguments of a lawyer can turn the tide of a case. Only a strong relationship between the bar and the bench will provide quick and cheap justice to the people. He expressed these views while addressing the farewell ceremony in his honor on behalf of the District Bar Association. On this occasion, President Bar Shah Qiyaz Khan Bacha, Advocate, General Secretary Shoaib Khan Sadozai Advocate presented a senior to the departing District and Sessions Judge Muzammil Khattak and paid tribute to his services to the bar. At the ceremony, he said, "As a lawyer, I have had a strong relationship with the bar, but when I became a judge, great responsibilities fell on me. Now if we follow the principles given by our chair, If we do not abide by the law, how will we answer Allah in that world? He said that lawyers and judges play their part in providing justice to the people. If the lawyer follows the case firmly in front of the court, then success in the case is possible.

Bid to supply liquor foiled

SARGODHA (INP): Police have successfully foiled a major attempt to supply illegal liquor and arrested an accused. According to police, Station House Officer Urban Area Safdar Iqbal led the operation alongside his team, intercepting a rickshaw being used to transport liquor. The accused, identified as Nauman, was taken into custody. During the search, police recovered 69 bottles of imported liquor and 90 liters of locally brewed alcohol from the suspect's possession. A case was registered against him under narcotics laws, and legal proceedings were initiated. "Sellers of poison have no place in our society and will not be shown any leniency," said DPO Muhammad Sohaib Ashraf.

10000 girls students to be enrolled F.P. Report

BUNER: The enrolment of girls has been started to ensure admission of ten thousand students in school and will continue till the end of this month, on Saturday. While making the announcement public along with the administrative staff, he has given a message to the parents through the media that they should enroll girls from the age of five to sixteen years in government schools and take advantage of the fixed incentive package for free books and cash stipend for uniforms. He added the government schools have the facilities of clean water, electricity and seating arrangement with availability highly qualified and teachers services to the students with modern training for better education and training and co-curricular activities. He further said that for the success of the ongoing admission campaign in the government schools, the SDEO ADEO DEO school in charge the school staff officers of the Department of Education, PTC members, Secretary Chairman of the Village Council, will go to house to house in the related Villages and to make sure admission to the school age girls from the age of five to sixteen.



SHANGLA: Funeral prayer of four tourists killed in road mishap being offered at Alpuri Chowk. — F.P. photo

Peace jirga vows to ensure stability in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Dozens of residents from Badawan, Khadgazai, Mian Badrangola, and surrounding villages in Tehsil Adenzai convened a peace jirga in Badawan to discuss measures for maintaining law and order in their area.

The gathering was addressed by community elders and political representatives, including Naeemullah Khan of PPP, President of Islah-e-Jirga Badawan Khadgazai Lateef Bacha, President of Islah-e-Aman Jirga Adenzai Muqarab Khan, former nazim Muhammad Israr, Dost Dar Khan, former Nazim Jehan Bahadur Khan, Engineer Wajid Ali Rughani, Ehsanullah Badawani, Ishaq Saimab Gujar, and former District Naib Nazim Abdul Rasheed Khan.

Addressing the jirga, the speakers emphasized that peace and stability in Tehsil Adenzai must be upheld at all costs. They firmly stated that no individual or group would be allowed to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of the region. The participants called upon elected representatives, including Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs), the Tehsil Chairman, and all Village Council Chairmen, to play an active role in safeguarding peace.

They declared their readiness to make any sacrifices necessary to maintain order and warned that no miscreants would be allowed to enter the area. Furthermore, they asserted that anyone found facilitating such elements would be held accountable before the entire community.

The jirga members pledged their full support to law enforcement agencies and the administration in national efforts to restore peace but opposed any military operations in the area. It was also announced that a grand Peace Jirga would soon be held at the tehsil level to further strengthen peace efforts.

Agriculture Department urges farmers to protect wheat crops from yellow Rust disease: The Agriculture Department of Lower Dir has advised farmers and landowners to take preventive measures against yellow rust disease in wheat crops. Talking to local journalists at Timergara here, officials emphasized that proper crop care and timely spraying are essential to safeguard wheat production.

District Director of Agriculture Sajjad Hussain stated that after continuous rainfall and fluctuations in weather conditions, the sudden clearing of the skies leads to an unusual increase in yellow rust disease, which significantly reduces yield.

He explained that due to humidity, the disease manifests as a powdery rust-like substance on wheat leaves, stems, or grains, severely impacting crop output. He urged farmers not to panic but to ensure timely care and spraying to prevent losses. Furthermore, he assured farmers that his department is available for any consultation and support in agricultural advancements.

DC hold meeting on repatriation of Afghans

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Deputy Commissioner Mardan, held meeting regarding the re-mapping and repatriation arrangements of foreign nationals. The meeting was attended by all Assistant Commissioners, Additional Assistant Commissioners, Administrator Afghan Refugee Camp, police, and law enforcement agencies, on Saturday.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on various aspects of the dignified repatriation of Afghan citizens. Important measures were reviewed, including the establishment of logistics points, mapping and re-mapping of Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, data collection of known and unknown individuals, and identification of legal and illegal Afghan citizens residing in District Mardan.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed the concerned authorities to initiate the repatriation process of foreign nationals in an effective manner immediately. He directed all relevant departments to complete the necessary

steps in a timely manner and adopt a comprehensive strategy in this regard.

Traders welcomed cut in electricity prices: Provincial General Secretary of the Central Traders Organization Zahir Shah said that while welcoming the government package of reducing electricity tariffs (Rs. 7.41 for domestic consumers, Rs. 7.69 for commercial consumers and Rs. 7.59 for industries per unit), he thanked Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his team that this revolutionary move by the government will not only provide relief to industry and commerce as well as the common man but will also help in the context of economic recovery and stabilize Pakistan's economic growth.

He has paid tribute and congratulated the traders, industrialists and the public across the country for their brilliant struggle to reduce electricity prices. Zahir Shah appealed to the Prime Minister to announce the immediate abolition of various types of taxes, slab system and peak hours to further reduce electricity

bills and thanks to this struggle, today the price of electricity has been reduced for millions of Pakistanis which we welcome.

I killed, six injured in road accident F.P. Report

DERA GHAZI KHAN: One passenger was killed while six others including five women sustained injuries as a bus overturned near South Punjab's hill station, Fort Monroe, while on way towards Multan.

A passenger bus was traveling towards Multan when it overturned near South Punjab's hill station, Fort Monroe. As a result, Abdullah Shah (35) died on the spot while Jaweria (28), Bilal (23), Kulsoom (45), Samina(40), Rimsha(20) and Nashila (50) sustained multiple injuries. Police concerned and Rescue 1122 reached on the spot, shifted the body and injured to THQ hospital Khar for medical treatment.

Bugti vows to eradicate terrorism in Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has expressed satisfaction over a successful operation carried out by Security Forces against terrorists in Buleida.

Chief Minister Bugti paid tribute to the forces, acknowledging their role in thwarting the plans of those aiming to disrupt the province's peace and progress. He emphasized that obstacles to Balochistan's development will not be tolerated.

Highlighting the sacrifices made by the forces, Bugti described them as a source of pride for the nation. He reaffirmed his commitment to eliminating terrorism and establishing lasting peace in Balochistan.

Meanwhile, mobile phone and internet services have been restored in the city of Quetta after three days' suspension. Authorities had suspended the services in the capital of Balochistan for three days due to security reasons.

Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rashid confirmed the restoration of the mobile phone and internet services in the city, saying the action was taken due to security concerns. The suspension of mobile phone and internet services caused difficulties for traders and students attending online classes.

Two killed in road mishap

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Almost two persons were killed while three people were seriously injured in the road mishap, on Saturday.

According to the details, a wagon full of PPP workers going to participate in the 46th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto overturned due to high speed.

As a result, 5 workers were seriously injured, since from 2 persons Zain Tunio and Irfan Ali Tunio died, the dead bodies of the injured workers were shifted to Bahram city of Qamber Shahdadkot district.

Special persons with disabilities hold protest: The deaf-mute and completely deaf youth of Larkana district were trapped in unemployment even though they have the best skills.

Despite hiring the 5% disabled quota set by the Sindh government, many mutes, deaf, deaf, middle, matric, intermediate including graduate and post-graduate education of Larkana district proved to be useless helpers who are currently struggling to get a job.

PPP workers die in mishap

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Two Pakistan People's Party (PPP) workers were killed in a road accident in Larkana when they were returning from attending Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's death anniversary.

According to rescue officials, the driver and seven other individuals also sustained injuries in the accident. The injured and deceased were promptly shifted to the Trauma Center for medical attention.

Four tourists dead, one injured in Shangla road mishap

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: As many as four tourists tragically lost their lives and another was injured when a car plunged into a stream in the darkness of night near Kagha Dand Mattah Aghwan, located about eight kilometers from the district headquarters.

According to details, the tourists, residents of Multan, were traveling from Mingora to Bisham on the fifth day of Eid when the accident occurred. As they reached Kagha Dand Mattah Aghwan, the car went out of the driver's control in the darkness and fell into a stream. Due to the late hour and the absence of nearby population, the incident went unnoticed for some time, resulting in the tragic

deaths of four passengers: Hassan Khan son of Hassan Khan, Jawad son of Shaukat Hussain, Muhammad Umair son of Muhammad Siddique, and Hammad son of Muhammad Khalid, all residents of Multan. They died from drowning and suffocation.

One survivor, Dilawar son of Shaukat Hussain, managed to escape the vehicle but sustained injuries. All deceased and the injured were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital Alpuri, where post-mortem examinations were conducted. The bodies were bathed, shrouded, and funeral prayers were offered at Chowk Alpuri before being sent to their hometown of Multan, Punjab.

Coal miner killed:

Another tragedy struck Shangla as a local resident lost his life in a coal mine accident in Hyderabad due to a dot-fall (roof collapse). The deceased was laid to rest in his native village amidst tearful mourners.

According to details, Gul Ikhtiar, son of Labour, from the village of Nairay Dara, died shortly after returning to work following Eid holidays. He had descended into the mine when a sudden roof collapse buried him under debris. Despite rescue efforts and being pulled out in an injured condition, he succumbed to his wounds.

The body was transported to his native village in Nairay Dara, where funeral rites were performed and he was buried in the presence of hundreds of grieving community members.

Bhutto's 46th death anniversary observed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: The 46th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto observed, at Hafizabad. In this occasion, a ceremony was held at District Bar under chairmanship of Ex- President District Bar Muhammad Arshad Mehind Advocate.

Ex-President PPP women wing Hafizabad Khalida Shahid Malik, Ch. Saleem Tarar, Madam Mehvish, Muhammad Mansha, Irfan Bashir, Shahzad Qamar Chatha and other lawyers attended the function.

Addressing on this occasion, Muhammad Arshad Mehind said that late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was given unanimous constitution the nation, he laid foundation of durable peace to make Shimla packet with India and get vacated thou-

sand mails land as well as get released war prisoners from India. He took different steps for protecting rights of down trodden segments of society.

At the end of ceremony, prayer was offered for eternal peace of the soul of late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto high ranks in paradise and integrity of the country. Prayers were also offered for healing of President Asif Ali Zardari on this occasion.

Car drowns into canal:

A speedy driven car plunged into canal near Hafizabad as a result of which a girl was drowned and his relative rescued. According to details, Manazar Ahmad and Sumaira Rani Resident of village Narowal were on its way to Hafizabad on a car. When the car reached near village Muradian, the driv-

er lost control over steering and the car plunged into canal. As result of which, car both riders were drowned. Rescue 1112 rushed to the spot and saved Manazar Ahmad alive while Sameera drowned to death. Rescue 1122 divers are searching the dead body till the filling of this report.

Meanwhile, a student of class 7th Murtaza was going to his village after receiving result card from school along with his brother on motorcycle. When they reached near Shahpur village, their bike was collided with a tractor trolley. Resultantly Murtaza was died on the spot while his brighter Mustafa was injured critically. The dead body and injured shifted to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital Pindi Bhattian.

PPP observes death anniversary of ZAB

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The People's Students Federation (PSF), Lower Dir, organized a solemn ceremony to mark the 46th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto at Timergara here the other day. The event was attended by Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Malakand Division President Malik Azmat Khan, PPP District Information Secretary Nawabzada Irfan Khan Advocate, PSF Provincial Vice President Fazal Hussain, PSF District President Amjad Hussain Salarzai, Timergara Tehsil Councilor Malik Awais Ahmad, former Nazim Malik Siyasat Hayat, and a large number of PSF workers.

Speakers at the event paid rich tributes to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, acknowledging his invaluable contributions to the nation. They highlighted that the late leader was the architect of Pakistan's first unanimous constitution, a champion of democracy, and the driving force behind making Pakistan a nuclear power. His vision led to economic reforms aimed at eliminating the capitalist system, providing overseas Pakistanis with green passports, and implementing initiatives for the upliftment of the poor.

Addressing the gathering, speakers described April 4 as a dark day in history of Pakistan, lamenting that one of the Muslim world's greatest leaders

was martyred through judicial execution. They emphasized that not only Pakistan's top judiciary but also political leaders across the spectrum have now acknowledged that Bhutto's judicial execution was a grave miscarriage of justice.

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to carrying forward the mission and vision of Shaheed Bhutto. They pledged to propagate his philosophy among the masses and to continue their struggle for democracy and social justice in Pakistan. On this occasion, special prayers were offered for the early recovery of President Asif Ali Zardari and for the departed soul of the father of PSF Provincial President Wali Khan.

Three innocent siblings perish in a room fire

F.P. Report

OKARA: Three young siblings were tragically killed in a fire; the children were alone at home while their parents went out to get medicine.

According to details, Zahra Khan, a laborer residing in village 31 GD, had gone with his sick wife to the doctor on Friday night to get her medication. Meanwhile, their three young children, six-year-old Abdullah, five-year-old Shiza, and three-year-old Qamar Abbas, were alone at home.

The children were sleeping on a single bed in the living room. To ward off mosquitoes, they had lit cow dung cakes near the bed. A corner of the sheet they were using fell onto the burning cakes, catching fire, which quickly spread, engulfing the bed and everything in the room.

The room filled with fire and smoke, and all three innocent children perished in the blaze. Local residents, with the help of rescue services, managed to control the fire and retrieve the children from the room.

Stage actress Chanda

Sana murdered: The stage actress Chanda Sana from Arifwala was murdered, and her body was found in Okara. According to the police, the deceased was shot dead, and the body was left in the area of Gogera police station.

On Saturday morning, the police received information that a body of an unidentified girl was lying near the town of 34GD. The deceased was wearing a red dress, and makeup items and cigarettes were also found with her.

Police sources indicate that initial evidence suggests the deceased was a newlywed bride, and the motives for the murder point towards a love marriage. The body was moved to the hospital for a post-mortem examination, where she was identified as Chanda Sana, a resident of Arifwala and a stage actress and dancer. Police registered the case against unknown suspects, and investigations are ongoing to arrest the killers and uncover the reasons behind the murder.

Global events and seminars held: Every year on April 6, the "International Day of Sport for

Development and Peace" is celebrated to highlight the importance of sports in contributing to education, health, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

The central theme for this day in 2025 is to promote social inclusion through sports. This aims to reduce social disparities and provide equal opportunities for all. This day commemorates the start of the modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. The United Nations General Assembly declared this day as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace in 2013. Its aim is to promote human rights and socio-economic development through sports.

Sports improve not only physical health but also mental well-being. They foster discipline, teamwork, and leadership skills among youth. Through sports, harmony and tolerance can be enhanced among people from different cultures and social backgrounds. This serves as a helpful tool in establishing global peace. Various events are organized worldwide, including sports competitions, workshops, and seminars.



BRUSSELS: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte posing with counterparts during a group photo of NATO foreign ministers at NATO headquarters.

Greece to spend 25b euros in ‘drastic’ defence overhaul: PM

ATHENS (AFP): Greece will spend 25 billion euros (\$27 billion) through to 2036 in the "most drastic" defence overhaul in its modern history, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said. The drive, which includes a new anti-missile, anti-aircraft and anti-drone defensive dome called "Achilles's Shield", is aimed at addressing rapidly changing geopolitical challenges and fraying transatlantic ties, Mitsotakis said. "The plan involves the most drastic transformation of the armed forces in the country's modern history," Mitsotakis told parliament.

"The world is changing at an unforeseeable pace." Greece has traditionally invested at least two per cent of gross domestic product on its defence -- NATO's spending target -- owing to decades of tension with regional rivals Turkey.

But the new initiative is also designed to make the country of 10.5 million people "a key branch" of the European Union's defence mechanism, contributing one of the bloc's "most advanced" armies, Mitsotakis said. This year, the nation's plans to spend 6.13 billion euros on defence.

Defence Minister Nikos Dendias said there would be a "full change of dogma" in which a "complex... cheaper... multiple missile system" would defend Greek territory. "We have opposite us an existing, stated threat ten times that of our capabili-

ty," he told lawmakers, referring to Turkey.

Alongside Poland, Estonia and Latvia, Greece is now one of the few NATO member states that allocates more than three percent of output to defence. "Historically, Greece has served and will continue to serve as an outpost for Europe, which is currently seeking to reorganise its defence in a difficult international setting," said Maria Gavouneli, a professor of international law at the University of Athens.

Greek media reports suggest Athens is in negotiations with Israel to acquire the defensive dome, which also includes enhancing anti-drone systems. France, Italy and Norway have been also cited as possible suppliers of the new weapons, which include unmanned vessels (USVs), drones and radars. Greece has sought to strengthen its position on the EU's Eastern Mediterranean border, close to the conflict zones of the Middle East.

A dutiful buyer of European military equipment, especially from France and Germany, Greece has always justified its arms spending by pointing to territorial disputes and threats from historic rival Turkey. "This reorganisation was necessary for Greece because during the economic crisis of the last decade and the freeze on public spending, the country fell behind in terms of mod-

ernising (its arsenal)," said Gavouneli, who is also the director general of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy think-tank.

Greece has signed a military cooperation agreement with France, ordering 24 Rafale fighter jets and three Belharra-class defence and intervention frigates (FDI) for a total of more than 5.5 billion euros. And three more of the frigates could be built in Greek shipyards under a new proposal, a source at France's Naval Group said.

Athens has also signed a deal for the acquisition of 20 US-made F-35 fighter jets. Last November, the defence minister said Greece would order four different drone systems and overhaul its armed forces by merging military units. Greece had over 1,800 colonels instead of a required 568, he said.

Athens must cope with a "different reality" and modernise its forces quickly to meet the challenges of the 21st century and those in its relationship with Ankara, Dendias said at the time. France, Germany, and Poland recently announced plans to bolster their militaries at a time of faltering confidence in the US military umbrella. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has stressed that the EU must significantly increase its arms spending in the face of the threat from Russia.

EU leaders push for influence at Central Asia summit

BRUSSELS (AFP): Top EU leaders were in Uzbekistan for a major summit with the heads of five Central Asian states, seeking to press their influence and boost ties in the face of Russian and Chinese competition.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has accelerated the region's drift from Moscow's orbit, with major powers to both the west and east sensing an opening. Central Asia is rich in natural resources, on the front lines of climate change and also seen as a key security player as a Muslim-majority region that is trying to contain extremism and shares borders with Afghanistan, Iran, China and Russia.

Leaders from the five states -- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan -- will meet European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa, head of the European Council. The summit takes place in the ancient Silk Road city of Samarkand, for centuries a key hub in East-West connections, trade and commerce.

Von der Leyen said she hopes the summit will take Brussels' relations with Central Asia "to the next level" and deepen ties in terms of transport, natural resources, water and energy. "In these uncertain times, Europe stands for openness and engagement. For Europe, Central Asia is a partner of choice," she said.

Alongside Russia's historic leadership in the region, Turkey, China, the United States and even the likes of South Korea and Japan are all trying to boost their influence. For its part, Central Asia -- as large as the EU but home to just 80 million people, one-fifth of those in the 27-member bloc -- has been seeking to boost foreign investment. The EU summit offers the countries a chance to get something their neighbours Russia and China cannot yet provide: advanced industrial technology.

Europe, meanwhile, is eyeing the region's precious resources. On the eve of the summit, Kazakhstan announced discovering potentially its "largest" ever deposit of rare earth elements. The EU has its

sights on uranium deposits, at a time when nuclear power is making a comeback, as well as other strategic metals like titanium, cobalt, and lithium, said Raul Villegas, an analyst at the European Policy Centre, a Brussels-based think tank.

As a bloc, the EU is already the region's largest foreign investor, accounting for 40 percent of direct inward investment over the last 10 years. It is also the largest provider of development aid. But Russia and China will be difficult to dislodge. Beijing is pouring cash into ambitious infrastructure projects, while Russia supplies arms and energy, as well as having long-standing cultural and linguistic reach across the former Soviet states.

During a visit to Uzbekistan last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin criticised the United States and Europe for "trying to disrupt our traditionally close commercial, cooperative and cultural ties." The war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia will also be on the table, an EU official told AFP. Central Asia has

emerged as one of several hubs through which sanctioned Western goods are re-exported to Russia.

Brussels would like the region to crack down on the flow, as it pushes to keep up the pressure on Moscow at a time when US President Donald Trump pushes a rapprochement with the Kremlin. Central Asian countries have shown "willingness" to act and "some progress" but "we would like to see a lot more from our partners," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Further action was not a precondition for cooperation in other sectors but "an important element in order to advance our relations," the official added. Despite pleas from NGOs, human rights were not expected to feature heavily in the talks.

"We're not going there to preach, but we are going to make our concerns known, to work with them, to have a dialogue," the official said. All five of the countries are classed as "not free" by the Freedom House NGO that tracks democratic rights around the world.

Russia says US threats of mly strikes against Iran unacceptable

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia said that threats of military strikes against its ally Iran were unacceptable and warned that attacking the Islamic Republic could lead to potentially catastrophic results if nuclear installations were bombed.

US President Donald Trump threatened Iran with bombing and secondary tariffs if Tehran did not come to an agreement with Washington over its nuclear program, and the United States has moved additional warplanes into the region.

Asked about Iran's nuclear programme and the dangers in the current situation, Russia's foreign ministry said that Moscow was committed to finding solutions to Iran's nuclear programme which respected Tehran's rights to peaceful nuclear energy. "The use of military force by Iran's opponents in the context of the settlement is illegal and unacceptable," Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the ministry, told reporters.

"Threats from outside to bomb Iran's nuclear infrastructure facilities will inevitably lead to an irreversible global catastrophe. These threats are simply unacceptable." Western powers accuse Iran of having a clandestine agenda to develop nuclear weapons capability by enriching uranium to a high level of fissile purity, above what they say is justifiable for a civilian atomic energy program.

Tehran says its nuclear program is wholly for civilian energy purposes. Russia and Iran signed a "comprehensive strategic partnership agreement" in January, though there is no mutual defence clause. Under the agreement, if one party is attacked, the other will not help the aggressor.

Russia condemns US threats, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told the Life magazine. Ryabkov said an attack on Iran could unfurl a broader open conflict in the Middle East. "The consequences of this, especially if there are strikes on the nuclear infrastructure, could be catastrophic for the entire region," Ryabkov said.

Ukraine has not discussed new aid with US yet

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine has not yet discussed new military aid packages with the US, the deputy head of the Ukrainian presidential office said, amid uncertainty about additional support from Washington for Kyiv's fight against Russia's full-scale invasion.

"As for new aid packages, we have not yet had a dialogue with the American side on this topic," Pavlo Palisa said in remarks to journalists. Palisa, who works on national security and defence in the presidential office, was referring to discussions with US representatives in meetings he attended in Saudi Arabia in March.

The first meeting resulted in a resumption of previously approved American aid to Ukraine, after Kyiv said it was ready to support a 30-day ceasefire proposal. However, Speaker of the US House of Representatives Mike Johnson said in February there was "no appetite" for another funding bill for Ukraine.

In late March the US reached separate deals with Ukraine and Russia, which included proposals to pause their attacks at sea and against energy targets. Since then Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of continued strikes on energy facilities. Palisa said the Ukrainian side informed the Americans about Russian violations of the moratorium on energy strikes, and still considered the agreement about it with the US to be valid. According to two US officials familiar with the matter, American officials in recent days discussed the likelihood that Washington would be unable to secure a Ukraine peace deal in the next few months and were drawing up new plans to pressure both Kyiv and Moscow.

Pakistan Day reception held in Ottawa



F.P. Report

OTTAWA: The High Commission hosted the Pakistan Day Reception to commemorate the 85th anniversary of Pakistan Day in Ottawa on Saturday. Around 250 guests including Canadian dignitaries, senior government functionaries, members of diplomatic corps, international organizations, business community, representatives of academia, media, civil society, Pakistani community and students attended the event.

In his address on the auspicious occasion, High Commissioner Muhammad Saleem underscored the significance of Pakistan Day reflecting on the country's journey shaped by the

vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the sacrifices of Pakistan's founding leaders.

The High Commissioner shared encouraging economic developments in Pakistan over the past year. He highlighted stabilization and growth driven by key reforms, improved fiscal management and increased investor confidence. He noted that foreign exchange reserves have strengthened while remittances and exports have also risen contributing to the country's economic resilience.

Emphasizing the friendly and enduring ties between Pakistan and Canada, Saleem highlighted the potential and promising opportunities for enhancing bilateral politi-

cal, economic, investment, trade and cultural ties. Highlighting Canada among the top 5 investor countries in Pakistan last year, he urged the business community for enhancing investment portfolio in mining, IT, agriculture, energy and infrastructure sectors. He also commended the vibrant Pakistani-Canadian diaspora for their significant contribution in public and private sectors enriching Canada's diverse society while maintaining strong ties with their heritage. The High Commissioner reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peace, prosperity, and inclusivity while stressing the importance of deepening Pakistan-Canada relations in all domains.

Workers killed in flooding were given time to evacuate

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) : Workers at an East Tennessee plastics company who died in flooding from last year's Hurricane Helene had time to evacuate, albeit by "makeshift routes," according to an investigation from the Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Administration released. "It was found that Impact Plastics, Inc. exercised reasonable diligence to dismiss employees and direct them to leave the site in this emergency situation," the report concludes. "As the deaths of Impact Plastics, Inc. employees are not work related, no citations are recommended." Five employees and one contractor who cleaned the offices once a week were killed on Sept. 27 after they were washed away by floodwaters. Attorneys for their surviving family members vehemently dispute the conclusion that they were dismissed from work with time to evacuate safely.

"TOSHA's report ignores the testimony of multiple witnesses, critical text messages, emergency alert logs, and photographic evidence that tell the real story about Impact Plastics' fatal failures," said attorney Alex Little, who represents the family of Johnny Peterson. "We're grateful that in America, juries - not bureaucrats citing unnamed sources - will decide the truth based on all the evidence." Peterson was one of 12 people who tried to escape the rising waters by climbing onto the bed of a semi-trailer loaded with giant spools of plastic piping that was parked outside the factory. When floodwaters eventually overwhelmed the truck, six people were able to use the piping for floatation and were later rescued. The other six drowned.

TOSHA notes that its investigation was hampered by "phone service disruptions, language barriers, and other challenges." It also says that the flooding destroyed the company's workplace safety records. Attorney Luke Widener, who represents the family of contractor Sibrina Barnett and other victims, alleged in a statement that many safety records, including an emergency evacuation plan, never existed. He pointed out that workers at surrounding businesses in the industrial park were able to evacuate safely.

"While we agree with TOSHA's suggestion that Impact Plastics should improve its emergency plans, this comes far too

late for our clients," Widener said. The TOSHA report relies on the fact that a number of Impact Plastics employees did escape the flood, despite the fact that the one road in and out of the park was already covered in water by the time they began to evacuate. Some were able to escape by driving or walking over an embankment to a nearby highway after workers at a neighboring business dismantled a fence there. Others escaped by driving over a makeshift path onto nearby railroad tracks that an employee at a neighboring business created with a tractor. Still others were able to escape by walking to the railroad tracks, according to the report.

In response to questions about these makeshift escape routes, Chris Cannon, spokesman for the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, said in an email, "Evacuation by auto was not the only feasible evacuation route." He added, "TOSHA would not be able to hold an employer accountable for road conditions." A statement for the company from attorney Stephen Ross Johnson says Impact Plastics welcomes the results of the TOSHA investigation.

US revokes visas of Mexican band members

MEXICO CITY (AP): The US State Department revoked the visas of members of a Mexican band after they projected the face of a drug cartel boss onto a large screen during a performance in the western state of Jalisco over the weekend. US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, who was US ambassador to Mexico during the first Trump administration, said on X that the work and tourism visas of members of Los Alegres del Barranco were revoked.

The visa revocations follow widespread outrage in Mexico over the concert as prosecutors in two states have launched investigations into the projected images, and a larger national reckoning over how to address the rise of a popular musical genre criticized for romanticizing drug cartels. "I'm a firm believer in freedom of expression, but that doesn't mean that expressions should be free of consequences," Landau wrote on X. "The last thing we need is a welcome mat for people who extol criminals and terrorists."

The controversy broke out over the weekend when the face of Nemesio Rubén "El Mencho"

Oseguera layered over flames was projected behind the band, originally hailing from Sinaloa, during the concert. Finger pointing ensued among the band, concert producers and the venue. Oseguera is the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, which has been connected to a ranch authorities say was used to train cartel recruits and possibly dispose of bodies in Jalisco, where searchers found human bone fragments, heaps of clothing and shoes.

The Jalisco cartel is among other criminal groups in Mexico that have been designated as foreign terrorist organizations by the Trump administration. While the image was met by applause during the concert, Jalisco prosecutors quickly announced they were summoning the band to testify in an investigation into whether they were promoting violence, a crime which could result in a penalty of up to six months in prison. The state of Michoacan also announced an investigation into the Los Alegres del Barranco for projecting the same images during a concert in the city of Uruapan.

Jalisco Gov. Pablo Lemus said that the state would ban musical performances that glorify violence, adding that violators would "face monetary and criminal sanctions." "We know that outrage is not enough," Lemus said. "Of course it's possible to ban (the music)."

Since, a number of the band's future shows have been cancelled, one town's government saying that the show "didn't have the municipal permissions needed" to carry out the performance. Pavel Moreno, the band's accordion player and back-up singer, didn't respond to questions by fans asking if his visa had been revoked, simply thanking them for support and saying that "everything is fine."

The band was scheduled to play in Tulsa, Oklahoma on April 4. While the event hasn't been publicly cancelled, ticket sales websites read: "No tickets available for now on our site" for that date. The dispute coincides with a larger cultural debate in Mexico as artists like Peso Pluma, Fuerza Regida and Natanael Cano usher in a global renaissance of Mexican regional music, by mixing classic ballads with trap music.

Serbian student protesters head to Strasbourg

NOVI SAD (AP): Serbian university students who say their fight for justice and the rule of law is being overlooked are cycling 1,300 kilometers (780 miles) toward the heart of the European Union to seek support.

Around 80 students set off on bicycles on a days-long journey to Strasbourg, France, where the European Parliament meets, aiming to draw EU attention to their months-long protests against corruption in the Balkan nation, which is seeking membership in the 27-nation bloc. University students have been a key force behind a nationwide anti-graft movement that includes almost daily street

demonstrations that have rattled the Balkan nation's President Aleksandar Vucic. While they have garnered huge support at home, many students feel they haven't received enough support from the EU.

The cycles took off in a light, chilly rain to a noisy farewell from Novi Sad, a northern Serbian city some 90 kilometers from the capital Belgrade. "Yes, it will be tough and we will have a hard time but I think it will be worth it," said Ivan Poturica, a mathematics student from Novi Sad. "We expect someone to finally react to the situation in Serbia."

The students will cycle about 100-150 kilometers

(60-90 miles) per day, through Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Germany before reaching France. Along the way, they plan to stay with the Serbs living abroad and fellow-students from the EU. The journey will show "the students' persistence and determination" and "make our voice heard throughout the world," they said.

The student-led protests in Serbia were triggered by the deaths of 16 people in a deadly train station canopy collapse November, widely blamed on rampant corruption, but they have since come to reflect wider discontent with Vucic's populist rule in Serbia. Since coming to power over a decade ago,

Vucic has been accused of stifling democratic freedoms while maintaining close links with Russia and China.

Protesting students have been demanding justice for the victims of the Nov. 1 canopy collapse and an end to government pressure and violence against protesters. Those are the values the EU stands for, students say. "I think our ideas and demands that we are taking to Strasbourg are realistic," said medical student Bogan Jelaca. "This is why I had to join." Vucic and pro-government media have accused the students and their professors of working against the state, and student protesters have been attacked on numerous occasions.

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Putin is in real trouble now

WITH increasing signs of Putin's Russia dragging its feet on the US proposed ceasefire one wonders if this is a case of brinkmanship or deliberate folly. Having rejected Trump's proposed 30-day ceasefire and making a frankly unattainable counter-offer, Putin has now set in motion the biggest call-up yet of Russian conscripts (and I would not put too much store in his promise that they will not be sent to Ukraine).

While he's still taking tough, things don't look great on the military or economic fronts for Putin. On the battlefield the Russians have resorted to still more extreme cannon-fodder tactics with some thrusts being led, Mad Max style, in converted cars and trucks. Ukrainian attacks have struck airfields far into Russia destroying some very modern and expensive aircraft and air defence missile systems. Add to these the mysterious attacks in Moscow itself, including the destruction of a presidential limousine, and it is clear that either there is a capable Ukrainian sabotage and special-ops network in place or disgruntled Russians are now out to rid themselves of their President.

Meanwhile Putin's international allies remain present but increasingly preoccupied with their own problems. China's focus is on Taiwan and its scuffles with the Philippines. Lukashenko is clinging to power in Belarus by his teeth, with his army fully committed to his personal defence since the stolen election of 2020 and his sham victory in January this year. The North Koreans have disappointed on the battlefield and an increasingly desperate Iranian regime is even talking of attacking the UK/US base in Diego Garcia as it faces a looming attack on its nuclear programme by Israel or the US or both.

For the Ukrainians the omens looked bad after Zelensky's disastrous Oval Office encounter in late February, but now there is the real possibility of Putin upsetting President Trump. This could mean increased indirect support to the Ukrainians using what Republican Congressman Lyndsey Graham described as "bone crushing" sanctions. This could mean sanctions not just on Russia but penalties for anyone who trades with them.

There could also be renewed arms shipments, including the missiles that are proving the most effective. HIMARS and ATACMs are always on the Ukrainian shopping list and they deliver fast results. A high-level Ukrainian source told me recently: "we have more targets than bullets, so to speak". Targeted attacks on high-value assets in Russia - an S300 missile battery at \$500m a copy, an S400 at \$1bn a copy - seriously degrade Russia's capability. If two or three such assets were destroyed each week, then by June, Russia would be begging for peace as its strategic reserve capability is eroded. With effective sanctions in place replacements could not be made at all, never mind in a timely fashion. Such a strategic setback for Russia would mean the voluntary redrawing of the front lines. But that means the munitions must be delivered, not as in the past at a rate enabling Ukraine to survive, but in quantities that give the Ukrainians the edge to win. But this is now an option that may be taken by the White House. It is the likely consequence of frustrating President Trump and his declared resolve to end this war shortly after taking office. A disappointed President Trump is a very dangerous and unpredictable beast. Vladimir Putin would be wise to realise that.

Trump and Brexit

WE have not seen much in the way of deregulation. Nor have we signed many blockbuster trade deals. And yet for anyone who is still wondering what the benefits were of Brexit, we now have a decisive answer. It has allowed the UK to escape the worst of Donald Trump's tariff wars - and in the medium term that could pay extraordinary dividends.

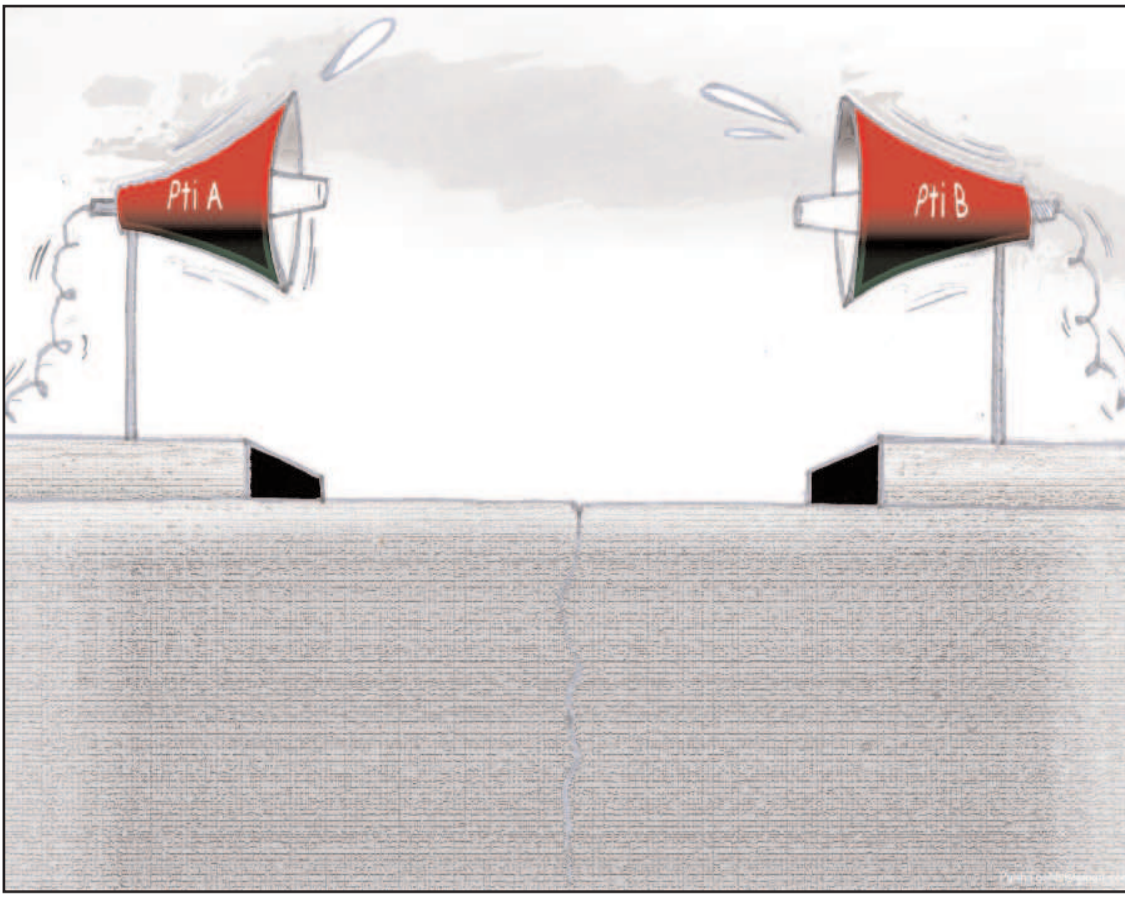
As he unveiled his global tariffs at the White House, the UK was mercifully low down on the list. It wasn't quite the "nul points" we often get at Eurovision, but our exporters will only face a 10 per cent levy on everything they sell into the US. It was less than much of the rest of the world. And perhaps most importantly, it was only half the 20 per cent imposed on the EU. Sure, that will still hurt. The United States is our single biggest export market, and the levies will depress demand. Even so, there is no question that we have been let off relatively lightly.

And we can thank Brexit for that - for three reasons. First, if we were still part of the bloc, or even the Customs Union as hardcore Remainers would like us to be, we would be facing an immediate 20 per cent tariff rate, twice as high as we now will. Next, the EU will almost certainly start a pointless tit for tat tariff war. It will impose retaliatory tariffs, prompting another round of higher levies from the White House, until tariffs hit 40 or 50 per cent on both sides. Inside the EU, we would have no choice but to go along with that. Instead Sir Keir Starmer and his Chancellor Rachel Reeves should be able to see that there is no point in trying to humiliate Trump or force him to back down. It won't work. Our tariffs will stay at 10 per cent and we may even be able to negotiate them even lower or eliminate them completely, something the EU will find impossible.

Finally, it will mean British industry now has a clear competitive advantage over the rest of Europe. For Americans, a Scotch will be cheaper than Cognac, and Burberry cheaper than Hermes, but still with a luxury feel. Even better, there will now be a powerful incentive for EU manufacturers to ramp up production in the UK when they are selling products into the US. They will face lower tariffs while still manufacturing in Europe. A few may even move completely. Of course, the tariffs will still damage the global economy. In effect, they are a huge tax increase, and one that will be paid by American consumers. They will leave the international economy in far worse shape than it was. Even so, the UK has clearly escaped relatively lightly. We might even be better off. And we have our departure from the EU to thank for that.

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The far right has seemed unstoppable in Europe

Nathalie Tocci

DONALD Trump has unleashed a trade war on the world, and Europe, considered by Washington to be among the "worst offenders", is a major target. After hitting European steel, aluminium and cars, this week Trump announced sweeping 20% tariffs on almost all EU imports. Europeans have seen this coming for a long time. Well before his re-election, officials in Brussels were drawing up plans on how the EU might respond to Trump 2.0 and a possible transatlantic trade war.

What might the political fallout in Europe be? The good news is that Trump's trade war puts Trump-friendly far-right forces in Europe in a terribly uncomfortable position. It's one thing for the European far right to support Trump in principle, or to support the administration's tyranny over peoples it doesn't care about, be it Ukrainians, Canadians, Mexicans or Palestinians. It's quite another to defend Trump and his policies when the victims are countries that these far-right parties supposedly represent.

Far-right leaders in Europe have adopted two approaches. The most populist among them have remained as obsequious as ever. Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League party in Italy, claimed that Trump's tariffs represented an "opportunity" for Italian business, without specifying why and how. And if that opportunity is not seized, it will presumably be because of the "grave mistakes" made by Brussels, as the Hungarian foreign minister, Péter Szijjártó, declared. Most other far-right leaders, however, are on the back foot, aware that they are damned if they speak in favour of Trump and damned if they don't. Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, who called the decision "wrong" while meekly arguing in favour of transatlantic talks (as if this were not the position of the European Commission), is clearly uncomfortable.

Another political upside of Trump's transatlantic trade war on Europe is that it could strengthen unity. This effect is already on display. Squeezed in

between Russia's war and US betrayal, Europeans have rediscovered their support for the EU. The latest Eurobarometer revealed that 74% of Europeans believe their country's membership of the EU is a good thing, the highest figure in 42 years. Intuitively, citizens understand that by sticking together the EU can better defend their interests. And nowhere is this more true than in the area of trade, an exclusive competence of the EU. This means that the union can

from Samarkand, where the first EU-central Asia summit is being held. In the same spirit, the entire college of commissioners for the first time travelled to India in February to explore deepening ties with Delhi. António Costa, the president of the European Council, also in Uzbekistan, called for the speedy implementation of the EU's recently signed trade deals with Mercosur and Mexico.

Retaliation towards the US may include sectoral

China in mind, the instrument could now be deployed against the US if an agreement is not reached. This would seriously limit the access of US service companies to the EU single market. So far the EU has allowed itself more time, refraining from responding immediately after Trump's tariff appetiser on steel and aluminium. The delay is aimed at exploring all options to reach a quick deal and, above all, find agreement with member states (or at least a majority of them), bearing in mind that not all countries are affected equally, with Germany, Ireland and Italy standing to lose the most from a trade war with the US.

This is where the main risk lies. So far the Trump administration has been anything but subtle. But precisely because of the differentiated economic impact of tariffs, a more sophisticated and dangerous US approach would be that of sowing divisions by leveraging relations with far-right governments in Europe. Washington could try to woo Rome, for instance, where Meloni's Trump-friendly government could be tempted to break EU unity and accept a favourable bilateral trade deal with the US. In principle it cannot do this, given that trade is an EU competence. But seen from Washington, breaking EU law (and the EU in general) is precisely the point. The US vice-president, JD Vance, is expected to visit Italy over Easter, which makes the threat palpable.

Breaking European unity might not be confined to the EU. Recent months have seen growing strategic convergence across the Channel, especially over Ukraine. The "coalition of the willing" includes France and the UK in the driver's seat, probably joined by Germany and Poland soon. This may open the way to a broader agreement between the EU and the UK. Trump's trade war could put the spanner in the works of this strategic realignment, which includes security but also the economy. So far Washington has not been smart enough to go down this route. But we should assume that it will, and prepare to avoid the trap.

The Guardian

Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, who called the decision "wrong" while meekly arguing in favour of transatlantic talks (as if this were not the position of the European Commission), is clearly uncomfortable. Another political upside of Trump's transatlantic trade war on Europe is that it could strengthen unity. This effect is already on display. Squeezed in between Russia's war and US betrayal, Europeans have rediscovered their support for the EU. The latest Eurobarometer revealed that 74% of Europeans believe their country's membership of the EU is a good thing, the highest figure in 42 years.

develop and deploy a coherent counterstrategy to Trump's trade war that represents the bloc as a whole, with its second-largest economy in the world and more than 450 million citizens. On trade and the economy, the US can hurt the EU a lot, but the reverse is also true.

The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, gave a preview of the EU's response. While pursuing negotiations with Washington, given that avoiding a trade war remains the foremost goal, the EU is preparing to retaliate, diversify its trade relations and deepen the single market. Interestingly, von der Leyen responded to Trump's "liberation day"

tariffs that could be phased over time. More significantly, the EU is considering countermeasures in services, where, unlike in goods, the US enjoys an annual surplus of more than 100bn (£84bn) with the EU. This could include measures such as the suspension of intellectual property rights and the exclusion of US companies from European public procurement tenders. If US escalation continues, demanding for example that the EU lower its VAT, scrap digital taxes or loosen the digital services and digital markets acts, EU retaliation could go as far as activating its trade "nuclear" option, known as the anti-coercion instrument. Developed primarily with

Danila Galperovich

Can the US pry Russia away from China?

WESTERN politicians have repeatedly called on China to limit or cease tacit support for Russia's bloody war against Ukraine. In response, China's leadership insists it is committed to peace and respect for the territorial integrity of other nations.

But unlike most United Nations member states, China has never condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and their military-diplomatic partnership - from joint bomber flights near the US state of Alaska to votes in the UN Security Council - has only helped the Kremlin overcome its international isolation. While President Donald Trump has said he has good personal relations with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, there is a consensus among experts in Washington that the China-Russia partnership poses a threat to US interests, and that while Trump's predeces-

sor, Joe Biden, tried to establish a strategic dialogue with China, the Trump team appears to be prioritizing normalized ties with Russia while punishing China over trade.

As the White House talks about the possibility of restoring economic cooperation with Russia, some of its officials are hinting at lifting or reducing the sanctions Washington has imposed on Moscow in recent years. Charles Hecker, an expert on Western-Russian economic ties and risks, and author of the book Zero Sum: The Arc of International Business in Russia, says some Western companies will quickly return to Russia if sanctions are lifted, particularly those involved in energy, metals and minerals.

"There's only so much oil in Norway, and there's only so much oil in Canada; the rest of it is in some countries that have a very high-risk environment," Hecker told VOA's Russian Service. "And so,

these kinds of companies are accustomed to business in these sorts of places, and they have the internal structures to help protect them. You know, there are energy companies doing business in Iraq right now. And I don't want to compare Russia and Iraq, but they are high-risk environments." Still, Hecker cautions, their return to doing business in Russia wouldn't signal an overall US-Russian rapprochement - let alone a fracturing of Sino-Russian relations.

"I think it will be very difficult for the West to pull Russia away from China," he said. "Allowing Western companies back into Russia doesn't necessarily change President Putin's hostility towards the West. President Putin remains antagonistic towards a Western-dominated political and economic system, and he has said over and over again that he wants to create an alternative political

and economic environment - an alternative to the West.

Therefore, in my opinion, it is entirely possible to consider historical frictions as a vulnerability." A media analyst at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, Gatov also noted that, despite the Kremlin's expectations, China's economic presence inside Russia today remains "several times smaller" than that of either Europe or the US before Russia invaded Ukraine. Thus, while Russian and China have overlapping interests, they are not "marching in lockstep."

"They are very different, they have very different geopolitical focuses, very different political philosophies," he said. Other experts, however, question the Filterlabs findings, warning that random Russian and Chinese opinions online are

Trump seems to be driving tourists away

Ross Bennett-Cook

THE United States is one of the top three most visited countries in the world. The big draw cards - cities such as San Francisco, New York and Chicago and national parks such as Yosemite - have attracted international tourists for decades. This combined with its role as a global business powerhouse meant it had 66.5 million visitors in 2023 - and the 2024 figure is expected to be higher still.

But a lot has changed in recent months, and 2025's figures may not be as strong. The 2024 reelection of Donald Trump as the president of the United States and the consequential changes in foreign diplomacy and relations, alongside internal cultural shifts, are starting to change global attitudes towards the US - attitudes that appear to be affecting tourists' desire to visit the US. In a recent report by research firm Tourism Economics, inbound travel to the US is now projected to decline by 5.5 per cent this year, instead of growing by nearly 9 per cent as had previously been forecast.

A further escalation in tariff and trade wars could result in further reductions in international tourism, which could amount to a US\$18 billion annual reduction in tourist spending in 2025. There is already some evidence of travel cancellations. Since Trump announced 25 per cent tariffs on many Canadian goods, the number of Canadians driving across the border at some crossings has fallen by up to 45 per cent, on some days, when compared to last year. Canada is the biggest source of international tourists to the US. Air Canada has announced it is reducing flights to some US holiday destinations, including Las Vegas, from March, as demand reduces.

According to a March poll by Canadian market researcher Leger, 36 per cent of Canadians who had planned trips to the United States had already cancelled them. According to data from the aviation analytics company OAG, passenger bookings on Canada to US routes are down by over 70 per cent compared to the same period last year. This comes after the US Travel Association warned that even a 10 per cent reduction in Canadian inbound travel could result in a US\$2.1 billion loss in spending, putting 140,000 hospitality jobs at risk.

Some would-be visitors have cited an unwelcoming political climate as part of a concern about visiting the US - including angry rhetoric about foreigners, migrants and the LGBTQ+ community. The Tourism Economics report also cited "polarizing Trump Administration policies and rhetoric" as a factor in travel cancellations. There are other factors that may influence travellers from, for instance, western Europe, which represented 37 per cent of overseas travel to the US last year. These include US tariffs pushing prices up at home and the US administration's perceived alignment with Russia in the war in Ukraine.

Research by YouGov in March found that western European attitudes towards the US have become more negative since Trump's reelection last November. More than half of people in Britain (56 per cent), Germany (53), Sweden (63) and Denmark (74) now have

an unfavourable opinion of the US. In five of the seven countries polled, figures for US favourability are at the lowest since polling began in November 2016. Some high-profile cases at the US border could also be putting off tourists. In March, a British woman was handcuffed and detained for more than ten days by US Customs Enforcement after a visa problem. In the same month, a Canadian tourist was detained after attempting to renew her visa at the US/Mexico border. During the 12-day detention, she was held in crowded jail cells and even put in chains.

Mexico is the US's second largest inbound travel market. Tourism Economics suggests that issues around new border enforcement rules will raise concerns with potential Mexican tourists. During Trump's first term in office, Mexican visits to the US fell by 3 per cent. In February this year, air travel from Mexico had already fallen 6 per cent when compared to 2024. Many countries including Canada have been updating their travel advice for the US. For instance, on March 15 the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office updated its advice for the US, warning visitors that "you may be liable to arrest or detention if you break the rules". The previous version of advice, from February, had no mention of arrest or detention. Germany has made similar updates to its travel advisory, after several Germans were recently detained for weeks by US border officials. Multiple European countries, including France, Germany, Denmark and Norway have also issued specific travel warnings to transgender and non-binary citizens, as US authorities demand tourists declare their biological sex at birth on visa applications. This comes as the US has stopped issuing of passports with a X marker - commonly used by those identifying as non-binary - for its own citizens. As thousands of travellers cancel their trips to the US, other destinations are seeing a spike in interest.

Hotels in Bermuda have reported a surge in enquiries as Canadians relocate business and leisure trips away from the US, with some predicting a 20 per cent increase in revenue from Canadian visits. Europe too has reported increased bookings from Canada, with rental properties experiencing a 32 per cent jump in summer reservations when compared to last year, according to some reports. There are already growing concerns that visa and entry restrictions will disrupt fans and athletes from enjoying 2026 men's Fifa World Cup, held on sites in the US, Canada and Mexico.

Visitors from some countries, such as Brazil, Turkey and Colombia, could wait up to 700 days to obtain visas. The International Olympic Committee has also raised concerns over the 2028 Olympics Games in Los Angeles, although US officials have insisted that "America will be open". With mounting visa delays, stricter border enforcement and growing concerns over human rights and anti-minority rhetoric, the United States risks losing its appeal as a top holiday destination. The long-term impact on its tourism industry may prove difficult to reverse.

VOA

Ramzan Kadyrov is not true leader of Chechnya

THE idea that Western media can spread Russian propaganda and enable the Kremlin's information warfare about the situation in Ukraine has entered the mainstream. But some outlets have inadvertently bolstered Moscow's propaganda by talking about Ramzan Kadyrov, the leader of the Russian administration in Chechnya as if he is the legitimate leader of an independent country without explaining the context. No media outlet would ever talk about the leaders of occupied Crimea or the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics this way.

The "Chechen leader" is nothing but a Russian bureaucrat who lacks legitimacy and support among Chechens. He was put in charge of Moscow's administration in Chechnya in 2007, during the second Russian-Chechen war, when Chechnya was already de facto under occupation.

The Kremlin first gave the title "President of the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation" to Ramzan Kadyrov's father, Akhmat Kadyrov, to reclaim the narrative to take control from the President of the independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Aslan Mashadov.

By naming Kadyrov "president," not a mere governor like in other territories, the Kremlin wanted to make its grip over Chechnya look more legitimate. It happened together with the Chechenization of the conflict during the Second Chechen War, in which Russians started to use ethnic Chechens to prosecute Chechen civilians. Kadyrov's family was chosen to carry out this operation.

As for Ramzan Kadyrov, he was famous at the time not just because of his father and lack of charisma, but because of his mafia-style actions against ordinary Chechens.

In 2006, before Ramzan Kadyrov was picked to rule occupied Chechnya, Anna Politkovskaya said, "[Ramzan Kadyrov's] personal control was expressed only in the fact that he ordered force, threats, and payment for this construction from other

Ayman Eckford

people, since it was not paid for from the federal budget."

"The main source of income for Kadyrov's budget is extortion from everyone who can be robbed," she added. Ali Bakaev is an official spokesperson for the Chechen Sheikh Mansur battalion that has been fighting on the Ukrainian side against the Russian army since 2014. I spoke with him about his own memories of the referendum on which Chechens voted to be part of Russia, which brought Akhmat Kadyrov's administration to power:

"My parents were killed by Russians during the wars," he told me. "My granny was barely able to save my little sisters and me. We were just children. But Russian militants blackmailed Granny. They forced her to go and vote for Chechnya to become a part of Russia. They threatened to kill us if she did not. Ramzan Kadyrov and his father weren't chosen by our people. You can't make people vote or participate in any referendum by aiming at them with machine guns, like they did." This is how all elections for the Kremlin's proxies in Chechnya happened. Chechen people were forced to choose both Akhmat and Ramzan Kadyrov during the war. Civilians were taken from the street to be publicly denounced as rebels to show that any signs of resistance toward Russian occupation were being cleaned up.

Experts have pointed out that nobody outside the Kremlin and its stooges in Chechnya believed the results were truly legitimate. In those years, Chechens faced punishment for actions as small as wrong glances toward Russian soldiers to careless words. That has not changed. While all media in Russian-controlled Chechnya is controlled by the state, independent Chechen political channels such as NIYSO and IAdat, and Tumso Abdurahmanov's YouTube channel continue to spread stories about Chechen people kidnapped by the authorities, to be tortured, executed without any trial or illegally sent to the front line in

Ukraine. Sometimes they are taken without any reason as part of a mass terror campaign to break the will of the Chechen population, sometimes as a punishment to their relatives in Europe who spoke up against the Chechen government.

From my own experience and that of my Chechen contacts, Kadyrov is deeply hated in all parts of Chechen society. I have spoken with Salafi, Sufi and atheist Chechens, with traditional wives and Chechen feminists, a former ISIS supporter and a Chechen gay activist, and people of all generations from villages to Grozny. The only thing these people have in common is their hatred of Kadyrov. "Ramzan Kadyrov is no one to the Chechen people. He is uneducated and doesn't have credibility," Djambulat Suleimanov, a Chechen historian and leader of the Chechen liberation group United Force, explained. The organization's representatives in 11 different countries give him a unique insight into the diaspora.

"Ramzan Kadyrov is a collaborator. But people at home cannot speak about it because they are scared not just for their lives, but for the survival of their families. The ideas Ramzan Kadyrov has brought to Chechen society, the way he behaved, the slave mentality and the authoritarianism that he is spreading. All of this is alien to our culture. Chechens have never had lordship for centuries. We are proud of our liberty. But Kadyrov is trying to shut down anyone whose opinion is different from his own. We, Chechens, respect the elderly and protect the weak. But Kadyrov attacked them first. He used and manipulated Chechen tradition, for example, by excluding criminals from society and announcing blood feuds, twisting them to serve his political ends," he added. "This is more harmful than the Soviets' repressions because they were at least seen as outsiders. Kadyrov is not seen as an outsider by people outside of Chechen culture, but influenced Chechen youth badly. His power is based on the Russian military and the Kremlin's

administration. He couldn't survive one-on-one against the Chechen people."

Chechen refugees in Europe and the US are scared to speak out against Kadyrov for the same reason people back home refused to do it. They are scared for the lives of their family members and friends. This is the primary reason why the Chechen diaspora mostly stays away from the media and little information about the actual situation in the region gets out. Meanwhile, the Western media, for some peculiar reason, speaks about Ramzan Kadyrov in a way Chechen people never would. Just because of the formal title that the Kremlin bestowed on Kadyrov, the Western media often call Kadyrov as a "strongman," "warlord," or the "leader" of Chechnya, and this is basically what the Kremlin wants to legitimize the occupational regime in Chechnya, and prove that Chechen people are not oppressed and have the opportunity to choose a leader among their own.

The same media have never spoken that way about the governors of the Russian region or about the Russian administration in the occupied Crimea and Donbas. The credibility Ramzan Kadyrov gets from this elevation above other Russian governors and governors of Russian-occupied territories makes him more influential. When the world sees him as an independent actor, his position and his confidence are boosted, and his will is presented as the will of the Chechen people, whose real opinion is erased. Words matter. Multiple studies show that using different terminology for the same condition affects how doctors treat their patients, reinforcing biases both for people who used them and for whom they were used against. This is why it is essential for the fight against Russian propaganda to stop legitimising the Russian Kadyrov regime. The first thing the Western world could do to stop the mass terror campaigns against Chechen civilians is to put Chechnya's situation in its correct historical context.

The Moscow Times

The tariffs are bad, but Britain should remember this

THE trade was astonishing. On Wednesday afternoon the world watched as the leader of its most powerful nation accused friends and foes alike of having "looted, pillaged, raped, plundered", and simultaneously waved a bogus list of tariff imbalances. The playground paranoia was cringeworthy. What on earth was going on?

The answer can only be that Donald Trump is America's elected president for the next four years. He says he wants to end the military conflicts the US has fought or sponsored round the globe for a quarter of a century. We are waiting for that. Meanwhile, he is waging an economic war on world trade, a response that his biographer and ghostwriter, Tony Schwartz, blames on his childhood: "a life spent feeling like a victim ... any time he does not totally dominate he feels ripped off".

The immediate question is how Britain should respond. At this moment British and US trade negotiators, some presumably crippled with embarrassment, have been struggling to reach a bilateral trade agreement of sorts. Rumours are that it was near completion though Trump had yet to agree. Since Trump

has already placed Britain among the countries to be least hit by the tariffs, retaliation at this point makes no sense. Britain would be acting outside the EU and it would have minimal impact.

History is never the point in diplomacy, but in tariffs it offers lessons. What Trump calls reciprocity is nothing of the sort. It is competition. The countries he is hitting hardest are in China's sphere of interest in south-east Asia.

These are doing to the US exactly what America did to Europe at the end of the 19th century, working feverishly to undercut its competitor on costs. This plunged 1890s Britain into a deep and lasting agricultural depression. Britain retaliated with tariffs dressed up as imperial preference.

Similar devastation followed President Herbert Hoover's notorious Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930. Seeking to answer the Wall Street crash, he imposed tariffs on imports that ran from about 20% to as high as 60%. The resulting bout of retaliation from European and other nations ensured that a downturn became a deep global depression. Is there

Simon Jenkins

no historian in the White House - or at least in the capitals of Europe? The lesson of Smoot-Hawley is don't initiate, but above all, don't retaliate.

As for Trump's claims of the US being "pillaged", he may have factored into his balance sheet the activities of his favourite pirates, those of America's digital empire. Inadequately regulated and all but free of tax, they are widely accused of spreading social and psychological devastation among the world's young people. Should they not be tariffed? That is without even starting on the service sector, inclusion of which would massively distort Trump's concept of reciprocity.

Students of classical economics are taught that Adam Smith was right. Free trade led to increased specialisation and market competition. It was tough but fair, and was to the advantage of all. The end of the postwar Bretton Woods system in the 1970s ushered in a world of ever freer trade, and eventual globalisation. The world's increasing reliance on the dollar led to a recklessness that tottered then recovered in 2008. Ever freer trade remains a bulwark of world

prosperity.

What Trump is doing has long been the left's answer to globalisation. It asserts that the benefits of freer trade flowed to the rich, while the poor needed protection from competition, fair or unfair. This is Trumpism. He is defending his domestic industries against what he understandably sees as an existential menace, particularly from south-east Asia. He is making his consumers pay more for their goods, supposedly repaying them with lower taxes. It did not rescue them in the 1930s.

World trade has become a robust phenomenon. Since 2022 it has adjusted with relative ease to Nato's sanctions against Russia and its supporting coalition. The chief beneficiaries of sanctions have been the so-called Bric nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China), who grow in strength by the year. Meanwhile a huge energy cost has been borne by Europe, with no change whatsoever in Russia's policy in Ukraine. But the truth is that trade does not do what it is told by governments. It finds ways of dodging regulatory obstacles and defying economic forecasters. Trump might partially mitigate this week's damage by ending sanctions forthwith.

There's method to Trump's tariff madness

WE'RE all free market purists now. Today's air-waves are full of people reminding us that David Ricardo was right and that President Trump's tariffs will boost inflation, increase costs, and hit global growth. Obviously I agree. Taken in isolation, tariffs worsen economic outcomes. But the same is true of many other policies very much approved of by the right-thinking majority: planning rules, stamp duty, the minimum wage, trade union rights, unfair dismissal laws, environmental regulations - the list extends indefinitely.

We do these things because we think simple maximisation of economic output is not the only objective. (In fact it seems about the last thing we think of nowadays - but that's a separate point.) So set aside the folk memory of the Great Depression, and try to look at tariffs in a non-hysterical way, as a policy with rational political aims. I don't claim that Donald Trump has reinvented the laws of economics; I claim that he may be trying to do something other than maximise short-run output. Trump and JD Vance say the US economy has hollowed out, with disastrous social consequences. US businesses have shifted activity overseas, China's entry to the WTO produced a wave of cheap imported products. And the under-valued euro

for most of that disaster-zone currency's lifetime has made Germany a super-competitive exporter.

Yes, business may have responded rationally to these trends: investing where the rate of return is highest and buying from the cheapest. All get richer. But there is more to it than that. The world isn't made up of businesses but of nations. You may not be interested in another nation getting richer if you think you might fight a war with them one day. And your own nation will only work well if there is a common sense of solidarity and political community: if the people who live there are "all in it together".

That social contract is breaking down, in America as elsewhere. Big business often seems indifferent to the local consequences of its decisions. For the first time the US has a genuine far-Left strand to its politics. Even mainstream Democrats have gone nuts on identity politics and believe national borders are out of date. It is therefore an absolutely crucial MAGA political project to try to put the country back together and generate a sense of "Americans first". If citizens aren't prioritised then what is the point of a nation at all? One of the ways of building that solidarity is to differentiate between things that originate beyond the borders and things

that happen within them. When it comes to workers, most countries already do this, without even really thinking about it. You can't - at least in theory - just come to the US or Britain and work. You need a visa and you need to meet certain conditions.

Usually there is a wage floor, which you might even argue is a form of tariff on labour costs. If we didn't have these rules, and tried to introduce them today, it's not hard to imagine businesses arguing that it stopped them importing the cheapest workers wherever they could find them and therefore harmed growth. But we would still think it a price worth paying because a nation is not a business. So it may be with trade in goods. Western nations could gradually reduce tariffs after the war because all had a strong sense of national community and solidarity. But in current conditions, where Western nation states are starting to fray and national solidarity is collapsing, then maybe making borders meaningful and ensuring the wellbeing of your own citizens is worth doing?

If the effect of Trump's tariffs is to get American businesses thinking "maybe it's better to stay in the US and buy from US companies", and if it gets Americans thinking that their country is sovereign again, then per-

haps the political effect is worth having and will eventually pay off economically too. After all, it's no coincidence that tariffs are so often used for nation-building: the Zollverein that helped build a united Germany, British imperial preference in the 30s, and of course the EU's doomed attempts to create a federal Europe behind customs union tariff walls.

Let's see what happens. Trump's tariffs may or may not stick. They certainly need to be coupled with other policies with the same aim. But the US has the advantage of being a highly innovative continent-sized self-sufficient economy. If anyone can shift the paradigm, they can.

That's not true of Britain. We too need to rebuild national solidarity, but it won't be done by tariffs, retaliatory or otherwise. Our offer must be that of a smaller country: an economy open to our friends around the world, super-competitive in certain areas, innovative in most, efficient in administration, attractive in culture, and above all flexible and responsive to global change. Simply to describe it is to reveal how far from it we are. But the Blue Labour vision of worker-rights behind a tariff wall isn't going to get us any closer. So we don't need to imitate Trump's measures. But we absolutely should share his broader goals - and find ways of achieving them here too.

Trump's self-inflicted tariff crisis sparks confusion

Stephen Collinson

his first.

Trump is challenging the rule of law with his expansive claims of executive power, has unleashed Elon Musk to eviscerate the federal government - including health care programs that have saved millions of lives. Migrants are being swept up off the streets or even expelled to a vicious El Salvador jail, often in apparent denial of due process and in defiance of judges and the rule of law. The circus that took over the White House between 2017 and 2021 is back in town. Almost unbelievable revelations about top officials discussing air attacks on Yemen on a chatroom app were followed by zero accountability for Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth for

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. And whether it's fair or not, many citizens view the federal government as indifferent to their plight and ripe for Musk's chainsaw.

"To anyone on Wall Street this morning, I would say trust in President Trump," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on CNN Thursday, trying, and failing, to calm the coming stock market mayhem. "This is a president who is doubling down on his proven economic formula from his first term." Wall Street traders may no longer trust Trump, but it will take more than a stock market slump to shatter the rare bond that the president enjoys with his base. Still, if the markets crisis developments into a recession and if the temporary pain that

It's the same with national security. The disapproving foreign policy elites who condemn Trump officials for lax cellphone use come from the same intellectual class that brought America the lost wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

posting operational intelligence. The drama provoked the same anxiety about the competence of Trump's national security team in a crisis as are now surrounding his economic brain trust. In another stunning development, the White House fired multiple officials, including three National Security Council staffers after meeting Laura Loomer. The far-right activist who once branded 9/11 an inside job accused the officials of disloyalty to the president.

Trump is causing havoc on his national security team while also upending decades of US foreign policy, as he has fractured confidence among America's western allies that he'd defend them against Russia. A recurring trend of Trump's political career is that his most outlandish acts - from his criminal indictments to his most outrageous uses of presidential power - often unleash a hysterical reaction from critics. In the eye of the storms of his own creation, the president draws political energy from the controversy and wrong foots his opponents. So, it's fair to ask whether Thursday's uproar is an overreaction. After all this is far from the first stocks sell-off in history. Top officials insist that the tariffs are a first step towards building an economy that protects American workers and rebuilds manufacturing desecrated by the loss of US factory jobs to low wage economies in Asia and elsewhere.

"What you're going to see is factories going to be built here," Lutnick told CNN's Pamela Brown. "Why should US policy basically suggest that you can find the cheapest labor in the world with the worst labor conditions in the whole wide world, the worst pollution ... no environmental rules at all, let's go build there because it's really cheap, and we will sell it to the great American economy?" No one can argue that the toll inflicted on former industrial heartlands is an unworthy issue for a president. And Trump is responding directly to the thwarted aspirations of millions of his voters who don't care that Wall Street traders took a hammering or that American allies who they regard as freeloaders are angry. And since China's entry into the World Trade Organization ended up bankrolling its spectacular rise, shouldn't someone be asking whether a trade policy that created a superpower enemy should be adjusted? Trump's supporters - in the democratic election that he won in 2024 - also voted for maximum disruption: He left no doubt that he'd be unleashed in a second term, even if some of his advisers suggested during the campaign, as they have this week, that tariffs would just be used as a negotiating tool rather than a permanent high barrier. It's the same with national security. The disapproving foreign policy elites who condemn Trump officials for lax cellphone use come from the same intellectual class that brought America the lost

administration officials say will pave the way to a new economic golden age turns out to be more permanent. Trump's support may face its steepest test. Coming days may establish whether the president and his supporters are willing to pay a significant economic or political price for the fruition of campaign trail vows.

And ahead of midterm elections in November 2026, Trump's fellow Republicans may soon start to learn whether more moderate and independent voters who bought into Trump's vaunted dealmaking and business mystique and thought he could supercharge the economy will stick with his party when he's off the ballot. "The challenge these tariffs are going to present is that they are almost certainly going to raise the cost of living for Americans at least in the short-term," Republican pollster and strategist Kristen Soltis Anderson told CNN's Kasie Hunt.

"What Donald Trump is asking is for everybody to endure a little bit of short-term pain in exchange for some long-term benefit - in his view a healthy reordering of the global economy," she said. "In politics, because we have elections every two years for Congress - saying that this is going to be very good for you way down the road is a tough sell for a lot of voters." But the administration - beyond unspecific warnings about short term disruption - still isn't conceding Americans will face price hikes. "Foreign nations who have to sell here are going to lower their prices and then the next thing they're going to do is continue to manipulate their currency, so our currency is going to get stronger," Navarro told CNN's Phil Mattingly. "We're going to have more purchasing power for the imports. That's going to offset it."

These predictions could be a trap for the White House. Past presidents have irrevocably severed trust with the public when they insisted on a reality that voters could perceive was false. This includes Lyndon Johnson's insistence on expanding a war he was losing in Vietnam, George W. Bush's denial when victory in Iraq degenerated into an insurgency and Joe Biden's insistence that the chaotic exit from Afghanistan was a success. Judging by their remarks on Thursday, Trump and Vance risk going down a similar road even as their situation promises to get worse. "Usually, when you have a terrible stock market experience, it's because a bank fails or there's a pandemic or there's a hurricane or some other country does something," former Secretary Lawrence Summers told CNN's Hunt. "We don't have these kind of stock market responses in response to policies that the president of the United States is proud of. That is something that is entirely without precedent and it is extremely dangerous."

CNN



KARACHI: People buying dry fruits from shop in a local market.

Meeting between Orangi Town Traders Association and MQM leadership held

KARACHI (PPI): Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Chairman of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM), stated that MQM represents the middle class and is aware of the public's difficulties during times of inflation. A delegation from the Orangi Town Traders Association met with Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, and Syed Amin-ul-Haq, a member of the central committee, at the Bahadurabad center. The meeting included Orangi Traders Association's General Secretary Shahbaz Naumi, Senior Vice President Abdul Qadir Shaikhani, Vice President Adnan Ahmed Khan, and other members. During the meeting, the delegation thanked MQM for urging the Prime Minister to reduce electricity rates. They also expressed gratitude for the gift of reduced electricity prices for the people of Karachi and discussed the issues faced by traders in Orangi Town. Since joining the government, Dr Siddiqui said the MQM has been demanding relief for the people. He welcomed the Prime Minister's reduction of electricity rates and affirmed that the call for addressing the concerns of the people and traders of Karachi and Pakistan will continue.

Syed Amin-ul-Haq mentioned that Orangi Town is the largest informal settlement in Asia and a stronghold of MQM. MQM is organizing new projects for the people of Orangi Town, which will enable development.

Stocks, oil slump as China retaliates and Trump digs in heels

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Equities and oil prices extended a global rout for markets Friday after China hit back over President Donald Trump's tariff blitz with its own mammoth levy on United States goods, inflaming international trade war fears. The Chinese government said Friday it would impose an additional 34 percent tariffs on all imports of US goods, making it the first major nation to unveil retaliatory measures. Despite the market turmoil, Trump insisted that "my policies will never change" and urged the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. Meanwhile, Wall Street stocks endured another bruising round of selling, with the S&P 500 sinking six percent and the Nasdaq falling into a bear market, defined as a 20 percent drop from a recent high. "We've essentially got an escalating trade war," said Jack Ablin of Cresset Capital. "We're at the beginning of a global slowdown if these tariffs remain in place."

The losses increased somewhat following remarks from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Friday, who warned of the risk of higher unemployment and higher inflation due to tariff increases he characterized as "significantly larger than expected."

Wall Street investors shrugged off data showing the US economy added 228,000 jobs last month, much higher than analysts expected. "Sentiment is so fragile right now," Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG, told AFP. "Investors are firmly in the 'get me to cash now' phase, on fears that other nations will follow China's lead, and of course that the US president will respond to China's tariffs with even more charges," he said. "This trade war is like nothing we've seen for years, perhaps decades."

European markets ended the day sharply lower, with Frankfurt and London sinking nearly five percent. The dollar rebounded against the euro and pound, having fallen sharply Thursday on fears of a recession in the United States. But oil futures plummeted around seven percent, having already plunged some six to seven percent Thursday on the prospect of weaker demand. News that OPEC+ had unexpectedly hiked crude supply more than planned added to the heavy selling.

The price of copper -- a vital component for energy storage, electric vehicles, solar panels and wind turbines -- also fell sharply. Beijing on Friday also imposed export controls on seven rare earth elements, its commerce ministry said, including gadolinium -- commonly used in MRIs -- and yttrium, utilized in consumer electronics. "Another jolt of fear has shot through markets as China's threat of retaliation has materialized," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown. "The big concern is that this is a sign of a sharp escalation of the tariff war which will have major implications for the global economy," she said.

US starts collecting new 10% tariff

WASHINGTON (INP): US customs agents began collecting President Donald Trump's unilateral 10% tariff on all imports from many countries on Saturday, with higher levies on goods from 57 larger trading partners due to start next week.

The initial 10% "baseline" tariff took effect at US seaports, airports and customs warehouses at 12:01 am ET (0401 GMT), ushering in Trump's full rejection of the post-World War Two system of mutually agreed tariff rates. "This is the single biggest trade action of our lifetime," said Kelly Ann Shaw, a trade lawyer at Hogan Lovells and former White House trade adviser during Trump's first term. Shaw told a Brookings Institution event on Thursday that she expected the tariffs to evolve over time as countries seek to negotiate lower rates. "But this is huge. This is a pretty seismic and significant shift in the way that we trade with every country on earth," she added.

Trump's Wednesday tariff announcement shook global stock markets to their core, wiping out \$5 trillion in stock market value for S&P 500 companies by Friday's close, a record two-day decline. Prices for oil and commodities plunged, while investors fled to the safety of government bonds. Among the countries first hit with the 10% tariff are Australia, Britain, Colombia, Argentina, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. A US Customs and Border Protection bulletin to shippers indicates no grace period for cargoes on the water at midnight on Saturday. But a US Customs and Border Protection bulletin did provide a 51-day grace period for cargoes loaded onto vessels or planes and in transit to the US before 12:01 am ET Saturday. These cargoes need arrive to by 12:01 am ET on May 27 to avoid the 10% duty. At the same hour on Wednesday, Trump's higher "reciprocal" tariff rates of 11% to 50% are due to take effect. European Union imports will be hit with a 20% tariff, while Chinese goods will be hit with a 34% tariff, bringing Trump's total new levies on China to 54%.

Vietnam, which benefited from the shift of US supply chains away from China after Trump's first-term trade war with Beijing, will be hit with a 46% tariff and agreed on Friday to discuss a deal with Trump. Canada and Mexico were exempt from both Trump's latest duties because they are still subject to a 25% tariff related to the US fentanyl crisis for goods that do not comply with the US-Mexico-Canada rules of origin.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs4,714 to Rs274,348 from Rs279,063 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went down by Rs4,322 to Rs251,494 from Rs255,817 respectively. The prices of per tola silver declined by Rs460 to Rs3,120 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs395 to Rs2,674. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$51 to \$3,038 from \$3,089 whereas that of silver went down by \$4.5 to \$29.59.

Gold prices decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs5,500 and was traded at Rs320,000 on Saturday as compared to its sale at Rs325,500 on previous trading day.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs4,714 to Rs274,348 from Rs279,063 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went down by Rs4,322 to Rs251,494 from Rs255,817 respectively. The prices of per tola silver declined by Rs460 to Rs3,120 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs395 to Rs2,674. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$51 to \$3,038 from \$3,089 whereas that of silver went down by \$4.5 to \$29.59.

Jaguar Land Rover to pause shipments to US

LONDON (Reuters): Jaguar Land Rover will pause shipments of its Britain-made cars to the United States for a month, it said on Saturday, as it considers how to mitigate the cost of President Donald Trump's 25% tariff. Jaguar Land Rover, which is owned by India's Tata Motors (TAMO.NS), opens new tab, confirmed the temporary export suspension after the Times newspaper reported the plan. "As we work to address the new trading terms with our business partners, we are taking some short-term actions, including a shipment pause in April, as we develop our mid-to longer-term plans," JLR said in an emailed statement. Britain's car industry, which employs 200,000 people directly, is highly exposed to the new tariffs. The United States is the second-biggest importer of British-made cars after the European Union, with nearly a 20% share, data from industry body SMMT shows. Jaguar Land Rover, one of Britain's biggest producers by volume, said in its statement that the US was an important market for its luxury brands. It sells 400,000 Range Rover Sports, Defenders and other models annually and exports to the US account for almost a quarter of sales. The US 25% tariff on imported cars and light trucks took effect on April 3, the day after Trump announced tariffs on other goods from countries across the globe. Britain has said it is focused on trying to secure a trade deal with Washington. The Times said that Jaguar Land Rover is thought to have a couple of months' supply of cars already in the US, which will not be subject to the new tariffs.

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PSBA projects to operate on self-sustaining financial model

F.P. Report

LAHORE: 'Sahulat on the Go' and other Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority (PSBA) projects will operate on a self-sustaining financial model. This will ensure that the bazaars remain financially viable without relying on recurring government subsidies. The initiative also aims to promote small businesses and local entrepreneurship by providing an affordable and regulated space for vendors to sell their goods. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz was briefed about the 'Sahulat on the Go' initiative, which aims to make essential commodities more accessible and affordable through mobile bazaars. The project will begin as a pilot in Lahore before expanding to other districts. With a total investment of Rs630.50 million, the initiative is expected to generate Rs93.6 million in annual revenue. The government plans to introduce 14 mobile bazaars in densely populated and high-traffic areas, removing encroachments and creating structured market spaces that enhance both accessibility and urban aesthetics. The project is scheduled for completion within three to four months, after which it will be extended to smaller tehsils across the province. The initiative was presented to the CM by PSBA representative Naveed Rafaqat Ahmad, who has been instrumental in modernising Punjab's market regulation efforts. A chartered accountant from England and Wales and a Certified Business Analyst from the UK, Ahmad has extensive experience in public sector reform, governance, and financial restructuring. Since joining the then Punjab Model Bazaars Management Company (PMBMC) in 2016, he has played a key role in restructuring the organisation, leading its transformation into PSBA in 2024 to enhance governance and operational efficiency. Under his leadership, PSBA currently operates 36 permanent bazaars across 25 districts, serving nearly 50 million customers annually. These bazaars provide a clean and organised shopping environment, offering products at prices 10-30% lower than market rates. Facilities such as free electricity, parking, security, and sanitation services make them attractive and consumer-friendly alternatives to unregulated markets. Encouraged by the success of these markets, the Punjab government has approved Rs3.433 billion for the construction of 13 new permanent Sahulat Bazaars in key locations, including Noshera, Burewala, Jalalpur, and Sangla Hill. The initiative is expected to expand further, with district administrations directed to allocate land for new bazaars in Bahawalnagar, Attock, Rahim Yar Khan, and Murree. Another step in ensuring the sustainability of these bazaars is the government's decision to solarise all existing facilities. Following a successful pilot at Township Bazaar, where electricity costs were reduced from Rs1 million to Rs100,000 per month, the government has allocated Rs693 million to transition all Sahulat Bazaars to solar energy. This move will not only reduce operational expenses but also contribute to Punjab's broader clean energy goals. During the meeting, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz praised the performance of PSBA, particularly its role in providing affordable commodities during Ramadan. She also acknowledged the contributions of MNA Muhammad Afzal Khokhar for his efforts in ensuring smooth operations during Ramadan. The CM further lauded PSBA for organising the Eid Gala celebrations from Ramadan 25 to Chaand Raat, which brought a festive atmosphere to the markets and encouraged greater public engagement. She has now directed that similar cultural and community-building activities be expanded across all Sahulat Bazaars in Punjab. The 'Sahulat on the Go' project aims to establish mobile bazaars at strategic locations across Lahore, including Multan Road, Hanjar Wall, Manga Mandi, Raiwind, G1 Market, Mustafa Town, Faisal Town, Moon Market, Bedian Road, Madar-e-Millat Road, Gulshan Ravi, Shahdara, Shadman, and Singhpura. Each of these mobile markets will have around 60 stalls, providing an organised shopping experience and ensuring that essential commodities remain available at controlled prices. The government plans to replicate this model in other districts once the Lahore pilot proves successful. To ensure smooth execution, the Chief Minister has also approved 'seed money' for PSBA, strengthening its institutional and operational capacity. This financial support will enable the authority to expand its mandate efficiently and oversee the swift implementation of all approved projects. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has instructed that all approved projects be completed within a strict timeframe, ensuring that Punjab's citizens benefit from affordable, well-regulated markets as soon as possible. The 'Sahulat on the Go' initiative, alongside the expansion of permanent bazaars, marks a significant shift in how essential commodities are managed and distributed, reinforcing the government's commitment to economic relief and sustainable urban development.

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France's cognac makers, buffeted by trade wars, reel from Trump's tariffs

COGNAC, France (Reuters): Christophe Fillioux's family estate in the cognac region of southwest France has survived for five generations, through wars and financial crises. Now, though, he has started to tear up some of his vineyards by the roots. US President Donald Trump's decision this week to slap 20% tariffs on all European goods is deepening the pain for France's nearly \$3 billion cognac industry, which was already being buffeted by global trade tensions. In October, the region's 4,000 growers were targeted by Beijing with tariffs following the European Union's levies on Chinese-made electric vehicles. Since then, cognac sales to China, its second-largest market by volume, have plunged by more than half. With the US - the world's top cognac consumer - accounting for one out of every two bottles sold, Trump's tariffs have left many growers apprehensive. Fillioux, the 45-year-old owner and master blender of the Jean Fillioux cognac house, founded in 1894 by his great-great-grandfather, had already torn out half a hectare of old vineyards. He plans to uproot another hectare-and-a-half next year as part of an industry-wide plan to help growers through the crisis. "The situation is very hard to navigate. We've got a huge visibility problem," Fillioux said, standing in a vineyard planted by his father in 1980 - the year he was born. Worse may be to come. Trump has threatened 200% tariffs on European wine and spirits if Europe hits US bourbon with additional duties. Cognac exports to the US last year roughly amounted to 1 billion euros (\$1.10 billion). And the US is also France's top export market for wine: sales rose 8% last year to \$2.3 billion last year, according to the Federation of Wine and Spirits Exporters, partly as buyers stocked up in anticipation of Trump's policies. Fillioux's estate is working with its distribution partners to try to develop new markets in countries including Thailand, Vietnam, and Nigeria. But he counts himself more fortunate than some other producers: he has little debt and owns his brand, making him less reliant on contracts with big houses such as LVMH-owned Hennessy, the largest cognac maker. "Problems are part of a vintner's life, with all the good and bad surprises", he said. Even before the trade tensions with China and the United States - which comprise well over three-quarters of cognac revenues - cognac sales had been falling over the last two years due to a global slowdown in luxury spending. Prior to this, the industry expanded production volumes to meet booming demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. As recently as 2022, cognac houses encouraged growers to buy more land and plant vineyards. Now many of the region's more than 4,000 growers find themselves indebted as their incomes deteriorate. "We're going to manage these situations as best we can with the banks," said Florent Morillon, president of the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC), an industry body representing growers and cognac houses including Hennessy, Remy Cointreau's (RCOP.PA), opens new tab Remy Martin, Pernod Ricard's (PER.PPA), opens new tab Martell and Campari's (COPR.MI), opens new tab Courvoisier. "All the investments made by the cognac houses, vintners, and distillers were based on business decisions. And then, external factors arrived," Morillon added. Exporting roughly 97% of its production, France's cognac industry has always been reliant on international trade, said Bertrand Blancheton, economics professor at Bordeaux University. "Cognac was born out of an alliance of foreign merchants and local growers." From the 17th century, when Dutch businessmen brought their know-how to the region and taught locals how to make brandy, cognac has always been destined for consumption abroad, with Irish, English, and Scandinavian merchants opening their houses and shipping cognac overseas. In February, industry body BNIC, which oversees production, reduced the annual production limit for a third straight year to just half the levels of 2022, citing a "strongly deteriorated economic environment and an unprecedented drop in global consumption."

"We're only at the beginning of the crisis," said Jerome Sourrisseau, a local politician and president of the group of municipalities formed by the villages around Cognac. Unemployment is on the rise since cognac houses and suppliers stopped hiring short-term workers, while some started laying off staff, he said. Cognac producers and suppliers, including bottling facilities, packaging firms, and makers of barrels, cork and containers, employ roughly 70,000 people in the region. Some, like Tonnellerie Vicard, a century-old oak barrel maker, face an extra hit, as they export their goods to US winemakers too. "We've already had customers tell us the same night that they need to review the orders they've already placed, reducing volumes by the amount of tariffs they will likely have to pay", said general manager Jerome Schmitt. In the United States, cognac has a "special bond" with the Black community, Blancheton said. Black American soldiers discovered the drink during World War II and brought it home, he said, before cognac brands led by Hennessy started heavily advertising in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2012, rapper Jay-Z established the Cognac d'Usse brand in partnership with Bacardi, while Hennessy struck a sponsorship deal with the NBA basketball league in 2021. But even before trade tensions, cognac's sales to the US were faltering, largely due to aggressive price hikes in recent years affecting middle-class consumers, said Thomas Mesmin of Paris-based luxury consultancy MAD. "Not only did Americans start to drink less cognac, but they also switched their consumption attitudes towards other spirits like tequila and whisky." While most high-end cognacs are exported to Asia, the US business is dominated by less expensive bottles, selling for \$36-60, and mass-selling brands like Hennessy so far failed to broaden their consumer base, Mesmin said. "It's only a certain part of the population in just a few cities," he said. Industry president Morillon predicted cognac would lose market share in the US, and producers would be unable to pass on the full cost of tariffs to consumers there. "It's up to each house to decide, but we know today that in the current context, even if you just increase by 1 or 2 dollars, this can lead to disruption," he said. Fourth-generation grower Pascale Dupuy, 67, said he would likely distill less this season, and sell more grapes to bulk buyers making cheap wine to limit his losses. "One more problem added to the pile", said Dupuy, who lives in Ambleville, a village near Cognac, when asked about the trade tensions with the United States. Dupuy said major cognac brand Remy Martin has already cut its contracts with him by almost half, and he expects Hennessy will also buy considerably less, leading to a 40% decrease in his expected revenues this year. The companies did not respond to a request for comment. With his daughter showing no interest in taking on the struggling business, Dupuy said he would likely be the last generation of cognac makers in his family. "You start questioning if it's still worth it," he added.

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"We're only at the beginning of the crisis," said Jerome Sourrisseau, a local politician and president of the group of municipalities formed by the villages around Cognac. Unemployment is on the rise since cognac houses and suppliers stopped hiring short-term workers, while some started laying off staff, he said. Cognac producers and suppliers, including bottling facilities, packaging firms, and makers of barrels, cork and containers, employ roughly 70,000 people in the region. Some, like Tonnellerie Vicard, a century-old oak barrel maker, face an extra hit, as they export their goods to US winemakers too. "We've already had customers tell us the same night that they need to review the orders they've already placed, reducing volumes by the amount of tariffs they will likely have to pay", said general manager Jerome Schmitt. In the United States, cognac has a "special bond" with the Black community, Blancheton said. Black American soldiers discovered the drink during World War II and brought it home, he said, before cognac brands led by Hennessy started heavily advertising in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2012, rapper Jay-Z established the Cognac d'Usse brand in partnership with Bacardi, while Hennessy struck a sponsorship deal with the NBA basketball league in 2021. But even before trade tensions, cognac's sales to the US were faltering, largely due to aggressive price hikes in recent years affecting middle-class consumers, said Thomas Mesmin of Paris-based luxury consultancy MAD. "Not only did Americans start to drink less cognac, but they also switched their consumption attitudes towards other spirits like tequila and whisky." While most high-end cognacs are exported to Asia, the US business is dominated by less expensive bottles, selling for \$36-60, and mass-selling brands like Hennessy so far failed to broaden their consumer base, Mesmin said. "It's only a certain part of the population in just a few cities," he said. Industry president Morillon predicted cognac would lose market share in the US, and producers would be unable to pass on the full cost of tariffs to consumers there. "It's up to each house to decide, but we know today that in the current context, even if you just increase by 1 or 2 dollars, this can lead to disruption," he said. Fourth-generation grower Pascale Dupuy, 67, said he would likely distill less this season, and sell more grapes to bulk buyers making cheap wine to limit his losses. "One more problem added to the pile", said Dupuy, who lives in Ambleville, a village near Cognac, when asked about the trade tensions with the United States. Dupuy said major cognac brand Remy Martin has already cut its contracts with him by almost half, and he expects Hennessy will also buy considerably less, leading to a 40% decrease in his expected revenues this year. The companies did not respond to a request for comment. With his daughter showing no interest in taking on the struggling business, Dupuy said he would likely be the last generation of cognac makers in his family. "You start questioning if it's still worth it," he added.

Even before the trade tensions with China and the United States - which comprise well over three-quarters of cognac revenues - cognac sales had been falling over the last two years due to a global slowdown in luxury spending. Prior to this, the industry expanded production volumes to meet booming demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. As recently as 2022, cognac houses encouraged growers to buy more land and plant vineyards. Now many of the region's more than 4,000 growers find themselves indebted as their incomes deteriorate. "We're going to manage these situations as best we can with the banks," said Florent Morillon, president of the Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac (BNIC), an industry body representing growers and cognac houses including Hennessy, Remy Cointreau's (RCOP.PA), opens new tab Remy Martin, Pernod Ricard's (PER.PPA), opens new tab Martell and Campari's (COPR.MI), opens new tab Courvoisier. "All the investments made by the cognac houses, vintners, and distillers were based on business decisions. And then, external factors arrived," Morillon added. Exporting roughly 97% of its production, France's cognac industry has always been reliant on international trade, said Bertrand Blancheton, economics professor at Bordeaux University. "Cognac was born out of an alliance of foreign merchants and local growers." From the 17th century, when Dutch businessmen brought their know-how to the region and taught locals how to make brandy, cognac has always been destined for consumption abroad, with Irish, English, and Scandinavian merchants opening their houses and shipping cognac overseas. In February, industry body BNIC, which oversees production, reduced the annual production limit for a third straight year to just half the levels of 2022, citing a "strongly deteriorated economic environment and an unprecedented drop in global consumption."

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In brief

World Jrs Tennis C'ship kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Juniors Tennis Championship Leg-1 kicked off here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Saturday. As many as 38 boys and 21 girls from 14 countries, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Turkey, Japan, China, Austria, Uzbekistan, the UK, Canada, Russia, Sweden, Korea, and Sri Lanka are participating in the Championships. The championship honors the memory of Zainab Ali Naqvi, a talented young tennis player from Karachi who tragically passed away on February 12, 2024, due to a heart attack while participating in an ITF Junior Tournament in Islamabad. Aisam ul Haq Qureshi, President - PTF, paid a heartfelt tribute to Zainab, saying, "The tennis fraternity will always remember Zainab's passion and dedication to the sport." He extended a warm welcome to the international players and wished all participants the best of luck. Col. (R) Zia ud Din Tufail, Secretary General -PTF, emphasized that this tournament is a fitting tribute to Zainab's legacy, promoting the values of sportsmanship and excellence that she embodied. The main draw will commence on Monday. Boys Singles Qualifying 1st Round: Diar Amanbek (KAZ) beat Gota Inoue (JPN) 6-2, 3-6(13-11); Djamal Khakimov (RUS) beat Bilal Awais Janjua (PAK) 6-2,7-5. The final round of the qualifying matches will be played on Sunday at 10am.

Muller to end 25-year Bayern stay

MUNICH (Agencies): Germany great Thomas Muller will end his 25-year association with Bayern Munich at the end of the current season. The 35-year-old has played the most games in the history of the club with 743, while he is third on their all-time scorer's list with 247 goals. The attacking midfielder, who also plays as a second striker, came through Bayern's academy to make his senior debut in 2008 and has won two Champions Leagues and 12 Bundesliga titles among 33 trophies in total with the German giants. "It's been an incredible journey, shaped by unique experiences, great encounters and unforgettable triumphs," said Muller, whose contract ends in June. "I feel immense gratitude and joy that I got to make this career with my beloved club. The special connection to the club and our fantastic fans will always remain. "What I want as a farewell should be clear: titles we can celebrate together, and moments we'll remember fondly for a long time. We're going to give our all in the coming weeks to bring the league title back to Munich." Muller, who scored 45 goals for Germany in 131 appearances, won the Golden Boot at the 2010 World Cup and was part of the Germany team that won the 2014 World Cup. "I could have easily imagined taking on this role [with Bayern] next year as well," he admitted, while club CEO Jan-Christian Dreesen said: "The most important thing is that we've found a mutual solution. "Thomas Muller is one of the greatest player personalities this club has produced, and therefore it was important to us to find a fair and amicable agreement." Muller has turned out 24 times for the Bavarian outfit in the Bundesliga this campaign, scoring once, but has only started on eight occasions. "The definition of a legend! It's been a pleasure to share these two years together! Let's make it a perfect ending." England and Bayern striker Harry Kane posted on X.

New Zealand hammer Pakistan by 43 runs to sweep ODI series 3-0



MOUNT MAUNGANUI (AFP) : Pakistan's brittle batting was exposed again as a Ben Sears-inspired New Zealand won the third and final one-day international by 43 runs Saturday to sweep the series 3-0.

The tourists were dismissed for 221 off 40 overs in response to New Zealand's 264-8, in a match shortened to 42 overs after a delayed start at Mount

Maunganui. It followed the pattern of the first two games, with the hosts winning the opener in Napier by 73 runs, followed by an 84-run victory in Hamilton. New Zealand also dominated the preceding T20 series, winning 4-1. Pakistan struggled throughout the tour to adjust to the sustained bounce and movement of New Zealand's seam attack and their bats-

men were again guilty of rash shots at Bay Oval. Aggressive pace bowler Sears claimed 5-34 to follow his five-wicket bag in Hamilton, with four of his victims falling to short-pitched deliveries. Player of the series Sears became the first New Zealander to claim five wickets in successive ODIs and said he simply appreciated a chance to play in the 50-over series,

having previously been considered a T20 specialist. "It was a cool couple of days, I'm pretty grateful to get the opportunity against a really good team and it was cool to get some wickets," said Sears, who adopted the same successful approach in both games. "Same plan, it was just trying to hold it through the middle and just keep that pressure going. It was just cool to be part of that performance." Fellow seamer Jacob Duffy, who was a handful in both series, took 2-40, including the wicket of Mohammad Rizwan for 37 in the 33rd over to effectively end the tourists' hopes of victory. Babar Azam top-scored with 50 off 58 balls while opener Abdullah Shafique ground out a sluggish 33 off 56. Pakistan outplayed again

Pakistan's innings began badly when opener Imam-ul-Haq was forced to retire hurt for one, having been struck on the jaw by a fielder's throw when attempting a quick single. Rizwan conceded his team had been outplayed. "It's a disappointing

series. I will give credit to New Zealand, they played really well in all departments of the game," he said. "They are like true professionals in all departments. And we need to improve and that's it, we need to play better against the new ball." Earlier, Rhys Mariu scored a maiden half-century after New Zealand were asked to bat first,

with the start of the match delayed for two hours because of a wet outfield. Opener Mariu, playing just his second international match, scored a composed 58 off 61 balls, featuring six fours and two sixes. A number of New Zealand middle-order batsmen made starts but didn't press on for big scores until captain Michael Bracewell

produced a flashy 59 at the death. Bracewell struck six sixes in his 40-ball knock before being caught off the last ball of the innings bowled by Akif Javed. Seamer Javed took 4-62 off his eight overs although Naseem Shah was arguably the best of the Pakistan bowlers, taking 2-54 and bowling with good pace and movement.

PCB condemns 'abusive language' directed at Pakistan players after New Zealand loss

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday condemned "abusive language" directed at Pakistan players by foreign spectators after the national side suffered a 3-0 loss against New Zealand in their one-day international (ODI) series. The PCB statement followed Pakistan all-rounder Khushdil Shah's altercation with fans following Pakistan's loss to New Zealand at Mount Maunganui. The board said foreign spectators hurled inappropriate remarks at cricketers present on the field. "When anti-Pakistan slogans emerged, cricketer Khushdil Shah stepped in and urged the spectators to refrain," the PCB said in a statement. "In response, Afghan spectators escalated the situation by using further inappropriate language in Pashto." The development comes at a time of strained ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan over a surge in militants attacks in Pakistan's western provinces that border Afghanistan. Islamabad has frequently accused Afghanistan of sheltering and supporting militant groups that launch cross-border attacks. Afghan officials deny involvement and insist that Pakistan's security issues are an internal matter of Islamabad. In the past, Pakistani and Afghan fans have also been engaged in heated exchange of words during various fixtures accusing each other of interference. "Following the Pakistani team's complaint, stadium officials intervened and ejected the two disruptive spectators," the PCB added.

Zverev 'mentally' affected by Australian Open defeat

MONTE CARLO (AFP): World No.2 Alexander Zverev, who has struggled for any kind of form since losing the Australian Open final at the end of January, admitted on Saturday that the defeat in Melbourne had affected him a lot mentally. The German, who has lost all three Grand Slam finals he has contested in his career, went down in straight sets to Jannik Sinner and has battled to pick himself up since. "I didn't take a rest after Australia and mentally it affected me a lot," said Zverev at a press conference ahead of the Monte-Carlo Masters 1000. "I was very upset, I was very tired also."

Zverev's response was to start training again "straight away" and heading to

South America to take part in the ATP 250 in Buenos Aires and the ATP 500 in Rio de Janeiro, where he was beaten on each occasion in the quarter-finals. "I didn't really have time to process what happened," said Zverev who is top seed in Monte Carlo in the absence of Sinner, who is suspended. "In a way, I just kept going, which was perhaps not the smartest thing to do. "But tennis is also a business. You have contracts with tournaments that you have to obligate. These contracts are signed six or seven months in advance." The seven-time Masters 1000 winner also agreed that he was in favour of players receiving a greater proportion of the revenue from tournaments.

Several top 20 players have sent a letter to Grand Slam organisers, requesting a more favourable revenue distribution with Casper Ruud on Thursday calling for a 50-50 split between tournaments and players. Zverev said that it would "never be shared 50-50" but called for a delegation of top male and female players to "sit around a table" with the Grand Slam organisers and try to find a solution. "It's no secret, we have the lowest revenue share in professional sport from the Grand Slam side," he said. "So, we're not trying to say it has to be 50-50 like in the NBA or American sports, but maybe a fair share would be nice. "I'm sure that we're going to achieve that."

Nick Rockett wins Grand National for Mullins duo



AINTREE (Agencies): Jockey Patrick Mullins won the Grand National on Nick Rockett as his trainer father Willie Mullins took the first three places in the race at Aintree. The 33-1 chance denied last year's winner I Am Maximus, who finished second, with Grangeclare West in third. Favourite Iroko was fourth, ahead of Meetingofthewaters. It was an emotional victory for winning owner Stewart Andrew, whose late wife Sadie died from cancer in December 2022, five days after watching Nick Rockett in his first race. Broadway Boy had led for much of the race but suffered a crashing fall on the second circuit. The Jockey Club said both Broadway Boy and Celebre D'Allen - who was pulled up - were walked on to horse ambulances after being assessed on course by vets and taken to the racecourse stables for further assessment. Broadway Boy's jockey Tom Bellamy was taken to Aintree University

Hospital for assessment. All other riders returned to the weighing room. The start of the following race was delayed by about 15 minutes while the horses and jockey were attended to. Nick Rockett galloped away from top weight I Am Maximus after the final fence to win by two and a half lengths. There was a further half-length back to Grangeclare West in third. "It's everything I've dreamed of since I was a kid," said the winning rider, who is an amateur jockey. "I know it's a cliché but when I was five or six years old, I was reading books about the National and watching black and white videos of Red Rum. To put my name there is very special." Emotional win for Mullins family. Champion Irish trainer Mullins was not only registering back-to-back victories but his third success, 20 years after his first with Hedgehunter. As well as the first three, he also saddled the fifth-placed horse Meetingofthewaters and

Minella Cocooner in seventh. Senior Chief finished sixth for Henry de Bromhead. Patrick Mullins is the latest in the family to have won the race, with his cousins David and Emmet having triumphed, the first-named as a jockey with Rule The World and the second as a trainer with Noble Yeats. "That was some result. It's lovely to be able to give your son a ride in the National, but to win it, it's unbelievable," said an emotional Willie Mullins. Winning owner Andrew said: "From a personal point of view, I can't tell you... Sadie would have loved today - she was up there, she'll have had a tenner each-way, I guarantee you. "What a ride from Patrick, what a ride. I knew if we got to the front jumping the last, this horse is tough. If you look at this form, when he's jumped the last, he keeps finding [more]. I can't believe it." Willie Mullins is now odds-on favourite to win the British trainers' championship for a second year running.

Arsenal's draw at Everton tightens Liverpool's grip on title

LIVERPOOL (AFP): Arsenal's small remaining hope of a first Premier League title for 21 years was further diminished after a 1-1 draw at Everton on Saturday. Leandro Trossard's opener for the Gunners was cancelled out by Iliman Ndiaye's penalty to leave Arsenal still 11 points behind Liverpool, who have a game in hand. The Reds now need just 11 points from their remaining eight games to secure a record-equaling 20th English top-flight title. "Especially with the result, very unhappy," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta, who spent six years at Goodison Park as an Everton player. "This is a very tough place to come, (against) a team who is very physical and direct. If you don't deal with it, it's hard to get momentum. The start of the second half was very poor." Arteta had said the best preparation for his side's Champions League quarter-final, first leg against Real Madrid would be to win on Merseyside. But the Spaniard showed he had one eye on the visit of the European champions with his team selection. Bukayo Saka was forced to wait for his first start since December as



the England international was left on the bench alongside Martin Odegaard, Gabriel Martinelli, Jurrien Timber and Thomas Partey. Despite also missing Gabriel Magalhaes, Kai Havertz and Gabriel Jesus to long-term injuries, Arsenal were still the dominant force in the first 45 minutes. However, it was from a rare Everton attack that the visitors took the lead on the counter-attack. Raheem Sterling drove through midfield and fed Trossard who drilled an accurate low finish beyond Jordan Pickford for his first league goal since January. Arsenal's title bid, though, has been undone throughout the season by not scoring enough goals, even when Havertz and Jesus were fit earlier in the campaign.

Controversial penalty Saka and Martinelli were introduced to add more firepower at half-time, but within seconds of the restart Everton were gifted a route back into the game. Myles Lewis-Skelly was penalised for a controversial foul on Jack Harrison and referee Darren England pointed to the spot. Ndiaye was made to wait by a lengthy VAR check to confirm the penalty award, but coolly sent David Raya the wrong way to level. Raya was then forced into a fine save from Abdoulaye Doucoure's powerful effort as Everton threatened to turn the game around. But David Moyes' men were ultimately grateful for a point as they sat back in the closing stages and relied on Arsenal's waste-

ful finishing to cling on for a draw. Odegaard and Mikel Merino wasted big chances for a winner when they fired off target in the final 10 minutes. Everton's only defeat in their last 11 league games came in a bad-tempered 1-0 Merseyside derby defeat to Liverpool on Wednesday. But despite the bad blood between the clubs, The Toffees did their local rivals a favour to edge Liverpool ever closer to sealing the title. A point edges Everton up to 14th, now 15 points clear of the relegation zone. Moyes previously pledged he would not visit the club's new stadium until safety was assured but said he will now go to see the 53,000 capacity ground this week thanks to the cushion his side have over the bottom three. "We're getting closer. It would be very hard for the other sides to get to where we are now," said Moyes, who added the pressure was on not to spoil the legacy of his first spell at the club with relegation when he returned in January. "I thought if I take Everton down it would be an absolute disaster! Thankfully the players have responded really well."

Verstappen snatches 'special' pole for Japan GP with lap record

SUZUKA (AFP): Four-time world champion Max Verstappen smashed the track record to snatch pole position for Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix ahead of McLaren's Lando Norris, as Yuki Tsunoda qualified a lowly 15th in his Red Bull debut. Verstappen clocked a blistering lap of 1min 26.983sec in his Red Bull, 0.012sec ahead of early championship leader Norris, with the other McLaren of Oscar Piastri third. Verstappen has struggled with his car this season and the McLarens dominated all three practice sessions at Suzuka. But Verstappen delivered in his final lap in Saturday qualifying, pipping Norris right at the death. "If you look at how our season started, even during this weekend, it's very unexpected," the Dutchman said of his first pole position of 2025. "I think that makes it a very special one." Verstappen is still looking for his first race victory of the campaign, having finished second in Australia and fourth in China. He has won in Japan for the past three seasons but he was cautious about reading too much into his latest qualifying heroics.



"I don't say, 'oh I'm first now, everything is perfect'," said the Dutchman. "We still have clear issues that we need to solve. That's what we are continuing to work on." Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was fourth ahead of Mercedes duo George Russell and Kimi Antonelli, with RB's Isack Hadjar seventh. Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton was eighth, followed by Williams's Alex Albon and Haas's Oliver Bearman. The McLarens have started the season in rampant form, with Norris winning the opener in Melbourne and Piastri leading him in a one-two finish in Shanghai. Norris said the team would "do our homework tonight" to try and break Verstappen's Suzuka stran-

glehold. "It's probably going to be a bit of a race like Melbourne, and that was an exciting race for everyone," said the Briton. "But now I've got to try and do some overtakes, so we'll see. It's exciting." Tsunoda eliminated in Q2 Tsunoda was eliminated in Q2 in a disappointing first qualifying drive for Red Bull after being promoted in place of Liam Lawson last week. The Japanese driver finished one place behind Lawson, who returned to RB after just two races for Red Bull in a ruthless driver swap. "I had pace in FP3 (third practice) so I didn't expect it to be like this, how it ended up today, so it's a shame," Tsunoda told Sky Sports. "But one positive is that

I started to understand the car. This car is quite difficult to operate properly, it's quite narrow compared to the RB, but I feel quite confident in the car." Alpine's Pierre Gasly, Williams's Carlos Sainz and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso were eliminated in Q2 along with Lawson and Tsunoda. Sauber pair Nico Hulkenberg and Gabriel Bortoleto, Haas's Esteban Ocon, Alpine's Jack Doohan and Aston Martin's Lance Stroll were all eliminated in Q1. Qualifying was suspended for about eight minutes in Q2 when a small trackside fire broke out as sparks from the cars ignited the grass in the dry conditions. It was the fifth such incident of the weekend, with the second and third practice sessions also disrupted by small fires. Rain has been forecast for Sunday's race, adding an extra layer of intrigue. Verstappen said his battle with the two McLarens will be "very hard". "So far this season we have not been able to fight them but it's not like we just sit there and accept it," he said. "We try to do the very best and we will give it a good fight tomorrow if we can."



In brief

IRSA releases 63,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 63,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 71,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1410.66 feet which was 8.66 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,700 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1088.60 feet, which was 38.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 22,600 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 27,700, 30,300, 16,600 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Drugs awareness walk held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi district police, under the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani, organized a walk in the Gujar Khan Circle area to sensitize the masses regarding the hazards and prevention of drugs here on Saturday. A large number of traders, students, citizens and police officers participated in the awareness walks. The walks aimed to provide awareness to the citizens about the harms of narcotics and its prevention. Special awareness pamphlets were also distributed during the walks and awareness banners were also displayed at different points. Police Officers also delivered lectures in Masajids and different educational institutions and said it was not the sole responsibility of any law enforcement agency, rather it was the collective responsibility of all citizens to play their role in creating awareness among the masses against drugs, the police spokesman said.

12 drug suppliers arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police, during the crackdown against drug dealers according to the drug-free vision of Chief Minister's Punjab on Saturday, netted 12 big drug smugglers, including a lady suspect with more than 27 kilograms of charas. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the Saddar Berooni Police nabbed an accused Shabir and recovered 4 kg 200 grams of hashish from him. Ratta Amral Police recovered 3 kg 600 grams of hashish from the accused, Tayyab and 2 kg 200 grams of hashish from Abdul Shakoar. Similarly, RA Bazar Police nabbed the lady smuggler Alina Batool and recovered 3 kg of hashish from her, while 3 kg 600 grams of hashish was recovered from the accused Jahangir. Pirwadhai Police arrested Akash and recovered 1 kg 800 grams of Charas. Newtown Police recovered 1 kg 650 grams of hashish from the accused Ali Shah Rubin, while Wah Cantt Police nabbed Waris Khan and recovered 1 kg 700 grams of hashish from him. Saddar Wah Police recovered 1 kg 800 grams of hashish from the accused Akram alias Toka. Similarly, Sadiqabad Police recovered 1 kg 530 grams of hashish from the accused, Afzal Hussain. Taxila Police recovered 1 kg 450 grams of hashish from the accused Alam Zeb, while Kahuta Police arrested the accused Ahmed Ali and recovered 1 kg 100 grams of hashish from him.



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry addressing a press conference at PTV Headquarters. —APP Photo

Pakistan sees economic stability under current govt: Danyal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, on Saturday highlighted the country's progress under the current government saying Pakistan has achieved both political and economic stability. Speaking at a press conference here, Chaudhry emphasized that despite initial predictions of bankruptcy within 24 to 48 hours by the previous government the country has seen an improvement in foreign reserves. Four million families received digital cash assistance during Ramadan, while three million people in Punjab received a Rs 10,000 ration package. 12 million people benefited from relief through Ramadan bazars.

Chaudhry credited the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) government for resolving the energy crisis that plagued Pakistan in 2013, with load shedding reaching 22 to 23 hours. The government provided thousands of megawatts to the grid, significantly improving the situation.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was revived after a brief halt due to the discontinuity of our government in 2018, he said. Due to Prime Minister's struggles, Rs 7.41 per unit cut in power rates was a major relief to the consumers, he said.

Chaudhry highlighted the government's efforts to bring transparency to the country, citing international institutions' positive analysis. He also criticized the

opposition for alleged corruption, 33 fake degrees at Swabi University, bogus candidates at Badashah University and illegal hiring in Agriculture University.

He said previous government also took two arab rupees on the name of mosques which they put on their social media and insaaf team. Eithsab commssion couldn't work in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We will also expose their corruption in the coming days, he said.

The previous government claimed that they have planted 1.8 billion trees but not even 20 per cent of it exists in reality and their corruption goes on. They were weakening our institutions and country through that corruption money, he said. We are not good in making propaganda or doing abusing politics

but when it comes to deliverance, making bridges, roads, infrastructure and economy we have and will deliver to the people.

The government has launched various public welfare projects, including Kisan Program supporting farmers through the Kisan card and tractor program, improved healthcare services and registering over 1.5 million people for housing initiatives through Apni Chat Apna Ghar program.

He reported positive economic indicators, including GDP Growth, stock market which was recognized as Asia's top-performing market. The IT Sector revenue will see growth to cross \$4 billion in the coming years and business sector has seen increased investment due to decreased interest rates.

Kousar Kazmi urged PTI to refrain from anti-state narratives

ISLAMABAD (APP): The spokesperson for the Punjab Chief Minister, Syed Kousar Kazmi Saturday called on the PTI to promote national unity and constructive dialogue to combat terrorism, rather than spreading anti-state narratives.

In an interview with a Private news channel, Spokesperson urged the PTI leadership to prioritize national unity and cooperation in the fight against terrorism, rather than engaging in anti-state rhetoric.

He criticized PTI leadership for their silence on terrorism, stating that not a single word of condolence has come from them, adding, PTI should avoid spreading enemy-based narratives and instead focus on promoting national

unity to combat terrorism. Kazmi emphasized the need for collective efforts to fight terrorism, but PTI's actions are seen as undermining national unity.

Responding to a query, Syed Kousar Kazmi highlighted the Pakistan Muslim League leadership's efforts in the power sector. He stated that the leadership is taking bold, historic steps with a milestone decision to decrease power prices being a significant move.

This decision is expected to have a positive impact on the country's economy and citizens' lives, he added. Kazmi also credited Mian Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif for their efforts in rescuing the economy.

He highlighted their

leadership and vision in implementing policies that have promoted economic stability and growth.

Kazmi emphasized that their initiatives have had a positive impact on the country's economy, citing their efforts to boost investment, infrastructure development and job creation.

Syed Kousar further praised Maryum Nawaz Sharif's leadership and initiatives, highlighting her efforts to improve education, agriculture, healthcare and infrastructure in Punjab.

Her programs aim to promote social welfare, women empowerment and economic growth, reflecting her commitment to uplifting the lives of Punjabis, he added.

Murderer received death sentence in shooting case

RAWALPINDI (APP): A local court has sentenced a criminal to death in a murder case. The accused, Sajid Hussain, was given the death penalty, two years of imprisonment, a Rs. 500,000 fine as compensation, and an additional Rs. 50,000 as surety.

According to the details, they killed Younas and injured Haq Nawaz when he opened fire due to previ-

ous enmity.

The court awarded him the death sentence and a Rs. 500,000 penalty for murder, while also sentencing him to two years in jail and a Rs. 50,000 surety for causing injury.

The case was registered in August 2023 at Saddar Barooni Police Station. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani commended the SSP

Investigation and the legal teams for their efforts in securing the conviction.

"Severe punishments in serious crimes represent the victory of justice and truth," said the CPO. He reassured that Rawalpindi Police remain committed to ensuring justice and maintaining law and order. He further said that such convictions reinforce public trust in the legal system.

PDP President slams NC govt

ISLAMABAD (DNA): Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President Mehbooba Mufti has launched a sharp attack on the National Conference-led government, stating that it has failed to address the real issues faced by the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, in Srinagar, Mehbooba Mufti emphasized that instead of tackling critical concerns like unemployment, arbitrary

arrests, and the everyday struggles of youth, the government was focusing on trivial matters like the transfer of Patwaris.

"This is a joke with the mandate people have given them," Mehbooba said. "Did the people vote for discussions on who will transfer a Patwari, or did they expect a government to address issues like youth rotting in jails, unemployment, and daily raids?"

She criticized the NC-led government for

remaining silent on pressing issues, including the termination of employees and arrests of young people. "It has been six months since the government was formed, but they have not spoken about our jailed youth or sacked employees," she said.

Mehbooba further said that the government has capitulated to New Delhi, adding it was afraid to speak on the issues that matter to the people of the occupied territory.

Minister Riaz Hussain visits Shaheed-e-Millat Secretariat

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada visited Shaheed-e-Millat Secretariat in Blue Area, here on Saturday. During his visit, he inspected the vertical transport system of a multi-storey government building and chaired a special meeting to resolve the issue of faulty elevators.

The meeting was conducted in the committee room of the Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation. Senior officers of the Ministry of Housing and Works and representatives from ICT administration, Pak PWD and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) participated in the meeting. Ministry of Housing and Works has owned the Shaheed-e-Millat Secretariat Building since

1986. Its vertical transport system consists of one cargo and five passenger elevators.

It was discussed in the meeting that the issue of elevators remained unresolved primarily due to the paucity and delays in the release of required funds. A contract was awarded after the approval of the first PC-I in 2019 with a budget of Rs. 54.24 million for replacing three lifts.

Subsequently, administrative approval was granted in 2021 to an umbrella PC-I that included the replacement of three other passenger lifts at a cost of Rs. 48 million. Initially, funds of Rs. 50.92 million were released in FY 2020-21, but the project could not meet expectations owing to the non-compliance of contractors, leading to the re-appropriation of funds to

other PSDP schemes.

Maintenance responsibility was handed over by Pak PWD to CDA on October 31, 2024. It was agreed upon that CDA would move for early revision of authority with termination and necessary revision of agreements with contractors. Chairman CDA, who spoke via Zoom link, assured the chair to act positively within the next two weeks by repairing and making operational the two elevators on an emergency basis. The minister showed grave concern over the long delay in the repair of elevators and the hardships faced by thousands of employees and visitors on a daily basis. He rebuked the relevant authorities for their negligence and urged all stakeholders to resolve the issue on a war footing.



ISLAMABAD: Smoke rises from Margalla Hills due to a forest fire in the Federal Capital, triggering environmental concerns and emergency response efforts. —APP Photo

DIG Tariq orders crackdown on criminals

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level crime meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq, to review the overall crime situation and operational performance across all police zones.

A police spokesperson told APP that the meeting was attended by Zonal SPs, SP Dolphin, SDPOs, and SHOs. DIG Islamabad reviewed the performance of each zone and directed officers to strengthen crime control efforts and improve the quality of investigations. DIG Tariq emphasized

that all pending case challans should be completed and submitted in a timely manner based on merit. He also underscored the importance of arresting proclaimed offenders and absconders without delay.

He instructed that a comprehensive crackdown must be launched against those involved in car and motorcycle thefts, along with proactive measures against active criminal gangs.

The DIG stressed that effective redressal of public complaints at the police station level must be ensured to build trust in the force.

Highlighting the force's stance on vulnerable groups, he reiterated that there is zero tolerance for crimes against women and children, and strict action would be taken in such cases.

He further pointed out that modern policing demands the integration of traditional investigative methods with the latest technology to boost efficiency and outcomes.

DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq reaffirmed that safeguarding the lives and property of citizens and eliminating criminal elements remain the top priorities of Islamabad Police.

Two-headed baby dies

TIRINKOT (Pajhwok): A baby girl born with two heads at the Uruzgan provincial hospital has passed away shortly after birth, an official confirmed on Saturday. A reliable source at the hospital confided to Pajhwok the mother, who was experiencing complications in labour, had been brought to the medical facility from Gizab district on Friday. Given the severity of the woman's condition, doctors decided to perform a surgery after conducting necessary examinations.

17-year-old girl dies by suicide

KUNDUZ (Amu TV): A 17-year-old girl died by suicide on late Friday in Kunduz, according to local sources who spoke to Amu TV. The incident occurred in the Doublola area of District 2 in the provincial capital. Sources said the girl was taken to Kunduz Regional Hospital after she was found, but she died before reaching the facility. The motive behind the suicide remains unclear, and Taliban authorities have not commented on the case.

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

Ministry: 370 projects implemented in 1403

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy has announced that 370 projects funded by the national budget have been implemented across the country during the solar year 1403.

According to Abdul Rahman Habib, spokesperson for the ministry, these projects have mainly been carried out in the infrastructure sector, and their implementation has provided employment opportunities for thousands of citizens.

"In the year 1403, 370 development projects have been funded through internal revenues and the development budget of the Islamic Emirate, which also includes 873 sub-projects at

the provincial level," the spokesperson stated.

However, an economic expert, pointing to the limited job opportunities in the country, emphasized the need for more infrastructure projects.

"It is very important for us to know how much work is being done in the economic and infrastructure sectors because its impact will be tangible in the future," stated Shams Rahman Ahmadi, an expert in economic affairs.

Meanwhile, some Kabul residents, expressing concerns over unemployment, have called on the Islamic Emirate to create more job opportunities.

"If there is work, I will

work. If there is none, I have these problems—from paying rent to other issues we all are facing," said Mohammad Yaseen, a Kabul resident.

"We ask the government to take initiatives and create job opportunities for the people," said Ghulam Sakhi, another resident of Kabul.

Poverty and unemployment remain among the most pressing challenges in Afghanistan.

According to data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than half of Afghanistan's population needs humanitarian assistance.

Muttaqi visits Saudi Arabia

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting foreign minister of the country, has visited Saudi Arabia. The visit, confirmed by Mawlawi Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, marks an important step towards enhancing the bilateral ties between the two nations.

According to Mujahid, the warm welcome and high-level protocol extended to Muttaqi by Saudi officials underscore the kingdom's positive intentions and commitment to fostering strong ties with Afghanistan.

The discussions during the visit are expected to focus on cooperation in various sectors, promoting mutual interests, and addressing regional challenges.

Both countries navigate the complexities of their political landscapes, this visit is viewed as a pivotal opportunity for Afghanistan to strengthen its international relationships and for Saudi Arabia to reinforce its role as a key player in the region.

1b afs recreation complex to be built in Herat



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Economic Commission has approved the construction of the Bam Herat recreational complex in the western province.

A regular meeting of the Economic Commission, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, approved the complex.

Baradar's office said in a statement the meeting gave the go-ahead to the proposed "Bam Herat" recreational complex by the private sector.

The distribution and sale of state-owned scrap to iron-melting factories, a contract for the extraction of gold from the Weka Dur mine in Badakhshan province and several follow-up topics were discussed.

Following detailed discussions, the proposal for the construction of the "Bam Herat" recreational complex by the private sector was approved.

The private sector will invest over one billion afghanis in the construction of the complex, which is

expected to create job opportunities for approximately four thousand people.

Additionally, the Ministry of Finance was tasked with settling outstanding accounts with iron-melting companies, collecting dues from firms and repaying debts.

The Ministry of Finance was also directed to implement the orders of Supreme Leader Sheikh Haibatullah Akhundzada regarding the distribution and sale of state-owned scrap.

The Ministry of Mines

and Petroleum was instructed to nullify the previous bidding process for the extraction and processing of gold from the Weka Dur mine and conduct a new bidding process. The new process should select a competent company.

At the end of the meeting, reports on several follow-up topics were presented and approved by the Economic Commission, with necessary recommendations for implementation sent to relevant ministries and agencies.

International Day of Conscience: Afghan women says world turned a blind eye

KABUL (Amu TV): As the world marked the International Day of Conscience on April 5, some Afghan women and girls said the concept of conscience holds little meaning in a country where they have been stripped of basic rights under Taliban rule.

The United Nations observes the day as a time to reflect on one's actions and to foster a more inclusive and compassionate world.

"Every small step toward compassion makes a difference," the UN said in its message commemorating the occasion.

But in Afghanistan, many women say such ideals feel out of reach.

"For nearly four years, we women and girls in Afghanistan have been deprived of all our rights, and no awakened con-

science within the country has heard our voices," said Nabila, a resident of Badghis Province. "We ask the world — as fellow human beings who also have human rights — not to forget us and to keep their consciences awake regarding the women of Afghanistan."

Since the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, they have imposed sweeping restrictions on women, barring them from most education, employment, and public life. Human rights organizations have repeatedly warned that the group's policies amount to gender persecution.

Footage circulated online on Friday appeared to show an Afghan woman defacing an image of Uzbekistan's president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, while

denouncing his government's engagement with the Taliban.

In the video, the activist accuses the Taliban of imprisoning and abusing women and condemns Mirziyoyev for supporting them.

"Shame on your conscience. You support and defend the Taliban who rape women in prison — you heartless hyena," the woman says. "The Taliban are rapists, terrorists, ignorant and fanatical."

Women's rights advocates have called on the international community to refrain from legitimizing the Taliban and to continue pressing for accountability. Many fear that global engagement with the Taliban — including from regional powers — risks sidelining women's issues altogether.

Child killed, 13 injured in collision

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): A child has been killed and 13 others injured in a traffic accident that took place on the Highway No. 2 in northern Faryab province, an official said Saturday.

Ahmad Fahim Kohi, a traffic police official, told Pajhwok Afghan News, the incident took place yesterday evening in Chimtal Sai area of the provincial capital, Maimana.

According to Kohi, two Passo type cars, taking part in a wedding procession, collided, leaving a child dead and 11 women, two children and a man injured.

The accident resulted from over-speeding and reckless overtaking, he said.

Dr. Qudratullah, a physician at Maimana Hospital, also confirmed receiving the body of a child.

UAE seek boost trade ties with Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, met with Saif Mohammed Al Khalfan, the United Arab Emirates' Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

According to reports from the Deputy Prime Minister's office, Al Khalfan underscored the importance of enhancing trade relations and attracting investment, expressing the UAE's eagerness to expand these ties.

He announced the UAE's readiness to support Afghan refugees facing deportation from neighboring countries, demonstrating the UAE's commitment to humanitarian assistance.

In response Deputy PM Hanafi expressed his appreciation for the UAE's continued cooperation, noting the fruitful history of collaboration in trade, economic, and political sectors, hoping for further growth and strengthening in the coming years.

North-South Corridor project progress announced

KABUL (TOLOnews): Acting Minister of Public Works Mohammad Esa Thani announced progress on the North-South Corridor construction project, which is being developed at a cost of \$120 million.

In addition to the remaining section of the Salang Tunnel, several other projects are currently underway, he stated.

"This year, we are implementing major projects. Work has begun on the Salang Tunnel, the Nuristan-Kunar roads, Kabul-Jalalabad, Badghis-Faryab, Kandahar-Lashkargah, and the second lane of Ghazni. Asphalt paving of the third lane of the Kabul-Kandahar highway is also planned and will commence soon," the acting minister told TOLOnews.

Technical officials of the North-South Corridor project emphasize its strategic importance, noting that once completed, Afghanistan will become a major transit hub in Asia.

"This project has strategic importance. Upon completion, it will connect northern Afghanistan to the south and transform the country into a vital transit hub in Asia. This corridor will reduce transit distance to Pakistan and other regional countries by up to 300 kilometers," said Shir Hasan Khushiwal, the technical officer for southern projects.

"Thus far, 11 kilometers of the route have been fundamentally reconstructed, and 5 more kilometers are ready for asphaltting. Work has also started from Uruzgan province," said

Mohammad Rafiq Mangal, a representative of the contracting company.

Several residents have also called for faster implementation of these projects.

"Our demand is for these projects to be implemented more quickly and for more development initiatives to begin. Such efforts will have a direct and positive impact on the people's economy," said Mohammad Aslam, a resident of Kandahar.

According to the Ministry of Public Works, the completion of the North-South Corridor will not only boost economic opportunities within the country but also play a vital role in strengthening Afghanistan's trade and transit relations with regional countries.

Ministry seeks investment in Energy and Water sectors

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Energy and Water is striving to create more facilities to pave the way for investment in the energy production and water management sectors.

Matullah Abid, spokesperson of the ministry, said that so far, in addition to domestic companies, firms from China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Turkey have held discussions with the ministry regarding investment.

"China, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Turkey, and several other countries have expressed interest in investing in Afghanistan's water and energy sectors. Turkey has already made practical investments in this area," stated the spokesperson.

Some economic experts believe that given Afghanistan's existing energy resources, investment in this sector could lead the country toward self-sufficiency in energy production.

"Developing a plan for neighboring countries and investors interested in Afghanistan can be beneficial and satisfying for them. Especially, working on hydro-sites that generate low-cost energy is important," said Mohammad Asif Stanezkai.

"Ministries should have clear plans and strategies for investors and should request foreign countries, through an organized platform, to produce electricity affordably and easily within Afghanistan," said another economic expert, Mohammad Nabi Afghan.

Since IE regained power, some domestic and international companies have shown interest in investing in sectors such as mining, agriculture, healthcare, water management, energy production, and road construction in Afghanistan.

Kabir urges Iran: Treat Afghans with compassion



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Refugee and Repatriation Maulvi Abdul Kabir has urged Iran to treat Afghan refugees with patience and kindness.

He issued the call at a meeting with the advisor to Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Reza Bahrani and Iranian Ambassador Ali Reza Bigdeli, the Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation said.

A statement from the ministry quoted Kabir as saying the caretaker government was developing a mechanism to provide legal documentation for the

Afghan refugees whose legal stay in Iran has expired. The documents will enable them to stay in Iran lawfully.

He urged the Iranian authorities to show tolerance and humane treatment towards Afghan refugees.

The minister also called on all host countries to grant Afghan refugees sufficient time to return to their homeland voluntarily.

He noted the interim government had devised plans for 46 townships for returning refugees, with work already in progress on several of them.

Bahrani extended an invitation to the minister to visit Tehran. He suggested ahead of the visit, the Afghan side should share a proposal outlining the process for refugee repatriation to facilitate a mutual understanding and enhance cooperation.

Bahrani stressed the importance of treating Afghan refugees in a humane manner, pointing out that Iran currently hosted eight million Afghan nationals, of whom around four million without legal documentation or residency authorisation.

Patient menu at Kabul hospitals sparks concerns

KABUL (Pajhwok): Relatives have expressed concerns about the provision of unsuitable food for jaundice patients at two hospitals in Kabul, but the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) says efforts are underway to develop a specialised menu for hospitalised individuals across the country.

Medical professionals say individuals with jaundice require specific diet due to the condition's impact on the liver and biliary system. Their diet must be tailored to promote liver function and prevent a worsening of symptoms.

Doctors caution difficult-to-digest items like fatty, fried and processed food should be avoided or minimised by jaundice patients.

Complaints from patient relatives

Khial Mohammad, hailing from Baghlan province, was recently hospitalised at the Infectious Disease Hospital due to jaundice. He shared his concerns with Pajhwok Afghan News.

"While doctors are attending to the patients, the food provided to those with jaundice is not suitable, particularly dishes with a lot of oil. They serve potatoes and beans, which are not good for jaundice patients," he noted.

Similarly, Safar Ali Ahmadi, a resident of Kabul's Dasht-i-Barchi area whose father has severe jaundice and is currently admitted to the Infectious Disease Hospital, expressed satisfaction with the hospital's services but objected to its food.

"Doctors say people with jaundice should avoid meat and beans and use less salt, yet the hospital serves

all these items. We often bring bread from home for my father," he alleged.

He called for the preparation of a separate nutritional menu tailored to the health conditions of the patients. Relatives of jaundice patients at the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul voiced similar complaints.

Ahmad Sadiq is a resident of Baghlan whose child is suffering from jaundice. The child was being served beans or chickpeas, which were unsuitable for jaundice patients, he complained. "I have to borrow money to bring food for my son from outside," he said, urging a solution to the issue.

Mohammad Agha, a resident of Kabul whose 10-year-old son is admitted with jaundice to the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospi-

tal, echoed similar concerns, emphasising the provision of mild foods for jaundice patients.

A longstanding issue Dr Faridullah Omari, a specialist at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Kabul, said patients with jaundice required specific diet due to the liver damage that could occur to them.

"To those suffering from acute jaundice, irreversible liver cell damage occurs. We must recommend foods that reduce the burden on the liver," he said.

He advised patients to avoid fried and fast foods, soft drinks, coffee, cakes and cookies, all of which could exacerbate liver stress. Instead, patients should consume balanced diet of vegetables, fruits and natural juices.

Dr Omari pointed out each patient's diet should

be tailored individually, as one patient might require more protein, while another could need a smaller amount of it.

At present, the hospital has a single-item menu, making it difficult to prepare different meals for different patients. "We recommend patients bring food from home," he added.

The typical menu includes milk, dry bread, eggs and sugar for breakfast; rice with beans or vegetables like pumpkin, eggplant, okra, and chicken for lunch, along with fruit; and salad with beans, potatoes and fruit for dinner. While this diet benefits some patients, it may be improper or even harmful for others.

"This problem has existed for a long time and is not new. However, compared to the past, 80 percent of the issue has been resolved. In

the past, patients only received plain rice and potatoes, but now their diet is balanced," Dr Omari claimed.

Dr Abdul Rahman Karimi, an official at the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital, highlighted the importance of adjusting diet based on the patient's condition. "Patients with jaundice should consume less protein until they recover. Eating too much protein, such as beans or chickpeas, may cause complications, commonly known as 'jaundice affecting the nerves.' This is why each patient needs a tailored diet," he explained.

The standard menu at the Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital includes rice, beans, chickpeas and vegetables such as cauliflower and eggplant, with eggs, milk and sugar for breakfast.

Dr Karimi pointed out the hospital's biggest challenge was the rising number of patients. "When the number of patients increases, more resources are required. We need additional beds and cooperation from the government and partner organisations to ensure patients with different conditions receive appropriate diet," he said.

Dr Noor Rahman Burhan, a pediatrician and nutritionist at the same hospital, stressed nutrition was as critical as medical treatment. "If the correct nutrition is not provided, medication alone cannot resolve an issue. Diet must be carefully implemented alongside treatment."

He proposed the activation of an exclusive department at hospitals, with support from friendly nations, to ensure patients received

proper nutritional care.

"The MoPH should collaborate with donor countries and organisations to address this issue," Dr Burhan suggested.

MoPH response

Dr Sharafat Zaman, spokesman for MoPH, acknowledged while the nutritional menu for bedridden patients at government hospitals had improved over time, there were still challenges.

"We have a regular nutritional programme for bedridden patients, but there are some outstanding issues. Work is ongoing to address these problems," he said.

He concluded efforts were ongoing to devise a standard nutritional plan using available resources, with the aim of improving the situation as much as possible and implementing more strategies in the future.



TORKHAM: An Afghan family loading their belongings before moving to their home land at border. — F.P. photo

Israeli troops firing on emergency vehicles

CAIRO (Reuters): A Palestinian paramedic who was present at an incident in which 15 of his colleagues were killed in southern Gaza last month said he saw Israeli troops firing at emergency vehicles that he later saw stained with blood.

After several days of uncertainty about the whereabouts of the paramedics, Red Crescent and UN officials found the bodies of the 15 emergency and aid workers buried in a mass grave in southern Gaza, accusing Israeli forces of killing them. Another worker is still missing. Munther Abed, a volunteer for the Palestinian Red Crescent, said he was responding to a call with two colleagues near Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip on March 23 when he was detained by the Israeli soldiers shortly before they opened fire on other emergency vehicles.

He said he had not been able to see exactly what happened when the soldiers opened fire. But his account corresponds with assertions by officials from the Palestinian Red Crescent and the United Nations that the emergency workers from the Red Cross, Red Crescent, UN and Palestinian Civil Emergency service were targeted by Israeli troops. The Israeli military has opened an investigation into the incident, which by its account occurred when unmarked vehicles approached an Israeli position in the dark without lights or special markings and without previous coordination, factors it said had made the vehicles' advance appear suspicious.

The military said the soldiers who opened fire had killed a number of Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants who were travelling in vehicles marked with the Palestinian Red Crescent signs. The Palestinian Red Crescent describes Abed as "the lone survivor" of the incident, with the fate of the missing paramedic still unclear.

Abed said he and colleagues had received a call to go out to help wounded people at around dawn following an air strike in the Al-Hashasheh area in Rafah, close to the border with Egypt. "We moved right away, it was me and two other colleagues. As soon as we arrived there, we came under fire and they detained us," he told Reuters by phone from his house in Khan Younis, referring to shooting by Israeli soldiers.

After he was detained, he said he lost sight of his two colleagues. As he was standing near the soldiers, he said he saw other emergency vehicles approaching the Israeli soldiers' position.

"I could see the vehicle of the Civil Emergency. The soldiers began shooting at the vehicles, they fired heavily,"

UN says 100 children killed or injured in Gaza every day

NEW YORK: The United Nations says at least 100 children have been killed or injured every day in Gaza since the strikes resumed on March 18, even as the United States underscores continued support for Israel. "Nothing justifies the killing of children," Philippe Lazzarini, chief of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), posted on X on Saturday. He said Israel was turning the besieged territory into a "no land" for children and lamented that "young lives" were being "cut short in a war not of children's making". "This is a stain on our common humanity," Lazzarini said.

UNICEF said at least 322 children were reported to have been killed since Israel renewed its offensive on March 18, shattering a two-month shaky ceasefire that took effect on January 19. UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on Monday said the ceasefire had "provided a desperately needed lifeline for Gaza's children and hope for a path to recovery".

"But children have again been plunged into a cycle of deadly violence and deprivation," she said. Marking the Palestine Children's Day, observed annually on April 5, the Palestinian Ministry of Education on Saturday said children are among the most targeted victims of Israeli aggression, with more than 17,000 of them killed in Gaza since October 2023. The "figure reflects the depth of the tragedy children are enduring, with each number representing a life, memories, and experiences lost", the ministry said. Palestinian group Hamas also condemned what it said was Israel's policy of "deliberate killing, detention, and torture of children, as well as the deprivation of their basic human rights". It warned that Israel's "impunity encourages further escalation of crimes against Palestinian children". "Approximately 1,100 children have been detained by the Israeli army since October 7, 2023, and about 39,000 others have lost one or both parents due to the violence," Hamas said in a statement. The Israeli occupation "continues to target children through systematic crimes, including using them as human shields, depriving them of education, and attempting to sever their national identity in the occupied territories of 1948 through manipulation of curricula, the spread of crime, and the destruction of values", it added. — Aljazeera

he said. "It was dark and I couldn't see what happened to the people there, but they (the soldiers) fired heavily. They asked me to duck down and they were firing heavily. I felt as if the bullets were hitting me personally." On Saturday, the Red Crescent issued published a video obtained from the cell phone of a paramedic found buried in the mass grave.

Filmed from inside a moving vehicle, it appears to show a clearly marked convoy of ambulances and a fire truck driving at dawn with their red lights flashing. After they stop by a vehicle that had veered off the road, two rescue workers and another man can be seen before a volley of gunshots is heard. Reuters was able to verify the location of the video near the Tal al-Sultan area west of Rafah city in Rafah governorate.

The Israeli military said in response to a request for comment about the video that the event on March 23, 2025, was under thorough examination. "All claims, including the documentation circulating about the incident, will be thoroughly and deeply examined to understand the sequence of events and the handling of the situation," it said.

It was only after daybreak that Abed, who remained held at the location where he was initially detained, was able to get a clearer picture of what had happened. "With the first light of the day, things become clearer, I saw the vehicles of the Civil Emergency and the Red Crescent, the doors of all the vehicles were open and there was blood on the vehicles," he said.

He said he saw a bulldozer dig four holes in the sandy ground before crushing the wrecked vehicles and burying them. "At that time I had no clue about the fate of my colleagues," he said. Abed said he was held in detention by Israeli forces for about 15 hours during which time he was interrogated and beaten. He said he saw the aid worker who is still missing, detained by Israeli soldiers.

"They asked me where I had been on October 7, they were saying Palestinians are terrorists, and that we are all terrorists. They asked many personal questions to about me and my family," he said. "I felt I was about to die." Eventually he said the soldiers made some checks on him before they decided to release him.

Russia kills 19 in Ukraine

KRYVYI RIH, Ukraine (Reuters): A Russian attack killed at least 19 people including nine children in the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih, local officials said, but Russia's Defence Ministry said it targeted a military gathering there. The Ukrainian military denounced the Russian statement as misinformation.

Serhiy Lysak, the regional governor, wrote on the Telegram messaging app that a missile hit residential areas, killing 18, and sparked fires. Later, Russian drones attacked homes and killed one person, Oleksandr Vilkul, the city's military administrator, said. Pictures posted online showed bodies of the dead and wounded lying on the pavement as grey smoke rose into the sky.

Russia's Defence Ministry, in a post on Telegram, said a "high-precision strike" had targeted "a meeting of unit commanders and Western instructors" in a restaurant. "As a result of the strike, enemy losses total up to 85 servicemen and officers of foreign countries, as well as up to 20 vehicles," the ministry said on Telegram.

US President Donald Trump, who took office in January after pledging he would end the war in 24 hours, has sought to broker an end to the conflict. The US said last week it had agreed with Russia and Ukraine two ceasefire accords, including one that would halt strikes on each other's energy infrastructure. Rescue workers toiled through the night with flashlights in Kryvyi Rih, moving around wrecked cars, buildings with shattered windows and a gaping crater. Residents carried armloads of foil and timber for emergency home repairs, according to a Reuters eyewitness. Using their mobile phones for light, some people registered at help centres.

"There were dead children lying there, crying parents, it was horrible," Yulia, 47, told Reuters as she surveyed the damaged blinds, fixtures and furniture in her apartment. The strike on President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown was one of Moscow's deadliest this year in the conflict, launched with the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

At least 50 people were wounded, the emergency services said, adding that the figure was growing. More than 30 people, including a three-month-old baby, were in hospital, Lysak said. Russia denies targeting civilians, but thousands have been killed and injured in the invasion.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military said the attack showed that Russia "is in no way seeking peace, but rather intends to continue its invasion and war to destroy Ukraine and all Ukrainians." In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy called on the West to exert greater pressure on Moscow.

On Friday, each side accused the other again of flouting the energy-infrastructure ceasefire. Russia's Defence Ministry accused Ukraine of attacking Russian energy facilities six times in the past 24 hours. Zelenskyy said Russia had launched a drone attack on a thermal power plant in Ukraine's city of Kherson on Friday.

Meanwhile, Russia's defence ministry said on Saturday Ukraine had increased its attacks on Russian energy infrastructure, hitting targets 14 times in the last 24 hours, despite a US-brokered moratorium, a charge Ukraine's military called "fake" and "disinformation". In a statement published on Telegram, the ministry said Ukraine "multiplied the number of unilateral attacks using drones and artillery shells on the energy infra-

structure of Russian regions".

It said the strikes had caused damage in Russia's Bryansk, Belgorod, Smolensk, Lipetsk and Voronezh regions, as well as the Ukrainian regions of Luhansk and Kherson, parts of which Russia controls. Reuters was unable to verify the reports of the strikes. In its own statement on Telegram, Ukraine's military said that the reports were fake, and that its forces were only striking military targets.

Ukraine's military has previously said it halted strikes on Russian energy facilities on March 18. Russia and Ukraine agreed last month to a US proposal for a 30-day moratorium on striking each other's energy infrastructure. Both sides have since repeatedly accused each other of violating the deal. The deal was part of a wider diplomatic push by US President Donald Trump since his return to office in January to end the conflict.

Separately on Saturday, authorities in two Russian regions reported Ukrainian drone strikes on local industrial facilities. The governor of Russia's Volga river region of Mordovia said Ukrainian drones had struck an industrial facility. Media reports said it was an optical fibre factory in the region's capital, Saransk. The governor of Samara region, another Volga riverside province, said that a factory in the city of Chapaevsk had been attacked by Ukrainian drones.

A source in Ukraine's SBU security service told Reuters that the target was a plant producing industrial explosives, and that the strike had caused multiple explosions and fires. A Russian strike on the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih killed at least 19 people, including nine children, local officials said.

Govt abolishes 5 accountability courts in Lahore

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has abolished five accountability courts in Lahore. A notification in this regard was also issued by the law ministry. Earlier, there were 10 accountability courts working in Lahore.

The law ministry stated that the staff from the abolished courts have been merged with tribunals and other special courts. According to the notification, the Accountability Court I has been changed into the Intellectual Property Tribunal, Multan.

The Accountability Court III has been changed into the Special Court for Customs and Taxation, Multan. The Accountability Court IV has been replaced with the Special Court for Customs and Taxation II, Lahore. "The existing posts of Judges and supporting staff, along with budget and assets pertaining to the above mentioned converted/re-designated accountability courts are hereby transferred to the newly-established courts/tribunals as mentioned against each," the notification said.

Meanwhile, the notification stated that the Accountability Court VIII will now function as the Intellectual Property Tribunal Lahore II. Similarly, the Accountability Court VII has been changed into the Special Judge Central Court in Gujrat.

PIA announces pre-Haji operation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has officially announced its pre-Haji operation for 2025, scheduled to run from April 29 to June 1. During this period, the national airline will operate 280 special flights to transport over 56,000 Pakistani pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

According to sources, 20,000 pilgrims will travel under the government Haji scheme, while 36,000 will go through private arrangements. PIA will utilise Boeing 777 and Airbus A320 aircraft to ensure a more comfortable and organised travel experience for the pilgrims. The post-Haji operation is set to begin on June 12 and will continue until July 10. PIA has put a comprehensive flight plan in place to bring pilgrims back home safely and efficiently.

Officials assured that special arrangements have been made to ensure timely and secure flights, with all possible facilities provided to avoid any inconvenience for the pilgrims.

Starmer, Macron share concerns over US tariff

LONDON (Reuters): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron shared their concerns over the economic and security impact of US President Donald Trump's tariffs when they spoke on Saturday, Starmer's office said.

"They agreed that a trade war was in nobody's interests, but nothing should be off the table," the statement from Downing Street said. "The prime minister and president also shared their concerns about the global economic and security impact, particularly in Southeast Asia." The pair agreed to stay in close contact over the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, China said on Saturday "the market has spoken" in rejecting US President Donald Trump's tariffs, and called on Washington for "equal-footed consultation" after global markets plunged in reaction to the trade levies that drew Chinese retaliation. State-run Xinhua news agency also published the Chinese government's stance, saying the US should "stop using tariffs as a weapon to suppress China's economy and trade."

Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan told public broadcaster RTHK, however, Hong Kong would not impose separate countermeasures, citing the need for the city to remain "free and open." "The market has spoken," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said in a post on Facebook on Saturday. He also posted a picture capturing Friday's falls on US markets.

Modi clinches defence, energy deals in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (AFP): India secured defence and energy deals with neighbouring Sri Lanka on Saturday during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, seen as a move to counter rival China's growing influence in the region.

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake rolled out the red carpet for Modi and conferred on him the country's highest civilian honour for "the deep personal friendship" shown to the smaller neighbour. "We believe that our security interests are aligned," Modi said during a televised ceremony from Dissanayake's office in the capital. "Our security is interdependent and interconnected."

A five-year defence cooperation agreement provides training of Sri Lankan military personnel in India as well as information and technology sharing. Dissanayake applauded what he called "India's rise as a world power, not just a regional power". "I have reiterated our position to Prime Minister Modi that Sri Lankan territory will not be allowed to be used by anyone to undermine India's security," he added.

Separately, the Indian foreign ministry said that the United Arab Emirates was also a part of the plan to develop the energy hub in Sri Lanka. The three nations signed the pact for the hub during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Sri Lanka. "The UAE is a strategic partner for India in the energy space and therefore was an ideal partner for this exercise that is being done for the first time in the region," Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told reporters in Colombo.

"The exact contours of UAE's role will be elaborated once the business-to-business discussions kick off," Misri said. The three nations will next choose business entities that will consider the financing and feasibility of projects for the hub, he said. India has previously objected to Chinese submarines and research vessels which have called at the main seaport in Colombo. Sri Lanka has not allowed Chinese submarines to dock since 2014, after India raised concerns over two such visits. Last year, Colombo imposed a ban on foreign research vessels following New Delhi's accusations that Chinese ships were being used to spy on India. On Saturday, Dissanayake welcomed Modi — the first foreign dignitary to visit Colombo since the leftist leader swept to power last

year — with a 19-gun salute.

The two leaders also celebrated the start of construction of a 120-megawatt solar power project, developed as a joint venture between the two nations. The solar plant, located in the island's northeastern Trincomalee district, had been stalled for years but was reinvigorated with New Delhi's backing. Modi's visit comes as Colombo grapples with the competing interests of New Delhi and Beijing. India has become concerned about China's influence in Sri Lanka, which it sees as falling within its sphere of interest.

Dissanayake's first foreign visit was to New Delhi in December, but he followed it with a visit to Beijing in January, underscoring Sri Lanka's delicate balancing act. China has emerged as Sri Lanka's largest single bilateral creditor, accounting for more than half of its \$14 billion bilateral debt at the time the island defaulted on its sovereign debt in 2022. Beijing was also the first to restructure its loans to Sri Lanka, a move that helped pave the way for the island to emerge from its worst economic meltdown.

In January, Colombo announced it had signed an agreement with a Chinese state-owned company to invest \$3.7 billion in an oil refinery in the island's south. The deal would mark Sri Lanka's largest single foreign investment and is seen as crucial for its economic recovery. Modi's visit to Sri Lanka followed a summit in Thailand and a string of meetings with leaders of neighbouring nations as he sought to shore up India's regional ties. On the sidelines of the Bangkok BIMSTEC meeting — the grouping of seven nations on the Bay of Bengal — Modi held a rare face-to-face meeting with Myanmar's junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing.

He also held talks on Friday with the interim leader of Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus — the first such meeting since a revolution in Dhaka ousted New Delhi's long-time ally Sheikh Hasina and sent relations into a tailspin. India had been the biggest benefactor of Hasina's government, and her overthrow prompted Yunus to make his first state visit last month to China. Modi also met on Friday in Bangkok with his Nepali counterpart, KP Sharma Oli — their first meeting since Oli returned to power last year — as well as Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan.

Myanmar quake death toll reaches 3,354

BANGKOK (Reuters): The death toll from Myanmar's devastating earthquake climbed to 3,354, with 4,850 injured and 220 missing, Myanmar media said on Saturday, as the visiting United Nations aid chief praised humanitarian and community groups for leading the aid response.

The leader of the military government, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, was back in the capital Naypyitaw after a rare foreign trip to attend a summit in Bangkok of South and Southeast Asian nations, where he also met separately with the leaders of Thailand, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and India. Min Aung Hlaing reaffirmed to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the junta's plans to hold "free and fair" elections in December, Myanmar media said.

Modi called for a post-quake ceasefire in Myanmar's civil war to be made permanent and said the elections needed to be "inclusive and credible", an Indian foreign affairs spokesperson said on Friday. Critics have derided the planned election as a sham to keep the generals in power through proxies.

Since overthrowing the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, the military has struggled to run Myanmar, leaving the economy and basic services, including healthcare, in tatters, a situation exacerbated by the March 28 quake. The civil war that followed the coup has displaced more than 3 million people, with widespread food insecurity and more than a third of the population in need of humanitarian

assistance, the UN says. United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher spent Friday night in Myanmar's second-biggest city Mandalay, near the epicentre of the quake, posting on X that humanitarian and community groups had led the response to the quake with "courage, skill and determination". "Many themselves lost everything, and yet kept heading out to support survivors," he said.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said on Friday the junta was restricting aid supplies to quake-hit areas where communities did not back its rule. The UN office said it was investigating 53 reported attacks by the junta against opponents, including airstrikes, of which 16 were after the ceasefire was declared on Wednesday.

JI to hold Aman March on 20th

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan will hold Aman March on April 20 on GT road Peshawar to stress the relevant stake-holders to improve the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

In this regard, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial Ameer Abdul Wasei along with JI Mardan district Ameer Ghulam Rasool and other party leaders held a press conference in Mardan press Club here Saturday.

The JI provincial chief told journalists that the scheduled Aman-March was the first one of the series that the party was going to launch for restoration of peace and improvement of law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. On the occasion, he claimed that the JI central Ameer Hafiz Naemul-Haq would not take part in the said peace-march but would also devise the next line of action as well as unveil the plan for holding other Aman-march programs and its venues.

He told media-persons that the JI was demanding of the government to take targeted actions against militancy as military operations were not the solution of issues related to peace and law and order situation, adding that such issues and problems could be resolved through bombardment or use of tanks and shelling. He said that the door for talks and

dialogues should be opened. The use of force should be avoided in those areas where peace-related issues could be solved by talks and dialogues.

Abdul Wasei that the general public and citizen should not be disgracedly checked and body searched by personnel of Pakistan Army on the different points, set by the relevant officials on different spots. He lamented that this act was not only creating a bad image among countrymen about the Pakistan Army but also creating a gap among them that was why it should be stopped forthwith. Replying to a query about Pakistan and Afghanistan relations, he said that both the countries were so interlinked with each other that they could not be separated.

"Both the countries share a border of 2400-kilometers. Similarly, both the countries are depending on one-another in many matters and issues. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is directly affected whenever relations between the two countries become weak or deteriorating," he lamented. "The business-community are worried and upset whenever relations between the two countries do not remain normal as it is affecting their trading activities," he said, adding that the government should not only be very careful in this connection but also try its best to immediately improve and normalize the relations.

Israel is trying to destabilize Lebanon, Syria

CAIRO: Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit on Saturday accused Israel of trying to destabilize Syria and Lebanon through military provocations, in "flagrant disregard for international legal norms."

In a statement, Aboul Gheit said that global inaction had further emboldened Israel. "(T)he wars waged by Israel on occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Syria have entered a new phase of complete recklessness, deliberately violating signed agreements, invading countries and killing more civilians," said the statement carried by the Saudi Press Agency.

He said that Israel's resumption of targeted assassinations in Lebanon was an unacceptable and condemnable breach of the ceasefire agreement it signed with Lebanon late last year. Aboul Gheit said that Israel's actions were driven by narrow domestic agendas at the expense of civilian lives and regional peace.

"It seems that the Israeli war machine does not want to stop as long as the occupation leaders insist on facing their internal crises by exporting them abroad, and this situation has become clear to everyone," he said. More than 50,000 people have been killed and more than 113,200 wounded in Israeli attacks on Palestinian territories in retaliation against the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attack on southern Israel. — Arab News