



KARACHI: Activists of GDA and PTI holding protest rally outside Karachi Press Club against the six-canal project on Indus River,

PM reaffirms commitment peace

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in his special message on the occasion of the International Day of Sports for Development and Peace, emphasized Pakistan's commitment to leveraging sports as a powerful tool for national growth and global harmony.

In his message on Sunday, the Prime Minister stated that Pakistan stands in solidarity with the international community in recognizing the transformative power of sports to promote positive change, eliminate barriers, and foster unity beyond borders.

Highlighting the role of sports in youth empowerment and national development, he said, "Sports serve as an effective medium for advancing our society and projecting Pakistan's identity on the world stage. This is why our government has declared sports a key pillar of its developmental agenda."

He elaborated that the National Sports Policy is centered on grassroots participation, talent discovery, gender equality, and inclusivity. Citing initiatives like the Arshad Nadeem / Shehbaz Sharif High Performance Academy, he said the goal is to equip young athletes with scientific training, financial backing, and modern facilities to help them meet future challenges.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed the importance of good governance in sports, stating, "We believe that strong governance is the foundation of successful sports institutions." He added that the government is implementing reforms to enhance transparency, accountability, and professionalism within national sports federations, ensuring merit-based athlete selection and ethical conduct.

He further mentioned Pakistan's preparations for the 14th South Asian Games in 2026 and efforts to organize nationwide training camps as part of its vision to establish the country as a regional hub of sports excellence and tourism.

Concluding his message, the Prime Minister urged all stakeholders—including civil society and development partners—to integrate sports into policies related to education, health, development, and peace. "Let us work together to strengthen our sports ecosystem and build a more inclusive, empowered, and sustainable society for future generations," he said.



TASHKENT: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, addressing the 150th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Tashkent.

Over 50 countries have contacted White House to start trade talks

WASHINGTON (Reuters): More than 50 countries have reached out to the White House to begin trade talks, a top economic adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday as U.S. officials sought to defend sweeping new tariffs that have unleashed global turmoil.

During an interview on ABC News' 'This Week,' U.S. National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett denied that the tariffs were part of a strategy by Trump to crash financial markets to pressure the U.S. Federal Reserve to cut interest rates.

He said there were would be no "political coercion" of the central bank. In a Truth Social post on Friday, Trump shared a video that suggested his tariffs aimed to hammer the stock market on purpose in a bid to force lower interest rates.

In a separate interview on NBC News's Meet the Press, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent downplayed the stock market drop and said there was "no reason" to anticipate a recession based on the tariffs.

Trump jolted economies around the world after he announced broad tariffs on U.S. imports on Wednesday, triggering retaliatory levies from China and sparking fears of a globe trade war and recession.

On Sunday morning talk shows, top Trump officials sought to portray the tariffs as a savvy repositioning of the U.S. in the global trade order and the economic disruptions as a short-term fallout.

U.S. stocks have tumbled by around 10% in the two days since Trump announced a new global tariff regime that was more aggressive than analysts and investors had been anticipating.

It is a drop that market analysts and large investors have blamed on Trump's aggressive push on tariffs, which most economists and the head of the U.S. Federal Reserve believe risk stoking inflation and damaging economic growth.

Tariff-stunned markets face another week of potential tariff turmoil, with fallout from Trump's sweeping import levies keeping investors on edge after the worst week for U.S. stocks since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis five years ago.

Hassett told ABC News' 'This Week' that Trump's tariffs had so far driven "more than 50" countries to contact the White House to begin trade talks.

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te on Sunday offered zero tariffs as the basis for talks with the U.S., pledging to remove trade barriers rather than imposing reciprocal measures and saying Taiwanese companies will raise their U.S. investments.

Unlike other economists, Hassett said he did not expect a big hit to consumers because exporters were likely to lower prices.

Bessent told NBC News he did not anticipate a recession based on the tariffs, citing stronger-than-anticipated U.S. jobs growth.

"We could see from the jobs number on Friday, that was well above expectations, that we are moving forward, so I see no reason that we have to price in a recession," Bessent said.

Security forces foil infiltration attempt, kill 8 terrorists

E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Force killed eight khwarij terrorists while foiling their infiltration attempt through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in general area of Hassan Khel, North Waziristan District on Sunday night.

"Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. After an intense exchange of fire, eight Khwarij were sent to hell, while four khwarij got injured," said a news release issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) here.

Pakistan has consistently been asking the Interim Afghan Government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. The Interim Afghan Government is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khwarij for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan.

"Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area as security forces of Pakistan are determined and remain committed to secure its borders and wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country," it further said.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday commended the bravery and professionalism of Pakistan's security forces for thwarting an infiltration attempt by Khawarij terrorists along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the Hasan Khel area.

In his official statement, the Prime Minister lauded the swift and decisive response of the officers and personnel, who successfully repelled the terrorists' attempt to enter Pakistan. He acknowledged their outstanding performance in eliminating eight terrorists and apprehending four others in injured condition.

"The officers and personnel of our security forces have foiled the nefarious designs of the Khawarij to spread chaos inside Pakistan," said the Prime Minister.

He further emphasized that the armed forces of Pakistan remain vigilant and fully committed to defending the nation's borders. "Our officers and soldiers are tirelessly engaged day and night to counter any attempts of mischief and ensure the safety and sovereignty of the country," he added.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday paid tribute to the security forces for foiling attempt of intrusion at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in district North Waziristan.

He lauded the security forces for killing eight Khawarij during the timely operation.

He said the brave armed forces of Pakistan were determined to protect borders of the country around the clock.

The operations against terrorists would continue till complete eradication of the menace of terrorism, he added. He said the whole nation stood with its security forces in the war against terrorism.

Public support crucial to tackle challenges: Attaullah Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday that the strength and resilience of the people of Pakistan continue to serve as the biggest source of inspiration for the government.

Addressing a workers' convention in NA-127, Lahore, he said that with public support and determination, even the most complex national challenges can be overcome.

Attaullah Tarar said that the true strength of any government lies in its people, and when the leadership demonstrates firm resolve, sincere intentions, and a clear direction, divine support follows and success becomes inevitable.

He noted that the government, under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, is working round the clock to provide real and sustainable relief to citizens. "Despite inheriting a fragile economy, widespread inflation, and political polarization, the government made tough but necessary decisions in the interest of the nation," he added.

Attaullah Tarar said that when Pakistan was confronted with unprecedented challenges, the Prime Minister prioritized the state over political gains and refused to jeopardize the country's future for short-term political advantage. He remarked that elements responsible for economic and institutional destruction are now facing political isolation. "The people of Pakistan have rejected those who prioritized chaos and conflict over development and stability," he said.

The minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has fulfilled his promise of providing affordable electricity to the people. He announced that electricity rates for domestic consumers have been reduced to Rs. 7.41 per unit, marking a significant relief for the public. He further said that the government's focused efforts on providing tangible relief, not just slogans, had led to these positive outcomes.

The information minister mentioned that Pakistan's economic performance is now being acknowledged internationally. He pointed out that with lower electricity costs, inflation at single digits, and a booming stock market, all economic indicators reflect a prosperous future for Pakistan. He said, "Pakistan is taking off, and under the 'Uraan Pakistan' initiative, the country is poised to achieve unprecedented economic development."

Attaullah Tarar also announced that industrial consumers will benefit from a reduction in electricity prices to Rs. 7.69 per unit, which he described as a positive sign for the country's economic revival. He emphasized that cheaper and low-cost electricity will stimulate economic activity and generate employment opportunities.

He noted that the policy rate has been reduced from 22 percent to 12 percent, contributing to a more favorable business environment.

He stated that the government's economic successes have played a key role in providing relief to the people. "Serving the people is our political focus and obligation," he said.

Attaullah Tarar stressed that the government's achievements are the result of teamwork and collaboration, and they remain committed to working together to make Pakistan a great nation. He also acknowledged the significant role of the Pakistan Army in ensuring national security and contributing to economic stability.

He said, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government will continue to move forward together, united in their efforts to build a prosperous and strong Pakistan. He also urged party workers to remain engaged with the public and continue conveying the government's message of development, stability, and national unity. "Together, with the people, we will defeat every challenge and lead Pakistan towards a brighter, stronger, and more prosperous future" he added.

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill 32, mostly women and children

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP): Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed at least 32 people, including over a dozen women and children, local health officials said Sunday, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu headed to the United States to meet with President Donald Trump about the war.

Israel last month ended its ceasefire with Hamas and renewed its air and ground offensive, carrying out waves of strikes and seizing territory to pressure the militant group to accept a new deal for a truce and release of remaining hostages. It has also blocked the import of food, fuel and humanitarian aid for over a month to the coastal territory heavily reliant on outside assistance.

"Stocks are getting low and the situation is becoming desperate," the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said on social media.

The latest Israeli strikes overnight into Sunday hit a tent and a house in the southern city of Khan Younis, killing five men, five women and five children, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies.

A female journalist was among those killed. "My daughter is innocent. She had no involvement, she loved journalism and adored it," said her mother, Amal Kaskeen.

The body of one child, 1 1/2-year old, took up just one end of an emergency stretcher.

"Trump wants to end the Gaza issue. He is in a hurry, and that is clear from this morning," asserted Mohammad Abdel-Hadi, cousin of a woman killed.

Israeli shelling killed at least four people in the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. And the bodies of five people, including a child and three women, arrived at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, according to an Associated Press journalist there.

Dozens of Palestinians took to the streets in Jabaliya for a new round of anti-war protests. Footage circulating on social media showed people marching and chanting against Hamas. Such protests, while rare, have occurred in recent weeks. There is also anger inside Israel over the war's resumption and its effects on remaining hostages in Gaza. Families of hostages along with some of those recently freed from Gaza and their supporters on Saturday urged Trump to help ensure the fighting ends.

Netanyahu on Monday will meet with Trump for the second time since Trump began his latest term in January. The prime minister said they would discuss the war and the new 17% tariff imposed on Israel, part of a sweeping global decision by the new U.S. administration.

"There is a very large queue of leaders who want to do this with respect to their economies. I think it reflects the special personal connection and the special connection between the United States and Israel, which is so vital at this time," Netanyahu said while wrapping up a visit to Hungary.

The U.S., a mediator in ceasefire efforts along with Egypt and Qatar, expressed support for Israel's resumption of the war last month.

Hundreds of Palestinians since then have been killed, among them 15 medics whose bodies were recovered only a week later. Israel's military this weekend backtracked on its account of what happened in the incident, captured in part on video, that caused anger by Red Cross and Red Crescent and U.N. officials.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Fifty-nine hostages are still held in Gaza — 24 believed to be alive — after most of the rest were released in ceasefires or other deals.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 50,695 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants but says more than half were women and children. It says another 115,338 people have been wounded. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence.



LAHORE: The President of SOS Children's Villages International is Dr. Dereje Wordofa and Suraiya Anwar presents the shield to the Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Nazeer Tarar at the 50th anniversary of the SOS Children's Villages Pakistan. —APP Photo

SOS Pakistan transforming countless young lives

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar has said that for a half century, SOS Pakistan has been a beacon of hope, transforming countless young lives through love, education and opportunities.

Addressing a ceremony held to celebrate 50 caring years of SOS Children's Villages Pakistan here on Sunday, he said, "It is indeed an immense pleasure to be at SOS village and I thank Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for giving me this opportunity to be here especially among loving children."

The federal law minister read out the message of the Prime Minister. The message said, "I am pleased to announce an anniversary gift of Rs 100 million to SOS Pakistan. I have full confidence that SOS dedicated Board of Governors would allocate these funds where they were needed most. I urge SOS to pay special emphasis on school education our constitutional commitment under Article 25 A of the constitution. The future of Pakistan rests in the hand of youths and their education is key to our nation's progress. I am especially honoured to welcome SOS Children's Villages International President Dr Dereje Wordofa whose presence adds to the significance of the celebration and recognition of his outstanding global contributions to the welfare of deprived children, we would like to honour him as state guest. Additionally, the President of Pakistan has conferred upon him 'Tamgha-i-Khidmat', a well deserved

tribute to his lifelong services.

"It is truly inspiring to see the impact of SOS Pakistan over the past five decades, the children you have nurtured are now serving the nation with distinction in the armed forces, engineering, medicine, business, banking, teaching, IT and many other fields. These children are future of Pakistan."

Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar congratulated entire family of SOS village for completing 50 years. He extended his heartfelt congratulations to SOS Pakistan on this remarkable milestone, 50 years of unwavering dedication to the orphans and underprivileged children. He said that SOS selfless service has owned a trust of federal and provincial governments as well as of individuals and donors. He said, "SOS is a pride of Pakistan and the spirit of giving is deeply engraved in our nation's ethos guided by timeless wisdom of the Holy Quran."

He said it was heartening to see that from single project in Lahore in 1975 the SOS Pakistan had grown into a nationwide network of 64 initiatives reaching every corner of the country including the most remote areas like Tharparkar, ranging from Mian Channu to RY Khan. He further said that this expansion was a testament to sincere efforts. He assured that federation and provincial governments would continue to stand by their noble mission. Azam Nazeer Tarar said that the country had faced extraordinary economic challenges in recent months but through resilience,

decisive action and collective efforts things had improved for ensuring sustainable growth.

He said, "Hardest phase was behind us but a road ahead remains demanding. Now we must unite, rise above the differences and work hand in hand to make Pakistan a stronger and more prosperous country. Our focus must remain on steadfast economic revival, job creation and securing bright future for every citizen." SOS Pakistan president-elect Shahid Hamid read out the message of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

The message said, "My government and I congratulate SOS Pakistan on its landmark achievement, 50 years of selfless service of upbringing welfare and education of orphans and deprived children. Recently my government has allocated 25 acres of land in RY Khan district to establish a complex for SOS activities and 4 kanals of land in the heart of Lahore for youth home. Your request for land in Johar Town for school is under active consideration. You, we and the government are fulfilling our religious obligations set out in the Holy Quran and Hadith of our beloved Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). I applaud thousands of donors who sustain your charitable works and volunteers who give time and money to supervise your projects. May the Allah Almighty continue to bless your efforts." SOS Children's Villages Pakistan President Souriya Anwar also spoke.

KP govt's ministers, their team are incompetent, uninformed: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that the KP government's ministers and their team are incompetent and uninformed, completely unaware of the actual facts.

She expressed these views in response to a statement by Barrister Saif. She said it's unclear what reports they have been reading, but they certainly do not reflect reality. The fact is that, under the supervision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, special Ramadan bazaars were set up where the public received 31% more relief compared to the open market. These Ramadan bazaars saw historic sales of 3.11 billion rupees.

On the other hand, the KP government, which claims to bring about "Tabdeeli" distributed 10 billion rupees among its own party members in the name of the Ramadan

package.

Azma Bokhari further said that in Punjab, the highest amount of relief was provided to the people through the Ramadan package and special bazaars.

In contrast, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could not even set up a single Ramadan bazaar, she said and added, "Lies and propaganda cannot hide the corruption and theft of the KP government. Gandapur is the only Chief Minister whose own cabinet and party members are calling him corrupt and a thief."

The Information Minister added that no corruption allegation, not even of a single penny, has been made against Maryam Nawaz's projects even after a year. Every project in Punjab stands as a model of transparency and merit, she added.

Punjab govt to takes action against theatres

violating SOPs: Azma: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that despite complete guarantees from the theatre owners, violations of SOPs were observed at some venues.

Consequently, action is being taken solely against those who failed to comply with the regulations.

Azma Bokhari made it clear in a press talk on Sunday that her mission is the complete eradication of obscenity and vulgarity from theatres. She emphasized that theatres must have an environment where families can comfortably and safely enjoy performances.

She said that we gave theatre owners and artists a year to reform, during which all parties provided written guarantees to turn theatres into centers of family entertainment.

The Information Minister further stated that

the government is taking action only against those who violated SOPs despite the assurances given. She firmly asserted that she is neither concerned about any threats nor will she be blackmailed.

Azma Bokhari also announced that new legislation aimed at eliminating obscenity from theatres is being introduced soon, and a comprehensive theatre policy will be launched in the coming days.

She described the public's positive response to these reforms as encouraging, noting that the people also want theatres to be a clean and high-quality source of entertainment. She concluded by stating that the purpose of the measures being taken for the improvement of theatres is to provide a healthy recreational environment, and the public's support is a source of great motivation.

Sindh CM felicitates security forces for foiling infiltration on Pak-Afghan border

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah congratulated security forces for foiling infiltration from

Pak-Afghan border.

He paid tributes to security forces for killing 8 Khawarij in firing.

The CM Murad said

that Pakistan forces are alert at all times to protect borders.

Security forces are bravely thwarting every

attack of the enemy, he said adding that the entire nation salutes those who risked their lives to protect the homeland.

Punjab CM launches Talent Hunt Programme

LAHORE (IN): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced the launch of the province's first-ever comprehensive Talent Hunt Programme to identify and nurture young sports talent.

Chairing a meeting here on Sunday, the CM directed the relevant departments to present a detailed implementation plan. "Young players in Punjab will be provided ample opportunities to showcase their abilities and move forward," she stated. The CM emphasized equal opportunities for female athletes, adding, "Women players will be given the same platforms to thrive and succeed."

CM Maryam Nawaz instructed authorities to ensure the financial independence of the Sports Department, stressing that there must be no disruption in employee salaries. She also called for a detailed proposal for the launch of a Youth Internship Program aimed at empowering young individuals through practical training and experience.

PTI leader flays govt's inflation claims

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader Mussrat Jamshed Cheema on Sunday criticized the government's claims of reducing inflation, asserting that the populace is grappling with diminished purchasing power. Cheema emphasized in a statement that official relief efforts remain confined to rhetoric, as evidenced by traders reporting that 70% of products went unsold during Eid-ul-Fitr.

She highlighted the discrepancy between government claims and reality, pointing to the negligible impact of a Rs 7 per unit reduction in electricity prices following significant hikes. He contrasted this with the past PTI administration's reduction of electricity costs by Rs 15 per unit under Imran Khan's leadership. Cheema also noted that despite a 7% decrease in global crude oil prices, these savings have not been passed on to the public. He urged the government to provide tangible relief rather than self-congratulatory gestures.

Mela Baharan concludes at Dehli Gate

LAHORE (APP): The Mela Baharan 2025 on Sunday concluded with unforgettable cultural celebration here at Dehli Gate, leaving behind a trail of joy, nostalgia and cultural revival. Over the past three days, thousands of attendees experienced Lahore's rich heritage through performances, workshops, storytelling, and traditional crafts, said a press release by the Walled City of Lahore Authority.

A defining feature of this year's festival was the breathtaking flower exhibition and artistic flower displays, which transformed the city into a mesmerizing floral paradise. Streets, markets, and public spaces bloomed with vibrant arrangements, offering visitors an enchanting visual experience at every step.

The fusion of cultural festivities with nature's beauty created an unforgettable atmosphere, making Mela Baharan a true celebration of spring. The final day's events featured a magnificent live 'Sarangi' performance at Gali Surjan Singh, transporting audiences to the golden era of classical music. The festival also witnessed a special closing Dastangoi session, where storytellers narrated enchanting tales, capturing the audience's imagination.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousef talking to media regarding Hajj 2025 preparations.

Karachi will face severe water scarcity

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Women Wing Karachi Division President Fizza Zeeshan on Sunday raised alarms over the escalating water crisis in the Indus River. She cautioned that if the construction of new canals on the Indus River is not halted, Karachi too will face a severe water scarcity.

In her statement, Fizza accused authorities of intentionally denying Sindh its rightful share of water. She pointed out that the crisis endangers agriculture and the economy in Sindh and could lead Karachi towards an acute water shortage. She highlighted that only 5 million acre-feet of water is currently released into the sea daily, whereas a minimum of 20 million acre-feet is required to

avert ecological damage. "The reduced river flow is causing harmful seawater intrusion in coastal districts like Badin, Thatta, and Sujawal."

Fizza urged the revocation of the controversial IRSA Amendment Act to prevent Karachi from reaching a state where it "craves every single drop of water." She described the deteriorating Indus Delta as a severe threat to Sindh's economy, citing historical data that showed a drastic decline in water availability per capita from 5,000 cubic meters annually in 1970 to just 800 today. She warned that ongoing canal projects risk plunging Sindh into severe drought.

Criticizing the failure to implement the 1991 Water Accord, she argued that Sindh was being deprived

of its fair share. She noted that during PTI's tenure, the Council of Common Interests had acknowledged Sindh's water demands and established a committee for equitable distribution.

The PTI women wing leader questioned the rationale behind sacrificing fertile lands for barren ones, deeming it unjust. She called on residents of Karachi and Hyderabad to protest, warning that without action, water from Kotri Barrage may soon become a "distant dream."

She rejected secretive water division decisions, emphasizing that allocation must reflect public will. Criticizing the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party, she accused it of misleading Sindh's people while retaining government positions.

Electricity relief package to be implemented

ISLAMABAD (APP): Spokesperson for the Power Division Zafaryab Khan on Sunday clarified that the electricity tariff relief announced by the government will be implemented, rejecting reports claiming otherwise as false and misleading.

While talking to a private news channel, he said that the reports denying any change in the electricity tariff were baseless and contradictory. He said that certain elements were deliberately distorting facts by spreading misinformation regarding the electricity tariff and its technical details. Such reports, he added, misrepresent the government's official position and aim to create confusion among the public.

The spokesperson clarified that the electricity tariff cut announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stands valid and will be reflected accordingly. He further stated that considering the ongoing summer

season, the Prime Minister directed immediate action

to ease the burden on consumers.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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As per the understanding those Clients of M/s Tulip Enclave, Islamabad who are in possession of Original Forms of M/s Tulip Enclave, Islamabad are informed to approach M/s Al-Sadat Marketing First Floor, Yasin Plaza Blue Area Main Jinnah Avenue, Islamabad and merge their form in Lakeshore City, Executive Block. This is a limited time offer available for all the form holder of M/s Tulip Enclave, Islamabad for 15 days i.e. 07-april-2025 till 21- april -2025.

It is therefore informed to all Form Holders through this Public Notice to opt for this one time opportunity and convert their Forms of M/s Tulip Enclave into membership of Lakeshore City, Executive Block as per the terms and condition of merger scheme 2025.

This is a limited time offer and priority shall be given on FIRST COME FIRST SERVE basis to M/s Tulip Enclave Form Holders who want to take benefit of this opportunity.

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LAHORE: Families enjoy boat riding at Jilani Park. —APP Photo

Meeting reviews progress on Peshawar uplift projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting of the Task Force established for the development and uplift of Peshawar was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah. The Task Force has been formed on the directions of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to fast-track efforts for the city's transformation.

The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister Meena Khan Afridi, MNA Asif Khan, the Chief Minister's Focal Person Arbab Asim Khan, Secretary Finance, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, representatives from PDA, WSSP, and other relevant officials.

The Task Force will focus on improving sanitation, traffic management, beautification, and execution of development projects in Peshawar. It will provide recommendations and assist the government in streamlining and coordinating efforts among departments. The Commissioner Peshawar will monitor field activities and regularly update the Task Force on progress.

Briefings were given on ongoing uplift projects across Peshawar, including the Hayatabad Trail project. It was reported that 72% of work on jogging and cycling tracks has been completed. The Chief Secretary emphasized the importance of sustainability planning for these projects after completion.

The restructuring of PDA to enhance its capacity also came under discussion. The Director General PDA informed the meeting that work on a comprehensive beautification plan for Peshawar would commence this month, with a detailed feasibility report to be completed within three months.

The meeting was also briefed on the timely completion of the new bus terminal project, with weekly review meetings being held for monitoring.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the provincial government's commitment to transform Peshawar into a model city in a short span and directed strict adherence to the tracking sheet system for timely completion of all development projects. He also directed PDA to develop an action plan outlining responsibilities clearly.

WSSP presented a briefing on sanitation, water

supply, drainage, road sweeping, and waste collection in the city. The meeting was informed that action is being taken against illegal water connections and efforts are underway to modernize WSSP with digital systems. A performance monitoring mechanism has also been introduced for WSSP staff.

TMA performance was also reviewed during the meeting. The Chief Secretary directed TMAs to formulate comprehensive plans for sanitation and optimal use of available resources.

The Task Force also approved a city-wide Cleanliness Week campaign starting from April 15, aimed at mobilizing departments and the community for improved urban hygiene and environmental care. Task Force Meeting Reviews Progress on Peshawar Uplift Projects, Key Decisions Taken

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The restructuring of PDA to enhance its capacity also came under discussion.

The Director General PDA informed the meeting that work on a comprehensive beautification plan for Peshawar would commence this month, with a detailed feasibility report to be completed within three months.

The meeting was also briefed on the timely completion of the new bus terminal project, with weekly review meetings being held for monitoring.

The Chief Secretary reiterated the provincial government's commitment to transform Peshawar into a model city in a short span and directed strict adherence to the tracking sheet system for timely completion of all development projects. He also directed PDA to develop an action plan outlining responsibilities clearly.

WSSP presented a briefing on sanitation, water supply, drainage, road sweeping, and waste collection in the city. The meeting was informed that action is being taken against illegal water connections and efforts are underway to modernize WSSP with digital systems. A performance monitoring mechanism has also been introduced for WSSP staff.

TMA performance was also reviewed during the meeting. The Chief Secretary directed TMAs to formulate comprehensive plans for sanitation and optimal use of available resources.

The Task Force also approved a city-wide Cleanliness Week campaign starting from April 15, aimed at mobilizing departments and the community for improved urban hygiene and environmental care.

Gaza under fire, humanity under trial

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE tragedy of Gaza has once again exposed the deep cracks in the conscience of the global community and the paralyzing inertia of the Muslim Ummah. As the tiny strip of land continues to burn under Israel's relentless bombardment, the world watches in silence, save for a few customary condemnations and hollow resolutions. The screams of innocent civilians, the wailing of mothers, and the crushed bodies of children buried under rubble have failed to stir any meaningful action from either the so-called champions of human rights or the Muslim countries that surround Gaza.

"And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?'" (Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa 4:75)

Gaza is not just another battlefield. It is a densely populated area home to over two million people, more than half of them children. Since the most recent aggression began, over 32,000 Palestinians have lost their lives, the majority of them women and children. Tens of thousands more are injured, displaced, or missing. The infrastructure of Gaza has been turned into dust. Hospitals, schools, residential buildings, water pipelines, electricity grids—nothing has been spared. The United Nations has estimated that over 70% of Gaza's infrastructure has been completely or partially destroyed, making it unlivable for its residents.

In the face of such devastation, the reaction of the world has been shamefully muted. The self-proclaimed torchbearers of human rights and international law have done little beyond issuing carefully worded statements and non-binding resolutions. These gestures, no matter how loud, do not stop bombs. They do not heal the wounded or feed the hungry. They do not bring back the dead children pulled from the rubble of their homes.

But perhaps even more heartbreaking is the role—or the lack thereof—played by the Muslim world. There are 57 Muslim-majority countries on this planet. Together, they possess tremendous wealth and military capacity. Collectively, Muslim countries control trillions of dollars in sovereign wealth, vast energy resources, and hold significant shares in global trade and finance. In terms of military strength, the Muslim world commands more than five million active and reserve personnel, thousands of tanks and fighter jets, and even nuclear capabilities. Some Muslim countries like Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have advanced defense industries and modernized weapon systems, yet when it comes to Gaza, all this power remains unused, locked behind closed borders and political calculations.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "The example of the believers in their mutual love, mercy, and compassion is like that of a body; when any limb aches, the whole body responds with sleeplessness and fever." (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Why, despite this enormous potential, do Muslim countries keep silent in the face of Israel's brutality? The answer lies in a complex web of fear, division, and dependency. Many Muslim states are entangled in economic, political, or military partnerships with Western powers that support Israel. Others are afraid of diplomatic isolation or sanctions. Some are too divided among themselves—embroiled in regional rivalries and internal crises—to unite for a collective response. The spirit of the Ummah has been weakened by decades of fragmentation, and Gaza is paying the price for that disunity.

Gaza shares borders with several Muslim countries—most notably Egypt, and nearby lie Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria—all Muslim-majority nations. Yet, none have opened their borders to offer significant refuge or medical assistance at scale. None have taken steps to halt the bloodshed or protect the people of Gaza from the wrath of Israel's military machine. Political hesitation and self-interest have overtaken the principles of Islamic brotherhood and humanitarian obligation.

This silence is not neutrality—it is complicity. When the world does nothing while war crimes are committed in plain view, it sends a message that the lives of Palestinians are expendable. That the destruction of their homes, hospitals, and futures is tolerable. That their suffering is not worth more than a few sound bites in the news cycle.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; and if he cannot, then with his heart—and that is the weakest of faith." (Sahih Muslim)

How many more bodies must fall before the world decides that enough is enough? How many more children must be buried under collapsed buildings before the Muslim world realizes that its strength lies not in numbers, but in unity and action? The crisis in Gaza is not just a humanitarian tragedy—it is a moral test. And so far, the world is failing.

The time for statements is over. What Gaza needs is immediate humanitarian aid, diplomatic pressure, and sustained political support. Muslim countries must rise above their divisions and come together, not just in sorrow, but in strategy and solidarity. They must leverage their influence at the United Nations, in global forums, and with their Western allies to demand a ceasefire and the lifting of the siege. They must provide material support to rebuild what has been destroyed, and most importantly, they must protect the dignity and rights of the Palestinian people.

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11)

History will remember this moment. It will remember the innocent lives lost and the silence that followed. It will remember the countries that stood by and did nothing. And it will ask: When Gaza was burning, where were you?

Mayor of Peshawar to attend AIM Congress 2025

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mayor of Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali has arrived in Dubai to represent the city at the prestigious AIM Congress 2025 - Al Karim Mayors Roundtable Conference, scheduled to begin on April 9.

Speaking ahead of the conference, Mayor Haji Zubair Ali expressed his commitment to representing Peshawar with full spirit and dedication, aiming to promote the city's welfare, development, and prosperity at the global level. He emphasized that no effort will be spared in restoring Peshawar's historical glory.

Since assuming charge as an elected mayor in the local government elections, Mayor Zubair Ali stated that he has served the people above political affiliations, and that commitment continues unwaveringly to this day. He further stated, "Participation in such international forums is a positive sign for the people of Peshawar. Exchanging ideas and experiences with global leaders helps in improving the quality of life and accelerating development."

He also highlighted the need to pave new avenues for a brighter future for the citizens, stating that it is the need of the hour.

The AIM Congress 2025 will feature a key session under the theme of Global Digital Cooperation, with guidance from mayors across the world. Supported by UN-Habitat and WeGO, the session will focus on promoting an open, secure, inclusive, and human-centered digital future, as envisioned by the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the International Guidelines on People-Centered Smart Cities (IG-PCSC).

Mayor Zubair Ali is expected to play an active role in discussions around implementing these global frameworks, addressing the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation in urban governance.

lance footage will facilitate data sharing with other departments, aiding in criminal investigations and enhancing inter-agency coordination. He added that this modern security initiative, launched in collaboration with the provincial government, will eventually be expanded to other major cities across the province. Surveys for the project's expansion have already

been completed in the terrorism-affected southern districts, including Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, and Bannu. Further surveys are underway in Karak, Tank, and North Waziristan for future implementation. The IGP emphasized that the Safe City Project is expected to be a game-changer not only in the fight against terrorism but also in addressing various social and street-level crimes.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for SAFRON and Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Amir Muqam addressing a gathering on Youm-e-Tashakur to celebrate the federal government's performance.

KPTMA demands level playing field for domestic spinning industry

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mr. Sikandar Kuli Khan Khattak, Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association (KPTMA), has raised grave concerns over the alarming surge in yarn imports under the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS), warning that it poses a serious threat to the survival of the domestic spinning industry, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Mr. Khattak highlighted that yarn imports under the EFS have skyrocketed by an astonishing 350%, with imports of both Cotton and MMF yarn increasing from 7,800 metric tons in January 2024 to 28,306 metric tons in February 2025.

This surge now accounts for over 30% of the total production of the domestic spinning industry. The repercussions are severe, as more than 40% of spinning mills have been forced to shut down, with many others scaling back operations

due to the flood of cheaper imported yarn into the market. The impact is particularly dire for mills in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a landlocked province that faces significant logistical and cost challenges. Local mills are now struggling with severe liquidity issues, exacerbated by the increased competition from subsidized imports. Many mills have been compelled to reduce their production by up to 40%, putting their financial stability and ability to meet obligations at significant risk.

Mr. Khattak further criticized the misuse of the EFS, which was originally designed to facilitate the export of textile products. A significant portion of the yarn imported under the scheme, intended for export use, is being diverted to the domestic market. This misuse not only harms local yarn manufacturers but also enables certain unscrupulous businesses to evade sales tax and

customs duties, resulting in millions of rupees in lost government revenue. Consequently, the domestic industry is suffering, and thousands of textile workers are losing their jobs and livelihoods.

In addition to the economic impact, the influx of cheaper imported yarn is degrading the quality of local textiles. As mills are forced to buy inferior yarn to stay competitive on price, the overall quality of domestically produced goods is declining.

This compromises the reputation of local mills both in the domestic and international markets, leading to a further loss of market share. Mr. Khattak urged the government to take immediate action to address these critical issues, including restoring the EFS to its pre-Finance Act 2024 form, which includes the sales tax exemption/zero-rating on all local supplies used for export manufacturing.

By addressing these issues, the government can protect the domestic textile industry, safeguard jobs, and contribute to the long-term economic health of Pakistan.

This would ensure a level playing field for the domestic spinning industry and help mitigate the negative effects of increased yarn imports.

Mr. Khattak emphasized that protecting the domestic industry is vital not only for preserving jobs and livelihoods but also for safeguarding the country's economic stability. Strengthening the local textile sector would help reduce reliance on imported yarn, strengthen the trade balance, alleviate pressure on foreign exchange reserves, and encourage innovation in technology and sustainability.

The KPTMA Chairman concluded by calling for stricter enforcement of the EFS and stronger checks and balances to prevent misuse.

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Rise and Shine Girls Education Network for improved education budget

PESHAWAR (APP): The Rise & Shine Girls Education Leadership Network, in collaboration with Blue Veins and the Pakistan Education Champion Network, called upon the KP government to step up and demonstrate real commitment to girls' education by increasing the education budget and formally including girls in the pre-budget planning process.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, the Network mentioned that despite repeated promises and some progress over the years, budgetary shortfalls and a lack of inclusive planning continue to hinder efforts to provide quality education to girls in the province.

Many schools still suffer from broken infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, a lack of essential learning materials, and unsafe environments — all of which have a disproportionate impact on girls, especially at girls' secondary education.

These gaps in the system have contributed to rising dropout rates and a persistent gender gap in literacy, it added.

Pakistan has pledged, both under its Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) commitments and international education agreements, to allocate at least 4% of its GDP to education. However, current allocations remain far below this benchmark, and the consequences are visible on the ground.

"Budgeting for education isn't just a financial exercise — it's a responsibility. The absence of girls' voices in these discussions leads to policies that often miss the mark. We need to change that," said Qamar Naseem, Program Manager, Blue Veins and Malala Fund Education

Champion. "Girls know best what barriers they face, and their participation in shaping solutions is not optional—it's essential."

The network urges the government to increase the education budget with dedicated funding streams for girls' education, including investments in safe school infrastructure, transportation, gender-sensitive training for teachers, scholarships, and sanitation facilities. But funding alone isn't enough. Girls must be given a seat at the table to influence the very policies and priorities that shape their futures.

Ms. Maham Nafees from the Rise & Shine Network added, "We're not asking for favors. We're demanding what is just and necessary. Girls deserve an education system that listens to them, plans with them, and works for them."

The Alliance demands that the KP government must take urgent and concrete steps to strengthen its commitment to education by increasing the overall education budget and progressively moving towards the 4% of GDP target, as per Pakistan's international obligations.

safety, and future opportunities."

The organizations also stressed the importance of accountability mechanisms to ensure transparency in how the education budget is spent, especially for girls' programming. Without clear reporting and oversight, even well-intentioned policies can falter.

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In brief

Three killed in road accident

VEHARI (INP): A motorcyclist and his wife, along with their young daughter died instantly when a speeding trailer collided with their bike in Karampur District Vehari on Sunday morning. Rescue sources reported that a speeding trailer was responsible for the fatal accident in Vehari, claiming the lives of three family members, private news channel reported. Upon receiving notification of the accident, rescue teams and local police promptly responded to the scene, arriving at the site to initiate relief and investigation efforts. The authorities worked to secure the area, provide assistance and gather details surrounding the tragic incident. Meanwhile, law enforcement officials began to investigate the circumstances leading up to the accident, including the role of the speeding trailer.

Firing leaves two dead

MARDAN (INP): In Takht Bhai tehsil of Mardan two brothers were shot dead during a jirga (tribal council) held to resolve a domestic dispute. Police informed on Sunday, that the tragic incident took place in Qandaro Kali, where Saeeda, a married woman from Azakhel, had been living at her parents' home in Qandaro Kali for the past two years after a fallout with her husband. During the jirga convened to mediate between the parties and reconcile the couple, gunfire erupted, resulting in the deaths of Saeeda's husband Jangrez and his brother Khalid, both sons of Fareed and residents of Azakhel, Nowshera. Upon receiving the report, SHO Murad Khan of Takht Bhai Police Station arrived at the scene along with police personnel and a Rescue 1122 medical team. The bodies were shifted to THQ Takht Bhai for postmortem. Police swiftly arrested two suspects: Nasir, son of Bahadur, a resident of Qandaro Kali, and Umar, son of Jangrez, a resident of Azakhel, Nowshera. Weapons used in the incident were also recovered. A double murder case has been registered against the suspects based on the complaint filed by Tariq, son of Farman Ali, a nephew of the deceased and resident of Chakdara. Further investigation is underway.

14 miscreants arrested

HANGU (APP): In a joint operation in Hangu and Kurram districts, police have arrested 14 miscreants involved in snatching a police van and weapons in the Tall area. According to police on Sunday, the arrested accused were attempting to disrupt law and order and challenge the writ of the government in the area. Regional Police Officer (RPO) Abbas Majid Marwat said the suspects had deliberately targeted state institutions and created disturbances in the area. He added that operations are still ongoing to apprehend their remaining accomplices. RPO Marwat emphasized that action will also be taken against those who incite violence against government institutions on social media. "No one will be allowed to attack the police or any other state institution," he asserted. He commended the police force for showing professionalism and restraint despite the attacks by the miscreants. According to the RPO, protecting the government's writ remains the top priority and a sacred duty of the police. The police have reaffirmed their commitment to taking all necessary measures to maintain peace and bring all those involved in such activities to justice, he added.

KP FA concludes inspection drive at tourist spots

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: In line with the directives of Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety & Halal Food Authority carried out a six-day special inspection campaign targeting food businesses in tourist and recreational spots across the province. The drive was conducted from March 31 to April 5, with the objective of ensuring the availability of safe and quality food for visitors.

According to the Authority's spokesperson, food safety teams carried out inspections in key tourist locations including Peshawar, Kund Park in Nowshera, Khan Pur Dam in Haripur, Sardaryab in

Charsadda, Balakot, Donga Gali, Nathiagali, Shogran, Harnou in Mansehra, Fizagat and Malam Jabba in Swat, and parts of Malakand, among others.

During the campaign, around 640 food businesses were inspected.

The teams confiscated and discarded over 431 kilograms of different substandard food items. Additionally, improvement notices were issued to 90 businesses, while 97 new licenses were granted, generating a revenue of Rs. 191,000 through the licensing process.

The spokesperson further shared that mobile food testing laboratories were also deployed on-site to conduct instant sampling and analysis of various edible items including cooking oil,

meat, tea, milk, yogurt, beverages, spices, and salt.

Out of the 32 samples tested, 19 were declared safe, while 13 were found substandard.

The spokesperson further added that Tourists appreciated the presence and efforts of the Food Authority teams, recognizing the inspections as a valuable step toward improving food standards at recreational spots.

Director General Wasif Saeed commended the field teams for their commitment and service during the Eid holidays.

He reiterated the Authority's resolve to continue such proactive measures in the future to ensure the provision of safe and quality food to tourists across the province.

CM okays solarization of tube wells in PK-97



F.P. Report

KARAK: Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Karak Khurshid Khattak MPA has said that under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, the journey of progress and prosperity of the province from promises to completion is successfully in progress and in line with the vision of PTI Chief Imran Khan. He hoped that all the promises made to the people will be fulfilled in later and spirit.

He expressed these views while talking on the occasion of a reconciliation ceremony between the families of Chairman Waliullah and Vice Chairman Sajid Niaz at Village Council Isk Chontra at District Karak the other day.

It may be recalled that the reconciliation between the above-mentioned families was made possible with the hectic efforts of Khurshid Khattak MPA, Speaker Tehsil Council Engineer Hassan Jan, former Central Deputy General Secretary of Insaf Youth Wing Dalir Khattak, Chairman Malik

Amir, Chairman Khaliq Kaleem, Contractor Shakir Khattak, local elders and Ulema and the dispute was resolved amicably.

Khurshid Khattak said, due to the tireless efforts of him and the MNA Shahid Khattak, formal approval has been given to convert the electric tube wells of his constituency PK-97 to solar, for which they were grateful to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa who approved the conversion of tube wells in Karak district to solar. The Solarization of tube wells will ensure clean drinking water to the people of Karak at their doorsteps.

Chairman DDAC Karak said that practical work on solarization of tube-wells will soon be started and all the tube wells of the constituency will be converted to solar to ensure uninterrupted supply of water to every village.

Nowshera police harassing family, claims woman

Shah Wali Ullah

NOWSHERA: A woman from Hakimabad, Nowshera, alleged that she and her family have been subjected to severe harassment and threats by the Nowshera Cantt police, led by SHO Waqas Khan and DSP Muqaddam Khan, after receiving bribes from their opponents.

In a press conference at the Nowshera Press Club, Nosheba Younis, a resident of Hakimabad, recounted the traumatic events that had unfolded over the past month.

According to Nosheba, on the night of February 28, a group of plainclothes men, without any female officers, unlawfully entered her home and forcibly took her father, Malik Younis, and her brother, Malik Tanveer, to an undisclosed location. Initially, the family feared they had been abducted, and after a month

of searching, Nosheba learned that her father and brother were being held in illegal custody by the Nowshera Cantt police.

Nosheba claimed that the police, led by SHO Waqas Khan, had falsely implicated her father and brother in a robbery case. She further accused the officers of attempting to extort their house and vehicle documents, with the aim of evicting the family from their property.

During their month-long detention, Nosheba revealed that her father and brother were subjected to severe torture, as visible marks of abuse appeared on their bodies when they were finally allowed to meet. In her emotional address, Nosheba explained how SHO Waqas Khan had repeatedly contacted her through different mobile numbers, demanding the documents for their home and car, and used offensive

language such as "Jano Maano" to pressure her into compliance. She also accused the police of pressuring their tenants, using their authority to forcibly evict them in order to further harass the family.

With tears in her eyes, Nosheba appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Inspector General of Police KP, and the Regional Police Officer of Mardan to intervene and stop the police harassment. She emphasized that if any harm came to her mother, Rabiya Begum, her sister, Romaisa, or her husband, Haris, the responsibility would fall squarely on the shoulders of SHO Waqas Khan and DSP Muqaddam Khan. She concluded her address by calling for justice and the protection of her family from further harm and oppression by the Nowshera Cantt police.

Smart Agriculture: A panacea to mitigating climatic impacts

KARACHI (APP): With Pakistan falling among the most vulnerable countries to climate change, this emerging phenomenon of recent decades has been felt in every field of life especially affecting water and food production across the world.

This men-made challenge is being paged at all forums to contain it in one way or the other as the situation has pressed the world to mull over various means and examine lots of methods particularly Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) to manage crops naturally and effectively.

Changing climate has emerged as a threat to the world economies and production in the form of extreme weather patterns and events, droughts, heat waves, floods, food insecurity and other challenges, Pakistan is also not an exception.

This phenomenon has raised the eye brows of scientists and experts globally with many research organizations working on weather patterns and subsequent effects on agriculture especially the food items.

"Climate-Smart Agriculture practices are vital and should be initiated in the country to improve crops yield," remarked Chairman of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) Dr. Ghulam Mohammad Ali. "Presently, a few farmers are using CSA and we need to promote these practices and technology on broader scale to improve crops yield."

Since, Pakistan enjoys all weathers, considerably more favorable for all kinds of crops, it needs more resources to fully implement CSA. Dr Muhammad Ali said.

"Pakistan needs a huge

amount under Climate Fund for Agriculture to save water and ensure food security," he said. "We have fertile lands and PARC is introducing different techniques to improve crop yields on these lands."

He said use of modern technologies in agri-foods will help reduce import of crops like potatoes, as the aeroponic technique is being employed to produce potato seeds locally.

He advised the farmers to grow heat-tolerant crops and use high-efficient irrigation system in their fields for considerable growth in production through climate friendly practices.

According to Climate Knowledge Portal of the World Bank (WB), changes in monsoon patterns and high temperatures are likely to bring considerable challenges to agricultural



DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Players demonstrating their skills during the ongoing Derajat Festival which also mark the begining of Mela Espan organized by KP government's Directorate General of Sports, at Ratta Kulachi Stadium.

Bannu National Jirga held

F.P. Report

BANNU: Bannu National Jirga was organized by Jamaat-e-Islami on the poor law and order situation, road closures and other issues in Bannu.

The Jirga was presided over by Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa South Ameer Professor Muhammad Ibrahim Khan. The Jirga was attended by Provincial Minister Malik Pakhtun Yar Khan, MNA Maulana Naseem Ali Shah, former Provincial Minister Syed Hamid Shah Malik Shah Muhammad Wazir, former Senator Baz Muhammad Khan, Malik Haroon Khan Advocate, Shoaib Saduzai Advocate, Shah Qiyaz Bacha Advocate Shaukat Ayaz Advocate, Pir Sahib Zaman, Malik Sheraz Khan, Mayor Tehsil Kaki Junaid Rashid, Malik Raza Khan, Malik Shakeel, Waheed Khan, Shah Qiyaz Bacha, Naz Ali Khan, Nasir Bangash, Jamshed Khan, Ghulam Qibaz, Malik Haroon, Abdul Ghaffar Qureshi and people of all schools of thought.

Addressing the Jirga, Professor Muhammad Ibrahim Khan said that a Jirga was held in the Jamaat-e-Islami office in December 2024 to establish peace.

Some demands were made to the government in the jirga, but not a single demand has been fulfilled so far. As a result of the jirga, the government backed down from the military operation Azm-e-Stafi, but peace could not be established.

He said that promises were made to meet the Chief Minister, but that promise has not been fulfilled yet. The government must show seriousness to restore trust. Peace in Bannu is a common problem for all of us and we will jointly struggle for its solution.

On this occasion, Provincial Minister Malik Pakhtun Yar said that I will present all the demands of the jirga before the Chief Minister and will try to arrange a meeting of the jirga committee with the Chief Minister as soon as possible.

At the end of the jirga, Professor Muhammad Ibrahim Khan presented a joint resolution, which was unanimously approved.

Derajat Festival DI Khan Traditional sports events continue

F.P. Report

DI KHAN: A series of traditional sports events organized by the Sports Department continued on Sunday, drawing large crowds to the Sports Complex under Derajat. The events included tent pegging, wrestling (kushti), kabaddi, and dodra, among others. Member National Assembly Faisal Amin Gandapur and Tehsil Mayor Umar Amin Gandapur were present at the venue, where enthusiastic spectators gathered in large numbers to witness the festivities.

The tent pegging event was a major attraction, featuring over 70 rider clubs showcasing their skills. The performances were met with great appreciation and applause from the audience. A special highlight was the participation of a female rider

club from Islamabad, whose performance received widespread praise.

Similarly, the kabaddi and dodra matches saw participation from renowned wrestlers of the region and beyond, bringing a spirit of competition and excitement to the event. Other competitions, such as sack lifting and stone lifting, also took place on the day.

Speaking on the occasion, MNA Faisal Amin Gandapur emphasized that Derajat not only promotes regional culture and traditions but also exemplifies the spirit of hospitality. He welcomed all guests to the region and urged the public to actively participate in the tree plantation campaign launched under the Derajat initiative. "Planting trees is a vital step toward a cleaner and greener environment," he

stated. Prizes were distributed among outstanding performers of the kabaddi matches, acknowledging their efforts and skills.

In a conversation with media representatives, Tehsil Mayor Umar Amin Gandapur remarked that Derajat is a source of joy not only for local residents and athletes but also for participants from other districts. He highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting traditional games through such large-scale events. He credited the continued success of Derajat events to the efforts of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, stating that these opportunities foster cultural harmony and generate economic activity, benefiting both athletes and the general public through various livelihood opportunities.

Annual Day held at Peshawar Millennium School

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: A grand, colorful, and dignified ceremony was organized at Peshawar Millennium School Charsadda on the occasion of Annual Day. The event was attended by Provincial Minister Fazal Shakoor Khan, Additional Director of Academic Directorate of Professional Development Dr. Safia Noor, PMS Charsadda Director Khawaja Shiraz Nasir, MD Shahmeer Qaiser, Principal Nusrat Nazir, and many parents.

During the ceremony, prizes and trophies were distributed among the students of PMS Charsadda who secured prominent positions in the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Peshawar, as well as among school-level position holders. Additionally, six teachers of PMS Charsadda were awarded a complete Umrah package along with cash prizes. Students also presented various tableaux, skits, and patriotic songs.

Director of PMS Khawaja Shiraz Nasir pre-

sented a shield to the Provincial Minister. Addressing the event, Provincial Minister Fazal Shakoor Khan said that private educational institutions are playing a significant role in supporting the government's efforts to increase the literacy rate. He praised PMS Charsadda for its valuable services in promoting purposeful and quality education in the region.

He further stated that the government is taking steps to promote education in line with modern requirements. Education is among the top priorities of the provincial government, with a special focus on educating children, especially girls. He emphasized that in this modern era of science

and technology, the dream of development and prosperity cannot be realized without education. He also stressed that along with education, special attention should be paid to the character building of children so they can grow up to be useful citizens who serve the country and nation.

Additional Director of Academic DPD, Dr. Safia Noor, also addressed the event. Earlier, PMS Director Khawaja Shiraz Nasir, MD Shahmeer Qaiser, and Principal Nusrat Nazir highlighted the school's performance, stating that PMS Charsadda has been demonstrating outstanding results in the Peshawar Board for several years. The school actively participates not only in aca-





ANKARA, TURKEY: Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Ozgür Ozel addresses to party members during the CHP's Extraordinary Congress on Sunday.

Pope makes surprise first appearance at Vatican



VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Francis made his first public appearance since being discharged from hospital two weeks ago after treatment for double pneumonia, entering St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in a wheelchair on Sunday to greet cheering crowds.

Francis, 88, had been out of public view since March 23, when he had given a short greeting before leaving Rome's Gemelli hospital after more than five weeks of treatment in the most serious health crisis of his 12-year papacy.

The pope, in a previously unannounced move, came out to the square shortly before noon (1000 GMT) at the end of the celebration of a Mass for the Catholic Church's Jubilee year.

Coming in front of the main altar for the service in bright sunshine, Francis waved to the crowds, before speaking briefly.

"Happy Sunday to everyone," the pope said, speaking in a frail voice while receiving oxygen via a small hose under his nose. "Thank you so much."

The pope smiled broadly as he greeted crowds. His voice, though weak, sounded stronger than it had during the March 23 appearance, when he struggled to speak.

Francis usually offers a weekly noon-time prayer in St. Peter's Square on Sundays. But he has not been able to do this since February 9, before going to hospital.

He was admitted to hospital on February 14 for a bout of bronchitis

that developed into double pneumonia, an especially serious condition for him as he had pleurisy as a young adult and had part of one lung removed.

Francis came so close to death at one point during his 38-day stay in hospital that his doctors considered ending treatment so he could die in peace, the head of his medical team said last month.

Sunday's Mass was part of a special celebration in honour of healthcare workers and those who are sick. In a written message released by the Vatican shortly after noon, Francis said he had felt God's closeness during his time in hospital.

"I ask the Lord that this touch of his love might reach all those who suffer and encourage those who are taking care of them," said the text.

It is unclear how often the pope will appear in public in the coming weeks, with Easter Sunday just two weeks away.

Doctors have prescribed Francis with a two-month period of rest at his Vatican residence, to allow his ageing body to heal, and the Vatican has removed all previous commitments from the pope's calendar.

Britain's King Charles, who is coming to Italy next week for a state visit, has cancelled a planned meeting with Francis.

The Vatican has not said yet whether the pope will be able to lead the celebrations on April 20 for Easter, the most important holiday of the Christian year.

Le Pen evokes spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. in Paris rally

PARIS (Reuters): French far-right leader Marine Le Pen said on Sunday she would peacefully fight her five-year ban from running for office and draw inspiration from American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., as thousands of people rallied in Paris to back her.

A Paris court convicted Le Pen and two dozen National Rally (RN) party members of embezzling EU funds last week and imposed a sentence that will prevent her from standing in France's 2027 presidential election unless she can get the ruling overturned within 18 months.

"We will follow Martin Luther King as an example," Le Pen said in a video appearance for Italian Matteo Salvini's anti-immigration Lega party, which was holding a meeting in Florence.

"Our fight will be a peaceful fight, a democratic fight. We will follow Martin Luther King,

who defended civil rights, as an example."

Le Pen supporters waved French flags and chanted "we will win" as they gathered in central Paris on Sunday afternoon for a peaceful protest, which could give an indication of how much popular backing there is for her accusations that prosecutors in the case sought her "political death".

Pensioner Marie-Claude Bonnefont, 79, said she was against "this parody of a decision against Le Pen".

"One should really question the impartiality of the judges," another protester, political science student Typhaine Quere, told Reuters.

There was no immediate police estimate of attendance at Sunday's protest, but organisers said about 15,000 people had gathered.

The court's ruling was a massive blow for Le Pen, 56.

The National Rally

chief is one of the most prominent figures of the European far right, and a front-runner in polls for France's 2027 election.

Le Pen has appealed the court's decision, and she vowed on Sunday to use all the tools and legal means to be able to run in 2027.

The court has said it will issue a ruling on the appeal in the summer of 2026.

An opinion poll by Elabe on Saturday showed Le Pen was still favourite to win the first round of the presidential vote with between 32% and 36% support, ahead of former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, who was polled at between 20.5% and 24%.

But attacks by Le Pen and her allies over the "tyranny of judges" have not gained traction, even among some of her supporters, particularly after the lead judge in her case was put under police protection following death

threats.

Most French people do not see any problem with the court's decision.

Some 65% of respondents said they were "not shocked" by the verdict and 54% said Le Pen was treated like any other defendant, according to an Odoxa poll.

Across the city, at Place de la Republique, leftist party supporters flocked to a counter-demonstration to protest Le Pen's attacks on the French state.

Centrist politicians including two former prime ministers, Gabriel Attal and Philippe, also gathered on Sunday to show a united front against the RN.

"Let us maintain this commitment to the morality of political life and to our institutions at a time when they are being challenged by the far right, which is gathering today to attack our judges, to attack our institutions," Attal said.



As judges stymie Trump with nationwide orders, pressure builds on US SC

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Republican President Donald Trump and his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden may not agree on much, but there is one issue on which they have been united: The need to blunt a powerful weapon that federal judges have been deploying at a quickly rising clip.

Top lawyers for each president separately urged the U.S. Supreme Court to limit the authority of judges to issue nationwide - or "universal" - injunctions that can stop a government policy in its tracks.

"This court should declare that enough is enough," Sarah Harris, serving at the time as the Trump administration's acting U.S. solicitor general, told the justices in a March 13 filing seeking to unshackle his executive order to restrict automatic U.S. birthright citizenship.

Elizabeth Prelogar, the solicitor general under Biden, less than three months earlier in a New Year's Eve bid to unblock an anti-money laundering law frozen by a federal judge, told the justices that these orders are causing "substantial disruption."

The power of a single judge to issue a nationwide injunction has become pivotal in the question of whether Trump can quickly implement his aggressive agenda, pushing the limits of presidential power. Several cases either already awaiting action by the Supreme Court or heading toward nine justices involve such a judicial order.

No president likes them, whether that's a Democratic president or Republican president, because they're really a method of cabining executive power," said University of Virginia law professor Amanda Frost, who has studied these judicial remedies.

The pressure on the Supreme Court or Congress to limit these injunctions is building. Trump on March 20 called the situation "toxic" and urged the Supreme Court to act.

Trump and fellow Republicans have escalated their attacks on judges who have impeded his executive actions - to purge federal workers, shutter agencies, slash federal funding, bar transgender people from military service, target perceived enemies and broadly roll back workplace diver-

sity programs, among others.

The president's call for Congress to impeach U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, who issued an order to halt the swift deportation of alleged Venezuelan gang members after Trump invoked a little-used 1798 law, drew an extraordinary rebuke from U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts. The stakes are escalating, with Boasberg on Thursday suggesting Trump's administration had violated his order.

The validity and origins of nationwide injunctions are hotly debated by legal experts.

Instead of granting an injunction that offers relief to a specific plaintiff who sued - the more common scenario - these nationwide orders halt the government from executing a policy against everyone, extending beyond the parties in a specific case. Judges often justify their use to address what they perceive as broader harm and to maintain uniformity of the law nationally.

Republicans and Democrats alike have railed against the ability of a single federal judge to exert such power, claiming it distorts the litigation process and politicizes the judiciary. Yet such injunctions have proven useful to members of the opposition party in curtailing what they see as presidential overreach.

According to a tally, opens new tab by Georgetown University law professor Stephen Vladeck, since Trump returned to office in January federal district courts have issued preliminary orders and injunctions - both universal and more limited - in 69% of cases in which plaintiffs requested such relief.

Republicans in Congress, controlling both the House of Representatives and Senate, have introduced legislation intended to curtail universal injunctions.

"They are a bipartisan scourge," University of Notre Dame law professor Samuel Bray told the Senate Judiciary Committee during a hearing on the issue on Wednesday. "In the long term, the real loser from the universal injunction is our democracy."

Frost said in an interview that universal injunctions are not appropriate in every case. And yet Trump is the "poster child" for why they should remain available, Frost added, because he is unilaterally issuing sweeping changes to the law.

Eliminating these injunctions, Frost said, "would allow the president to blatantly violate constitutional rights" for the months or years it takes to get to the Supreme Court.

Three different judges blocked nationwide Trump's executive order that would deny citizenship to babies born on U.S. soil based on the immigration status of their parents, agreeing with the various plaintiffs that Trump's order likely violates the citizenship clause of the Constitution's 14th Amendment that provides that anyone born in the United States is a citizen.

Limiting injunctions to protect only the individuals who sue would force other parents to prove their own lawful status in order for a baby to be deemed a citizen, and some "kids would be born without status" until a Supreme Court decision on the matter comes, Frost said.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, dissenting in 2018 to the court's endorsement of a travel ban Trump imposed in his first term targeting several Muslim-majority countries, said the nationwide injunction in that matter was necessary to provide complete relief to the plaintiffs.

In the past, Democrats expressed dismay when judges used these injunctions or similar orders to frustrate Biden's policies, including on a path to citizenship for immigrant spouses of U.S. citizens and on student debt relief.

A federal judge in Texas also attempted to order the abortion pill mifepristone - approved by federal regulators in 2000 - off the market, a decision Biden's administration successfully appealed at the Supreme Court.

At Wednesday's Senate hearing, Democrats said that any limits on such injunctions imposed by Congress should take effect in four years when the next president takes office, lest the legislation be used simply to insulate Trump's actions.

The origins of universal injunctions in the U.S. legal system is contentious. "As best I can tell, universal injunctions are a relatively new phenomenon,"

conservative Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in a 2024 decision that let Republican-governed Idaho enforce a ban on transgender care for minors.

Some legal scholars contest this conclusion.

"Justice Gorsuch is viewing the history too narrowly," said Stanford Law School professor Mila Sohoni, who wrote an academic paper on the topic.

Sohoni cited a handful of cases in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s in which courts offered universal relief or relief that applied beyond the plaintiffs in a case.

"In 1913, the Supreme Court itself issued an injunction that protected non-party newspaper publishers nationwide," Sohoni said.

It is undisputed that nationwide orders have been accelerating in the past two decades. A 2024 Harvard Law Review study found that they were overwhelmingly issued by judges appointed by presidents of the party opposite to the one in power.

Trump's administration in filings to the Supreme Court has complained that more universal injunctions were imposed against his policies in February alone than against Biden's administration during the first three years of his presidency.

Sohoni said that is "not all that surprising given the breakneck speed and sweeping scope of (Trump's) executive orders and other dikats." Trump has signed more than 100 executive orders in just 10 weeks, compared to 162 during Biden's four-year term.

Monica Haymond, an expert in legal procedure at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law, said nationwide injunctions can efficiently stop executive actions that are deemed likely unlawful, but they also can be misused and delay rules passed by democratically accountable institutions.

"Taking that power away from the courts will mean they have fewer ways to prevent harm. But nationwide injunctions can also cause harm," Haymond said. "I think the answer to the question whether courts should have the power to issue nationwide injunctions comes down to whether you trust the judicial process writ large."

He proposed a national referendum on constitutional reform to coincide with the presidential election that must be held within two months of Yoon's ouster on Friday by the nation's Constitutional Court.

The court upheld parliament's impeachment of Yoon for briefly declaring martial law on December 3, sparking South Korea's worst political crisis in decades.

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change the "imperial presidency", which he called a source of extreme political conflict.

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The leading candidate to replace Yoon, main opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung, has also spoken of that idea.

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"I would like to propose to the people that we should now quickly pursue constitutional revision," Woo Won-shik, the National Assembly speaker, told a press conference.

"After going through the unconstitutional and illegal martial law and (then Yoon's) impeachment, the public consensus on the urgency of constitutional revision is greater than ever."

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South Korea assembly speaker proposes revising constitution

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Rains add to challenge for Myanmar quake relief, toll at 3,471

BANGKOK (Reuters): Rains fell on parts of earthquake-hit Myanmar over the weekend, which aid agencies said could complicate relief efforts and raise the risk of disease as the United Nations aid chief said more tents were needed to shelter those left homeless. The death toll from the powerful quake that hit on March 28 rose to 3,471, state media reported, with 4,671 people injured and another 214 still missing. Aid agencies have warned the combination of the unseasonable rains and extreme heat could cause outbreaks of disease, including cholera, among quake survivors who are camping in the open. "Families sleeping outside the ruins of their homes while bodies of loved ones are pulled from rubble. Real fear of more quakes," visiting U.N. aid chief Tom Fletcher said in a post on X.

"We need to get tents and hope to survivors as they rebuild their shattered lives," he said, adding strong, coordinated action was the key to saving as many lives as possible. Myanmar's neighbours, such as China, India and Southeast Asian nations, are among those that dispatched relief supplies and rescuers over the past week to aid the recovery effort in quake-hit areas that are home to about 28 million people. The United States, which was until recently the world's top humanitarian donor, has pledged at least \$9 million to Myanmar to support earthquake-affected communities but current and former U.S. officials say the dismantling of its foreign aid programme has affected its response. Three U.S. Agency for International Development workers who had travelled to Myanmar after the quake were told they were being let go, Marcia Wong, a former senior USAID official, told Reuters.

"This team is working incredibly hard, focused on getting humanitarian aid to those in need. To get news of your imminent termination - how can that not be demoralising?" Wong said. In neighbouring Thailand, authorities said that country's death toll from the quake had risen to 24. Of those, 17 died at the site of a skyscraper in the capital, Bangkok, that collapsed while under construction. A further 77 were still missing there. Myanmar's military has struggled to run the country since overthrowing the government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, leaving the economy and basic services, including healthcare, in tatters, a situation exacerbated by the quake.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

US wields power as epicentre of financial world

WITH the ink still fresh on US President Donald Trump's latest batch of tariffs, some are already bracing for what may come next in his effort to strong-arm trading partners into doing his bidding. As the epicentre of the financial world and the issuer of the global reserve currency, the United States has a number of levers that Trump can pull to coerce other countries, from credit cards to the very provision of dollars to foreign banks.

While deploying these unconventional weapons would come at a large cost for the US itself and may even backfire altogether, observers say such doomsday scenarios should not be discarded.

This would be particularly true if tariffs do not succeed in reducing the US trade deficit with the rest of the world – an outcome many economists see as plausible given the fact that near-full employment in the US has led to deep labour shortages, according to Reuters.

The US administration's not-so-secret plan is to rebalance trade by weakening the dollar. A way to do that would be to enlist foreign central banks in a coordinated effort to revalue their own currencies.

According to a paper by Trump's pick to chair his Council of Economic Advisers, Stephen Miran, this may happen as part of a Mar-a-Lago accord, a reference to the dollar-capping Plaza Accord of 1985 and to Trump's resort in Florida.

The November paper suggested the United States would use the threat of tariffs and the lure of US security support to persuade foreign countries to appreciate their currencies against the dollar, among other concessions.

But economists are sceptical any such deal would gain traction in Europe or China because the economic and political situation is so different now from four decades ago.

"I think that's a really unlikely scenario," Maurice Obstfeld, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said.

He added central bankers in the euro zone, Japan and Britain were unlikely to yield to a deal that would see them forced to raise interest rates and risk a recession.

If an accord can't be reached, Trump's administration might be tempted to use more aggressive tactics, such as harnessing the dollar's status as the currency in which the world trades, saves and invests.

This may take the shape of threatening to turn off the Federal Reserve's taps for foreign central banks, which allows them to borrow dollars in return for collateral in their own currency, according to Obstfeld and some supervisors and central bankers.

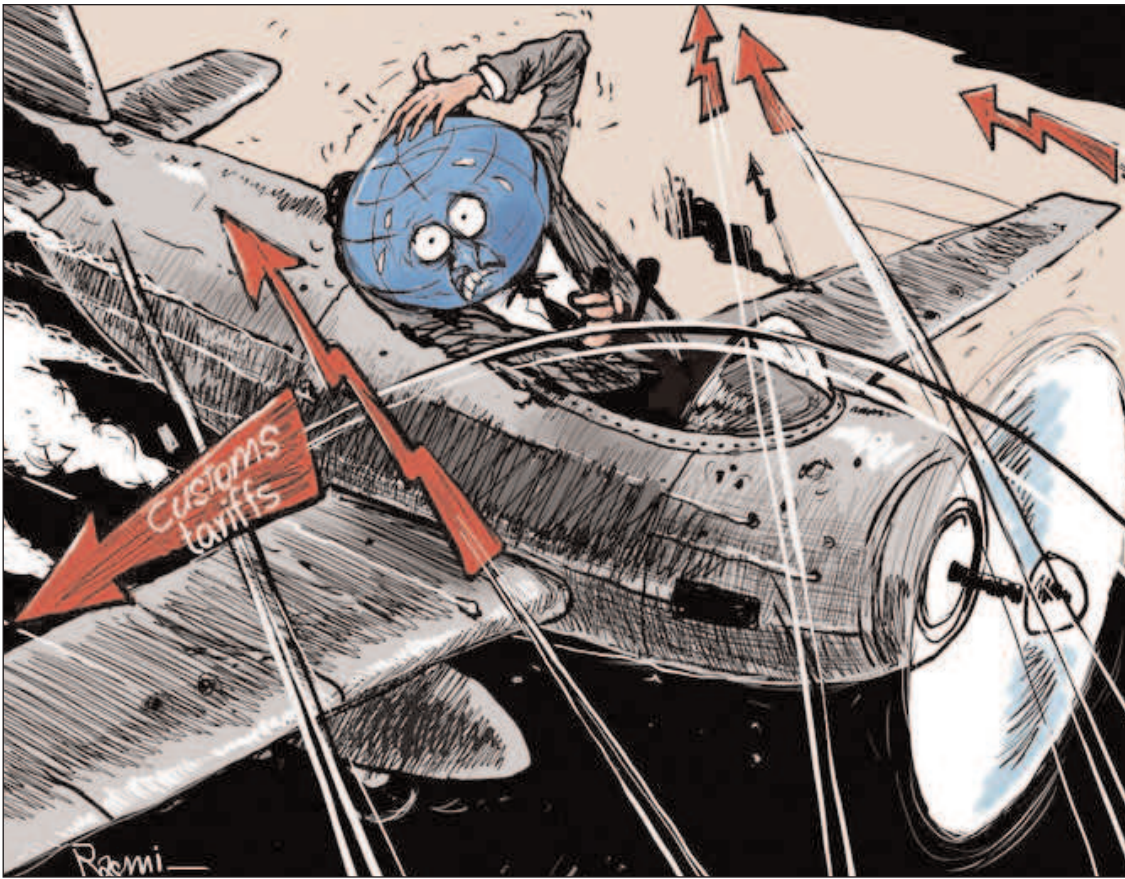
This is an essential source of funding at times of crisis, when money markets seize up and investors retrench to the safety of the dollar. Taking it away would upset a multi-trillion market for dollar credit outside of the United States and hit banks in Britain, the euro zone and Japan particularly hard. But his recent moves to replace key personnel, including at regulatory agencies, have unnerved observers.

The United States has another ace up its sleeve – its payment giants, including credit card companies Visa and Mastercard.

While Japan and China have to varying degrees developed their own electronic means of payment, the two US firms process two-thirds of card payments made in the 20-nation euro zone. Mobile phone app payments, dominated by US firms such as Apple and Google, make up almost one-tenth of retail payments. This shift has put Europeans on the backfoot in a vast market, worth more than 113 trillion euros (\$124.7 trillion dollars) in the first six months of last year. Were Visa and Mastercard to be pressured into pulling the plug on services, as they did in Russia shortly after it invaded Ukraine, Europeans would have to use cash or cumbersome bank transfers to shop instead.

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Israel kills, lies, and the western media believe it

Ahmed Najar

Fifteen members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and Civil Defence were killed.

Not fighters. Not militants. Not people hiding rockets or weapons. They were aid workers. Humanitarians. Medics who ran towards the injured when bombs fell. People who gave their lives trying to save others.

On March 23 in Rafah in southern Gaza, Israeli forces targeted a convoy of ambulances and emergency vehicles. Eight Red Crescent staff, six from the Palestinian Civil Defence and one United Nations staff member were slaughtered. The Israeli military claimed the vehicles were unmarked and suspected of carrying militants.

But that was a lie. Footage retrieved from the phone of Rifat Radwan, one of the murdered medics, shows flashing red lights, clearly marked vehicles and no weapons in sight. Then, heavy Israeli gunfire. Rifat's body was later found in a mass grave along with 13 others, some of which bore the signs of execution: bullets in the head or chest and hands bound.

Even in death, they had to prove they were aid workers. And still, much of the Western media reported Israel's version first – "Israel says...", "the IDF states..." – "a military source tells...", "These carefully worded lines carry

more weight than the blood-stained uniforms of the Red Crescent. More than the evidence. More than the truth.

This is not new. This is not an isolated mistake. This is a system.

A system in which Palestinians are presumed guilty. A system in which hospitals must prove they are hospitals, schools must prove they are schools and children must prove they are not human shields. A system in which our existence is treated as a threat – one that must be justified, explained, verified – before anyone will mourn us.

This is what dehumanisation looks like.

I was born and raised in Gaza. I know what a Red Crescent vest means. It means hope when there's nothing left. It means someone is coming to help – not to fight, not to kill but to save. It means that even in the middle of rubble and death, life still matters to someone.

And I also know what it means to lose that. To see medics killed and then smeared. To hear the world debate their innocence while their colleagues dig through mass graves. To watch the people who tried to save lives reduced to statistics, framed as suspects, then forgotten.

Dehumanisation is not just a rhetorical problem. It is not just media framing or political language. It kills.

It erases. It allows the world to look away while entire communities are wiped out.

It tells us: Your life does not matter the same way. Your grief is not real until we verify it. Your death is not tragic until we approve it.

This is why the deaths of these 15 medics and rescuers matter so deeply. Because their story is not just about one atrocity. It is about the machinery of doubt that kicks in every time Palestinians are killed. It is about how we must become our own forensic investigators, our own legal team, our own public relations firm – while mourning the dead.

This burden is not placed on anyone else. When Western journalists are killed, they are honoured. When Israeli civilians die, their names and faces fill screens around the world. When Palestinians die, their families have to prove they weren't terrorists first.

We are always guilty until proven innocent – and often, not even then.

Study after study has found that Western media quote Israeli sources far more than Palestinian ones and fail to challenge Israeli statements with the same rigour.

Palestinian voices are not only marginalised but are also often framed as unreliable or emotional – as

if grief discredits truth, as if pain makes us irrational.

This media pattern fuels and reflects political decisions – from arms sales to diplomatic immunity, from silence at international forums to vetoes at the UN. It is all connected. When Palestinians are not seen as fully human, then their killers are not seen as fully responsible.

And the emotional toll is immense. We do not just grieve; we defend our grief. We do not just bury our dead; we fight to have their deaths recognised. We live with a psychological pressure no community should bear – the pressure to prove we are not what the world has already decided we are.

These 15 medics and first responders were heroes. They ran towards danger. They served their people. They believed in the sanctity of life, even in a place where life is constantly under siege. Their memory should be sacred.

Instead, their story became another battle-ground. The world needs to stop making us prove we are human. Stop assuming that we lie and that our killers tell the truth. Stop accepting a narrative that requires Palestinians to be saints in order to be mourned.

These medics deserved to be believed. They deserved to be protected. And they deserve justice.

But most of all, they deserved – as we all do – to be seen as human.

UK's 'grooming gang' scandal is about race, class and misogyny

Julie Bindel

"My daughter is being gang raped and sold to countless men." These were the words, spoken by a heartbroken mother, that first alerted me to the organised rape and pimping gangs – now commonly referred to as "grooming gangs" – targeting young girls in the north of England.

It was the late 1990s and, knowing that I was a campaigner against child sexual exploitation, some of the mothers of these girls had reached out to me. They were desperate for help.

I wasn't the first person they'd approached. They had tried the authorities – the police and child protection services – but instead of help, they'd found only judgement, about their parenting and their daughters. One police officer described a victim as a "troublesome slag". The gang that had abused her was later convicted of horrific child rapes.

I marvelled at the strength of these mothers

to the door of the care home and rang the doorbell. He spoke briefly to the member of staff who answered. Five minutes later, a girl who couldn't have been older than 14 ran out and clambered into the back of the car. They drove off.

I was all too familiar with the machinations of child sexual abuse and exploitation, but there were some key differences between the cases I'd investigated previously and the way these gangs operated. These gangs made their victims believe that they were their saviours.

Younger men would be used to draw the victims in. Initially, they'd provide friendship, fast food and fun. Because most of the victims were white and most of the perpetrators were of Pakistani descent, the girls would be told that it was best they didn't tell their parents, as they were "bound to be racist". Once the girls were sucked in, they would be passed on to other men, who would sell

Some of these gangs were highly organised – young runners would be tasked with making initial contact with the victims; landlords would rent out their flats for the girls to be raped in; others were more opportunistic. All of them benefitted from the culture of impunity that continues to surround the sexual abuse of women and girls – a culture where conviction rates are so low as to render rape virtually decriminalised. Most media reports approach complex stories like this as being about race or class or sex – never all three at once.

even as I saw, up close, the pain in their eyes. I couldn't help but get emotional when one told me about how her 13-year-old daughter had come home crying, with blood all over her legs, high on cannabis and alcohol. She had been anally gang raped.

Social workers had told some of the families that their daughters were "choosing" this "lifestyle" and there was nothing they could do about it. To these adults who were tasked with protecting these children, child rape and prostitution was a "lifestyle choice".

I felt horrified and blindly furious. "We didn't know," the mothers kept telling me. "We did nothing wrong!"

They came from a broad range of backgrounds, mainly working class. Some of them had happy, stable family setups, and others were more chaotic, where their daughters had been taken into local authority care homes. Some of the girls had already been victims of sexual abuse – by boys in their neighbourhood or male family members. Some of them were being bullied at school. Some were autistic. But all of them shared something in common – neither the police nor child protection professionals had stepped in to help them.

The most vulnerable were those in care homes. Workers at these homes would turn a blind eye to the men in flash cars waiting outside for them. When the girls would disappear for days on end, the police would barely look for them.

It was obvious, once I spoke to the mothers and some of the girls who had managed to escape the gangs, that this was not an unknown phenomenon – health workers, neighbours and teachers were aware of what was happening. It wasn't a secret that girls had begun to replace heroin as the preferred merchandise for criminals looking to make a fast buck.

I had previously investigated widespread sexual abuse by clergy and online child abuse rings. Now I wanted to investigate what these mothers were telling me. One evening, I was sat outside a care home in Blackpool, in the north of England, hoping to ask a member of staff what they were doing to protect the girls in their care, when I noticed what looked like a brand-new car pulling up around the corner. It was driven by a man in his 40s. There were two younger men sitting on the back seat. One of the younger men got out of the car, went

them from flats.

Early reports from parents and victims confirmed that some of the older men in the network were taxi drivers. It soon became clear how the girls were targeted: Taxi drivers would pick them up – often from care homes. I saw taxis pull up outside these homes and girls get in as staff watched from the windows.

The taxi drivers would get a fee for each girl delivered to the gang members – mainly men in their 20s and 30s – although that fee often involved being permitted to rape the victim free of charge.

Some of these gangs were highly organised – young runners would be tasked with making initial contact with the victims; landlords would rent out their flats for the girls to be raped in; others were more opportunistic. All of them benefitted from the culture of impunity that continues to surround the sexual abuse of women and girls – a culture where conviction rates are so low as to render rape virtually decriminalised.

Most media reports approach complex stories like this as being about race or class or sex – never all three at once. But the truth is that these children were abused because they were girls. They were denied any pretence of protection from the authorities because they were poor. They were targeted because of their race and then ignored by authorities that simultaneously feared being accused of racism while adopting racist assumptions about the sorts of white girls who would "sleep with" brown men. This is about race and class and sex. And misogyny runs through all three.

These girls were either blamed or not believed. In fact, sometimes they would be prosecuted for being drunk and disorderly while the men who supplied the alcohol – the same men who raped them – were not.

These girls were not merely "duped" as the word "grooming" suggests, although they were certainly tricked into believing that they had a boyfriend in one of the younger procurers; they were raped, sold, abused, in some cases tortured.

Now, almost three decades after I first spoke to those mothers, nothing has changed. There is still an appalling complacency about organised sexual exploitation, which results in few convictions – regardless of the ethnicity of the perpetrators. The police still are not doing enough. We are still choosing to blame the victims.

A watershed moment in Israel-Lebanon ties

Old habits die hard, they say, and Israel's modus operandi of using force, often excessive military force, when there are good enough reasons due to the complexity of a situation to hold their fire, has become irrepresible.

The current bombardment of targets in Lebanon is a case in point. It does not necessarily serve Israeli security and economic interests, given that it threatens to slam shut the small window of opportunity that had opened up for improved relations between the two countries, and could destabilize Israel's nascent attempts to revive its northern neighbor's political system with reduced Hezbollah influence.

For years before the Oct. 7 attacks, a violent confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah was widely regarded as a matter of when, not if, and the only question was how deadly it would be.

On reflection, given the way in which Israel has conducted its wars on Gaza and Lebanon, it is obvious that it was much better prepared to deal with its Lebanese nemesis Hezbollah, as an extension of the perceived existential threat from Tehran, than with the Hamas threat in Gaza.

By joining the war and forcing tens of thousands of Israelis out of their homes in the north of the country for nearly a year, Hezbollah provided Israeli authorities with the perfect excuse to inflict a massive retaliation that decimated the Iranian-backed movement, its militants, and much of its military infrastructure.

But it also resulted in the deaths and suffering of many civilians and caused further devastation to a country that has for so many years suffered immensely from internal, but externally imposed, conflicts.

Yet with the ceasefire deal and the weakening of Hezbollah's military power, and consequently its political influence, new horizons have opened up for peaceful engagement in efforts to resolve border disputes and security arrangements, and even the prospect of nor-

malization of relations at some point in the future.

The new leadership in Beirut is tasked with the momentous challenge of rebuilding the country, but first and foremost with bringing its diverse communities together and creating a coherent Lebanese identity that takes precedence over any other domestic or external images. It could be helped in this by Israeli authorities, were they to minimize the activities and physical presence of their military in their northern neighbor's territory. This would also be in Israel's best interest.

Certainly, there has been

Yossi Mekelberg

ing progress toward improving them. It exposes the inability of Israeli authorities to translate tactical achievements on the battlefield into strategic gains.

Israel is constantly focused on threats rather than opportunities, and continues to search for further tactical objectives. It is obsessed with the constant use of military force, as evidenced by its habit of reacting to every single incident, large or small, which in turn emboldens Hezbollah.

After all, Hezbollah's main raison d'être for keep-

Lebanese government flatly denies, it must also agree to negotiate, in good faith, historical claims on disputed areas that have been within Israel's borders since the 1948 war, and discuss the possibility of agreeing on a permanent border.

Given the present political situation in Israel, this is hardly realistic, considering that some members of the governing coalition are opposed to a complete withdrawal even to the Blue Line, to which Israel withdrew in 2000, though it is not even the international border.

Any territorial "conces-

Israel could help to undermine Hezbollah's posturing as the defender of Lebanon, and at the same time empower the country's legitimate government and military, if it would agree to relinquish the territory it still holds inside Lebanon in violation of October's ceasefire agreement, while also insisting that Hezbollah also does not violate the terms of the deal and remains north of the Litani River. Moreover, if Israel would like to make good on its assertion that the current negotiations between the two countries involve discussions about normalized relations, something the Lebanese government flatly denies, it must also agree to negotiate, in good faith, historical claims on disputed areas that have been within Israel's borders since the 1948 war, and discuss the possibility of agreeing on a permanent border.

a promising start, in extremely difficult circumstances, by new President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam in their efforts to restore stability in Lebanon after the war. They have been very clear that they have no interest in a conflict with Israel, and that their country had been dragged into it by foreign interests.

But if peace is to prevail, both Hezbollah and Israel must adhere to the terms of the ceasefire agreement. For now, the weakening of Hezbollah and Iran limits their capacities to undermine the positive developments in Lebanon, including the ceasefire agreement.

However, Israel's approach to Hezbollah, and therefore inevitably to Lebanon, is only complicating relations between the two countries and hamper-

ing a military force of some 50,000 combatants armed to the teeth has been its claim to be the sole source of resistance to the Israeli occupation of Lebanese land.

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Moreover, if Israel would like to make good on its assertion that the current negotiations between the two countries involve discussions about normalized relations, something the

sion" to Lebanon would require, according to Israeli law, approval by a supermajority of 80 of the 120 Knesset members, or support through a national referendum. The current composition of the Knesset would neither allow the ceding of territory nor a referendum on the matter.

The aim of demarcating an agreed border is to bring an end to territorial claims by either side and, in doing so, remove any pretext for hostilities.

Israel, not without justification, would like to ensure that Hezbollah and militant Palestinian elements mainly associated with Hamas adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Reaffirmed in the recent ceasefire agreement, Resolution 1701, adopted by the Security Council in 2006 with the aim of end-

ing the war that year between Israel and Hezbollah, created a buffer zone between Israel and Lebanon in which the presence of armed forces would be restricted to UN peacekeepers and the Lebanese army. It also prohibits incursions into Lebanese territory by Israeli ground troops or the Israeli air force.

In all of this, the peacekeeping operation along the border, and the international coordination mechanism tasked with overseeing the present ceasefire and future agreements, are therefore crucial.

It is through sheer luck and the hesitation shown by Hezbollah's slain leader Hassan Nasrallah that he didn't emulate, as his organization had planned for many years, an attack like the one by Hamas from Gaza, which probably would have had even worse consequences.

Lebanon has experienced the military might of Israel in the worst possible way a number of times, including during the First Lebanon War in 1982, the Second Lebanon War in 2006, and the most recent conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The country is entitled to guarantees that this will not happen again.

The key objective of any agreement must be to break this vicious cycle of violence between the two countries and eventually normalize relations. Israel's calmest borders are those it shares with Egypt and Jordan, and this was achieved through diplomatic negotiations, not military force.

Moreover, the 2022 maritime agreement between Israel and Lebanon demonstrated that both sides can, if they believe it is in their national interests, settle their differences in a mutually beneficial way.

For any long-term resolution of the historically fraught relations between Israel and Lebanon, their respective leaderships need to overcome certain domestic objections but, most of all, they must liberate themselves from the type of rigid thinking derived from being prisoners of history, ideology and, yes, old (and bad) habits.

How North Africa is asserting itself in a changing world

Hafed Al-Ghwell

It must be earned or bargained for.

Morocco's foreign policy best reflects this calculated shift. Frustrated by European aid that often came laden with conditionality, or simply unfulfilled promises, Rabat has turned instead to Gulf states for strategic investment and diplomatic backing.

Concurrently, the country has repositioned itself strategically within Africa. Since rejoining the African Union in 2017 after a 33-year hiatus, Morocco has aggressively expanded its economic footprint across the continent, and the nation's leading banks, telecom businesses, and phosphate companies now operate in dozens of African states.

Algeria, buoyed by hydrocarbon wealth and Europe's heightened demand for non-Russian gas, is pursuing a newly assertive foreign policy. Given the disruption to European energy security resulting from the war in Ukraine, Algiers has positioned itself as a crucial

alternative supplier, negotiating aggressively with Italy and other EU partners to secure favorable agreements that support domestic economic development. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has also extended this activism southward within Africa itself, notably offering mediation services after the 2023 coup in Niger, and advocating for a revival of Mali's stalled 2015 peace accords following the withdrawal of France and the arrival of the Russia-backed Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group).

Globally, Algeria is actively working to rebalance its traditional arms relationship with Russia by entering into new defense agreements with China and Turkiye, while remaining adamant about maintaining its selective engagement with the West on security matters by rejecting the establishment of foreign military bases and conditional aid.

The pursuit of observer status in the BRICS group of developing economies, and membership of the bloc's New Development Bank, also reflect the efforts by Algeria to diversify its engagements while shoring up its status as an influential regional actor and autonomous diplomatic voice.

Egypt, under President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, has reinvigorated its diplomatic activism, positioning itself as an indispensable mediator in regional conflicts, including efforts to broker a ceasefire in Gaza and facilitate talks on Libya and Sudan.

Since rejoining the African Union in 2014, Egypt has boosted its profile on the continent significantly, notably hosting the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference, COP27, to

help amplify African climate finance demands.

Beyond the continent, Cairo remains a leading recipient of US military aid, yet collaborates closely with Russia, which is building Egypt's first nuclear plant. Meanwhile, ties with China have surged; the value of bilateral trade surpassed \$13 billion in 2023 and Beijing financed Egypt's new administrative capital.

In addition, Gulf states have funneled tens of billions of dollars into Egypt, reducing Cairo's traditional dependence on conditional Western inflows.

A foreign policy shift in Tunisia since 2011 reflects the country's mounting economic woes and a pragmatic recalibration under President Kais Saied. Initially hailed as the democratic success story of the Arab Spring, Tunisia eagerly embraced European and US support. But chronic economic stagnation, ongoing instability in neighboring Libya, and democratic backsliding at home prompted Saied to assert national sovereignty more forcefully.

Globally, Algeria is actively working to rebalance its traditional arms relationship with Russia by entering into new defense agreements with China and Turkiye, while remaining adamant about maintaining its selective engagement with the West on security matters by rejecting the establishment of foreign military bases and conditional aid.

In 2023, he rejected a critical loan from the International Monetary Fund, despite acute financial distress, as he refused to impose austerity measures and turned instead to aid from Algeria and potential investments from the Gulf.

As European influence wanes in Tunis, it is increasingly evident that even smaller North African states are capable of punching above their diplomatic weight by deftly managing a litany of external dependencies.

Well over a decade after its 2011 civil war Libya remains deeply divided, with rival factions independently engaging with foreign allies in an attempt to strengthen their respective positions. In Tripoli, the internationally recognized government secured its survival through such pragmatic alliances with foreign patrons.

In the east of the country, Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army relies on the Russians of the Africa Corps, whose presence provides Moscow with strategic access on NATO's southern flank. Haftar also receives critical military and financial backing from Arab allies.

By engaging with several foreign patrons simultaneously, both of the Libyan factions effectively balance internal and external pressures, exploiting global rivalries to maintain relative autonomy and optimize their influence and chances of survival.

In different ways and at different speeds, North African states are asserting themselves as independent actors in an increasingly multipolar world. The message is clear: The era of reflexive deference to Western tutelage and paternalism is over.

Modernizing irrigation for Saudi sustainability

Water scarcity is one of the biggest challenges facing Saudi Arabia today, with agriculture consuming 85 percent of the country's water resources.

Traditional irrigation methods, such as flood irrigation, have long been the norm — but they are no longer viable. I've seen firsthand how inefficient water use puts our food security at risk.

The way forward isn't incremental change — it requires a fundamental shift in how we approach irrigation. For me, the key to addressing this challenge lies in AI-driven smart irrigation, precision water management, and modern irrigation technologies.

These innovations are essential for Saudi Arabia to boost crop yields and strengthen long-term food sustainability. However, the real challenge — and opportunity — lies in scaling these solutions.

Despite advances in

water management, many farmers in Saudi Arabia and across the Middle East and North Africa still rely on conventional surface irrigation, losing up to 60 percent of water through evaporation and inefficiency.

By adopting AI-driven irrigation networks, we can redefine water management — significantly reducing waste while improving efficiency.

These systems automate water delivery based on real-time soil moisture data, weather forecasts, and crop-specific requirements, ensuring every drop is used with maximum impact.

As Saudi Arabia develops smart cities such as NEOM, we are witnessing innovative technologies take shape, including vertical farming.

In 2024, Grundfos successfully executed a vertical farming project, supplying a range of solutions including multistage vertical pumps, end-suction pumps, and submersible

Abdulaziz Daghestani

pumps.

These advances show how cutting-edge irrigation technologies can support sustainable food production in urban environments while conserving water resources.

Surface irrigation is still widely used in Saudi Arabia, leading to excessive water loss through evaporation. However, drip and subsurface irrigation systems offer more efficient alternatives, delivering controlled doses of water directly to plant roots.

Studies show these methods reduce water consumption by 10 percent to 15 percent while increasing crop productivity by up to 35 percent.

When combined with AI-powered scheduling systems, these technologies ensure water is applied precisely when and where it's needed — optimizing water use and improving yields.

Recognizing the importance of efficient irrigation for small-scale farmers, the Saudi Irrigation Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization have launched the "Promoting Efficient Irrigation and Water Productivity Amongst Farmers" project.

This initiative aims to make advanced irrigation technologies more accessible — helping farmers adopt smarter, more sustainable practices while reinforcing Saudi Arabia's commitment to responsible water management.

For Saudi Arabia's transition to water-smart agriculture to succeed, farmers need practical, accessible solutions that conserve water without compromising productivity.

Smallholder farmers play a major role in Saudi Arabia's agricultural sector, with up to 200,000 farm families contributing 43 percent of the country's agricultural gross domestic product.

Giving them the right support — through resources and training — will help them to adopt smart irrigation technologies and achieve large-scale water efficiency.

Bridging this gap requires collaboration between government and the private sector to deliver targeted training programs and scalable, cost-effective irrigation solutions. These efforts are already helping farmers integrate state-of-the-art water management technologies, ensuring efficiency improvements reach farms of all sizes.

The path forward is clear — water-smart agriculture must be at the heart of Saudi Arabia's long-term sustainability and food security strategy.

By scaling up AI-driven irrigation networks, expanding precision irrigation systems, and strengthening public-private partnerships, we can secure a more sustainable future for generations to come.

Luke Coffey

ity guarantees from Europe; and no duplication of NATO capabilities.

But Trump's arrival shifted American attitudes. Some in his orbit are perfectly comfortable with the idea of the US playing a reduced role in NATO, or even leaving the alliance altogether. As a result, they welcome the idea of the EU stepping up to carry more of the defense burden.

European advocates of deeper integration, such as French President Emmanuel Macron, have seized on this shift to push for what he calls "strategic autonomy," or the idea that Europe should be able to manage its military affairs without relying on NATO or the US.

While this might be a fashionable idea in Paris and Brussels, it deeply unsettles many nations in Eastern Europe. These

countries, which live under the shadow of Russian aggression, know firsthand the importance of US military power in preserving peace and stability. For them, any weakening of transatlantic ties could be disastrous, if not an existential threat.

In response to Russia's aggression, the EU launched a 150 million (\$164 million) initiative to co-finance defense procurement among member states. But there was a catch: at least 65 percent of that funding must be spent on products manufactured within the EU. In other words, the policy explicitly discriminates against non-EU NATO members, exactly what Madeleine Albright warned against 25 years ago.

It is easy to understand why countries might want to favor domestic defense

industries. In times of crisis, it is reassuring to know that critical military capabilities will be available without relying on foreign suppliers, even friendly ones.

That logic has only been reinforced by Trump-era threats to withhold military support from allies, and even the Obama administration selectively restricted arms sales to key American allies.

But defense policy cannot be reduced to a jobs program. Of course countries will want to maintain certain key capabilities at home, but in a world defined by alliances and interdependence it makes sense to share the burden. Governments should seek the best military equipment at the best price, without compromising security.

The EU's 65 percent internal defense spending requirement is counterproductive. It shuts out some

of the world's top defense producers: the US, the UK, and Turkiye.

All three countries offer proven, high-quality systems, from American and British air-defense platforms to cutting-edge Turkish drones. These capabilities could significantly enhance Europe's defense posture, especially in light of the threats from Russia and instability in the wider neighborhood.

If the EU truly wants to be taken seriously on defense, it should pursue an open and competitive defense market, one that maximizes the capabilities available to European armed forces rather than limiting them in the name of industrial policy.

Unfortunately, change is unlikely. The recent escalation of Trump's global trade war, including new tariffs on EU goods, will only reinforce the protectionist instincts of Brussels. But

the cost of these instincts could be high. After all, 23 of 27 EU members are also in NATO. If Brussels limits their ability to procure the best hardware from wherever it is produced, it could weaken not only the EU's own defense posture but that of NATO as well.

At a time when the future of Ukraine hangs in the balance, and the White House's commitment to NATO is being questioned, Europe cannot afford to let ideology or industrial politics get in the way of military readiness. It must be pragmatic.

That means buying the best equipment available, regardless of whether it is built in France, the UK, Turkiye, or the US.

Anything less would not only undermine Europe's ability to defend itself, it would play directly into the hands of those who want to see the transatlantic alliance fail.



Private companies recognized for supporting Ramazan subsidies in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon chaired a meeting in his office in which the Islamabad administration acknowledged the role of private companies that provided essential items at subsidized rates during Ramazan.

Representatives from various companies dealing in poultry, eggs, sugar, ghee, and grocery items attended the session. Assistant Commissioners from all city zones were also present, said the

spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration here.

Speaking at the meeting, DC Irfan Nawaz Memon appreciated the support provided by the private sector. He said that these companies played a significant role in helping the administration deliver essential items at reduced prices through stalls set up across Islamabad.

He also distributed appreciation certificates to the representatives of companies that actively participated in the subsidy initia-

tive.

The Deputy Commissioner said that during Ramazan, the administration remained available round the clock to address public needs. He added that continuous efforts by officers and field staff ensured that affordable goods were made available throughout the month.

According to DC Islamabad, the private sector's cooperation made it possible to provide relief to citizens by offering food items at controlled prices. He emphasized the

importance of continued collaboration between public and private sectors in addressing market challenges.

Officials said that the administration plans to further strengthen this cooperation in the future to ensure that residents continue to receive price relief during key times of the year.

The meeting ended with a renewed commitment to joint efforts for improving service delivery and ensuring public convenience through timely interventions.

Lower tariff to make industry more competitive: PIAF

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Association Front (PIAF) has appreciated the government for taking structural reforms especially in power sector to ensure further relief for the consumers and overall development of the country.

The PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol, Senior Vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and Vice chairman Tahirm Manzoor Chaudhry in a joint statement said this reduction will help industrialists produce cheaper and more competitive products. They noted that the common people had to suffer a lot in the past due to high inflation rate and electricity bills. However, they asked the government to take further steps to provide maximum relief to them.

Highlighting the structural reforms to be taken in power sector, the PIAF Chairman said the government should ensure halting

power theft which was around Rs600 billion per year. Similarly, he said by establishing open market, the electricity tariffs will be further decreased.

He said there was no option but to privatise or commercialise Power Distribution Companies (DISCOs) to reduce the burden of line losses and power theft on the national exchequer.

It is to be noted that Prime Minister had announced a significant reduction of up to Rs 7.69 per unit in the electricity prices for the consumers, pledging to provide further relief in near future through structural reforms in the power sector. In June 2024, the per unit price for industrial sector was Rs 58.5 which was first reduced by Rs 10.3 and further by Rs 7.69," he added. The PM has directed the team concerned to work diligently to implement reforms in the sector as soon as possible," he added. Appreciating the

task force formed to finalise power reforms, he said the force worked really hard and through their innovative thoughts, they brought different options and managed to convince the IMF to reduce the power tariffs.

The govt did not pass on the low international petroleum prices and retained the prices to ensure that the government will reduce the power tariffs to which IMF agreed in principle, he added. He said the trust with the IMF that was breached in 2020, was now being restored.

Similarly, he said the government successfully negotiated with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and praised the government team, led by Awaiz Leghari for their commendable efforts. "After negotiation with the IPPs, the govt managed to save Rs 3,696 billion that were to be paid to the IPPs.

Likewise, he added that the government was also facing an immense chal-

lenge of circular debts of Rs 2,393 billion. However, he informed that the government had also made arrangements to gradually but permanently solve this problem within five years.

He also extended his gratitude to his leader and PML-N President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and the allied political party leadership for their support and guidance in this regard.

Recalling the time when the govt took over the charge Pakistan was on the verge of being default at that time and the nation, especially business community was afraid about the future of the country.

He said the government even had to face difficulties to open LCs for importing petroleum products and other essential items.

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



KARACHI: People showing interest in purchasing chicken at Saddar Bird Market.

PFC to showcase Pak craftsmanship

LAHORE (APP): PFC is set to participate in the prestigious 4-day Build Your House Exhibition 2025 in Doha, Qatar, scheduled to commence on April 28.

Chairing a board of directors meeting here on Sunday, PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq announced that the council will present an exclusive collection of Pakistani furniture, celebrated for its fusion of traditional craftsmanship and modern innovation. The exhibit will feature intricately hand-carved wooden pieces, luxurious upholstered furniture, and contemporary modular designs.

Highlighting the significance of the event, Mian Kashif Ashfaq said, "This exhibition is a gateway to building stronger trade relations with Qatar and the wider Middle Eastern market. We are excited to unveil Pakistan's rich artistry, with a strong focus on sustainability and premium quality that aligns with global trends."

Services' exports grow by 6.03% to \$5.45b

ISLAMABAD (APP): The export of various services witnessed 6.03% increase during the first eight months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

According to PBS data, Pakistan earned \$5.459 billion from the export of various services during July-February (2024-25) as compared to \$5.148 billion in July-February (2023-24). On the other hand, the services' imports also witnessed an increase of 12.03 percent during the months under review and were recorded at \$7.709 billion as compared to the import

of \$6.881 billion in July-February (2023-24).

Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit increased by 29.85 percent during the period under review by growing from \$1.732 billion last year to \$2.250 billion during the ongoing fiscal year.

Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of services in February 2025 increased by 5 percent to \$709.96 million from \$676.17 million in February 2024.

On the other hand, the imports also grew by 32.70 percent by going up from \$763.42 million to \$1,013.02 million, according to PBS data.

On month-on-month basis, the export of services increased by 2.50 percent in February 2025 when compared to the imports of \$692.62 million in February 2024.

The imports of services however witnessed a decrease of 1.08 percent in February 2025 compared to

imports of \$1,024 million in February 2024, PBS reported.

Meanwhile, the merchandise exports from the country increased by 7.69 percent during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

Exports during July-March (2024-25) were recorded at \$24.690 billion against \$22.926 billion during July-March (2023-24), according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) data.

On the other hand, imports into the country went up by 6.33 percent by growing from \$40.054 billion last year to \$42.589 billion during the first nine months of the current year.

Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the period under review was recorded at \$17.899 billion against the deficit of \$17.128 billion last year, showing an increase of 4.50 percent.

Health Minister assures swift resolution of medical device registration crisis



F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a significant development for Pakistan's medical device industry, Federal Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal has assured the leadership of Healthcare Devices Association of Pakistan (HDAP) that the longstanding issue of medical device registration will be resolved in coming few days.

Calling it a "complex and lingering problem," the minister pledged to take immediate action to ensure the continued availability of critical healthcare equipment across the country.

The assurance came during a high-level meeting between the federal health minister and an HDAP delegation at the Central Drug

Testing Laboratory in Karachi. The delegation was led by HDAP's Chairman Syed Omer Ahmed and included Senior Vice Chairman Shahan Irshad, former Chairmen Dr. Zaffar Hashmi & Masood Ahmed, and former Vice Chairman Abid Maniyar.

The HDAP delegation presented a comprehensive overview of the mounting regulatory challenges in the sector, particularly the urgent need to extend the exemption period for registration of medical devices under the Medical Devices Rules (MDR) 2017.

"DRAP claims to have processed hundreds of registration applications, but certificates are still not being issued, which has

caused customs authorities to withhold shipments," HDAP office-bearers informed the minister.

They added that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) had previously asked HDAP not to submit registration applications for Class A and B medical devices due to a lack of manpower and the inability to handle a high volume of applications.

"DRAP also assured us that registration timeline extensions would be granted to facilitate the industry, but they are now going back on their commitments," said HDAP Chairman Syed Omer Ahmed.

The delegation warned that the failure to extend the deadline could trigger a

national health crisis, with over 7,000 registration applications still pending.

Delegation also noted that DRAP had suspended the registration process, citing the need for federal cabinet approval, but the absence of progress and clarity has created serious uncertainty among importers and healthcare providers.

Syed Omer Ahmed emphasized that the delays directly threaten the availability of essential medical equipment used in diagnostics, surgeries, intensive care units, and patient monitoring-particularly in public and private hospitals nationwide.

The HDAP team also expressed concern over the lack of transparency in DRAP's regulatory proceedings, pointing out that recent meetings of the Medical Device Board (MDB) had not been followed by the release of agendas or meeting minutes. They questioned DRAP's claims of rapid progress, noting that the average application processing time remains between three to four years, with little evidence of improvement.

The delegation urged the government to align Pakistan's regulatory

framework with international standards, pointing to the European Union's MDR/IVDR transition period, which extends through 2027-28. They called for a more pragmatic approach that includes the acceptance of international certifications such as CE and FDA approvals, as well as Letters of Authorization (LoAs), to streamline the registration process.

Minister Mustafa Kamal responded positively, appreciating HDAP's constructive input and recognizing the industry's vital role in supporting Pakistan's healthcare system. He assured the delegation that the matter would be fast-tracked and all necessary administrative steps would be taken to avoid disruption in the supply of essential medical devices.

Reaffirming its commitment to national healthcare, HDAP pledged to continue working closely with the Ministry of National Health Services and DRAP to build a more efficient, transparent, and internationally aligned regulatory system. The association also offered support in strengthening institutional capacity and shaping long-term policy, including the promotion of local manufacturing.

Vietnam seeks US tariff delay

HANOI (APP/APP): The Vietnam has asked for a last-minute delay to colossal tariffs imposed by Washington as government figures showed on Sunday that its economy grew at a slightly slower pace in the first quarter.

The Southeast Asian manufacturing powerhouse counted the United States as its biggest export market in the first three months of the year but its key customer has now hit it with a thumping 46 percent tariff.

The move is part of a furious new global trade blitz announced Wednesday by US President Donald Trump that has sent markets around the world into a tailspin.

However, top leader To Lam has asked Trump for a delay of at least 45 days to the new 46 percent tariff, according to a copy of a formal letter seen by AFP.

In the letter, Lam said he had appointed Deputy Prime Minister Ho Duc Phoc to serve as the primary contact with the US side on the issue, "with the aim of reaching an agreement as soon as possible".

He also said he hoped to meet Trump in Washington at the end of May to finalise the matter.

Trump said on Friday he had had "a very productive" call with Lam, who he said wanted to make a deal on tariffs.

Gross domestic product in Vietnam during the first quarter grew 6.93 percent year-on-year, down slightly from the 7.55 expansion in the final quarter of last year, Vietnam's General Statistics Office said Sunday.

Iftikhar calls for regional trade boost

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik has stressed the urgent need to address the challenges cropped up in the wake of Trump tariffs by fully reviving regional cooperation though SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) to strengthen intra-regional trade.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said by becoming more resilient and less dependent on major powers, Pakistan can better shield its economy from future global trade shocks. He said to mitigate Trump tariff impact, Pakistan must adopt a multi-pronged strategy with essential diversification of export markets and expanding trade ties with Africa, Central Asia, and the European Union can reduce risk.

He said Pakistan should invest in value-added industries and technology to make its exports more competitive. Improving the ease of doing business and political stability would help attract foreign investors despite global uncertainties.

He said Pakistan's textile and manufacturing sectors, which rely heavily on imported raw materials and machinery, will bear the

brunt of higher costs due to volatility in global prices. He said policy reforms to attract and protect foreign investment, along with greater integration into global value chains, will also help mitigate external shocks.

Strengthening domestic industries and encouraging import substitution will definitely further shield the economy from global trade uncertainties. By adopting a proactive and diversified economic strategy, Pakistan can reduce vulnerability to global policy shifts like the Trump tariffs.

He said Pakistan must focus on enhancing the competitiveness of its industries through modernization, better infrastructure, and skill development. He said improving trade ties with regional partners through CPEC can open new export avenues.

He cautioned that "we should also bear in mind that global trade war is posed to reduce demand for Pakistani exports, particularly textiles, which form the backbone of the economy".

The government must take all stakeholders into confidence in framing result oriented strategy to offset the impact of tariffs on Pakistan economy especially exports, he concluded.

Continue working with businessmen for long-term tariff stability: BMP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that the relief in power tariff is a step in the right direction, asking the government to continue working closely with the businessmen to monitor energy pricing and ensure long-term tariff stability for the trade and industry.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, while appreciating Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement of a substantial reduction of Rs7.59 per unit in electricity tariffs for industrial consumers, stated that it is a critical move that will ease financial pressure

on both businesses, emphasizing that the relief package came at a time when it was needed the most.

Anjum Nisar called the initiative a historic intervention and a bold step towards providing relief to millions of households and thousands of businesses across the country. This tariff reduction would have far-reaching positive effects, which will not only ease the financial burden on consumers but also revitalize the industrial sector, fostering economic growth, enhancing exports, and contributing to a more competitive business environment, he said.

It is an essential catalyst for the growth of local industries. Over the years, high energy costs have hindered industrial productivi-

ty, and this reduction will bring tangible benefits to manufacturing and exports, which are the key drivers of economy, he remarked.

It is to be noted that business community across the country has welcomed the reduction of power tariff for industrial consumers and expressed hope that this move would enhance exports, production capacity and reduce cost of manufacturing and help reduce inflation. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced a decrease of Rs 7.41 in electricity prices for residences consumers and a decrease of Rs 7.41 in electricity tariff after receiving approval from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reduce tariff differentials.

While highly appreciating Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif for his timely and impactful announcement of a substantial reduction in electricity tariffs by Rs7.59 per unit for industrial consumers and Rs7.41 per unit for domestic consumers, stated that it was undoubtedly a critical move to alleviate the financial pressure on both citizens and businesses that have long struggled with the burden of exorbitant energy costs.

They emphasized that this much-needed relief package comes at a time when it is most needed—offering significant reprieve to the public and industrial sectors which have faced escalating energy bills.

They recognized the Prime Minister's initiative as a historic intervention and a bold step towards providing much-needed

relief to millions of households and thousands of businesses across the country.

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

While commending the splendid job done by the Taskforce on Energy Sector constituted by the Prime Minister, they particularly appreciated the efforts made by Federal Minister for Energy and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Power Muhammad Ali that resulted in providing a huge

relief to the entire nation.

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

Over the years, high energy costs have severely hindered industrial productivity, and this reduction promises to bring tangible benefits to manufacturing and exports, which are key drivers of Pakistan's economy. They further highlighted the particular significance of this tariff reduction for Karachi's industrial sector, which has long been weighed down by soaring electricity prices. He pra-

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

This announcement is a step in the right direction, he stated. They reiterated BMP's commitment to collaborating with the government to create a favorable business climate that drives sustainable economic growth and enhances Pakistan's global competitiveness.

He expressed optimism that this initiative would be the first in a series of positive reforms aimed at strengthening the nation's industrial base and stimulating economic activity

across key sectors.

As the country grapples with rising inflation and economic challenges, this decision marks a turning point in the government's efforts to support businesses and ease the financial burden on consumers.

The leadership of BMP looks forward to continued dialogue with the government to ensure that such pro-business and pro-growth measures are sustained and expanded, further advancing Pakistan's economic prosperity.

He highlighted that the government's move to lower electricity rates for industrial consumers by Rs. 7.59 per unit, bringing the tariff down to Rs. 40.60 per unit from Rs. 58.50 per unit in June 2024, will significantly benefit the sector.



In brief

ITF tennis c'ship continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tennis Federation -PTF is pleased to inform you that the ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Juniors Tennis Championship Leg-1 continued here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Sunday. A total of 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 honours 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. The main draw will commence tomorrow Monday, April 7. In Boys singles Final Round, Danial Shalkhimbayev (KAZ) beat Seungwoo Han (KOR) 6-1,6-3; Platon Kovalyov (KAZ) beat Djamal Khakimov (RUS) 7-6(1),6-1; Diar Amanbek (KAZ) beat Ayaan Malik (PAK) 6-2,6-3.

Karachi Kings unveil new Kit

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Kings have officially unveiled their brand-new team kit for the much-anticipated HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10. With its striking blue and red palette, the kit pays tribute to the franchise's rich legacy while introducing a fresh and confident new identity. Designed by the creative minds at The Peace Club, this kit blends fashion and function with a uniquely bold perspective, the Kings Kings claimed. The new Karachi Kings kit is a true reflection of the team's identity and tradition. Blue serves as the dominant color, representing strength and resilience, while bold red stripes inject energy and movement into the design. The shirt strikes a balance between elegance and simplicity, drawing subtle inspiration from the classic kits of earlier seasons. Behind this striking new look is the creative vision of The Peace Club. The designers have crafted a kit that is as high-performing on the field as it is visually impressive. Built with both style and substance in mind, it offers comfort, agility, and flair—just what the Karachi Kings need to dominate the tournament. HBL PSL Season 10 kicks off on April 11, 2025. Karachi Kings will play their opening match on April 12 at their home ground, the National Bank Stadium in Karachi, against the Multan Sultans.

Djokovic gets eye infection

MONTE CARLO (AFP): World No.5 Novak Djokovic, a finalist at the recent Miami Masters, said on Sunday that he did not have high expectations for the Monte Carlo Masters as he was suffering from the effects of an eye infection. Djokovic is a two-time winner in Monte Carlo but has not won any title since taking the gold medal at the Paris Olympics last summer. The hard courts of Miami marked a return to form even though the 37-year-old lost the final in straight sets to Czech teenager Jakub Mensik. "I'm glad that I found at least in Miami that joy on the court and, I feel, performance level," said the former world No.1 at a press conference ahead of the tournament.

Liverpool's loss delays title march

LONDON (AFP): Liverpool slumped to just their second Premier League defeat this season as Fulham clinched a shock 3-2 win over the runaway leaders, while Southampton were relegated in record-setting time after a 3-1 loss at Tottenham on Sunday. Arsenal's 1-1 draw at Everton on Saturday left Liverpool needing just 11 points to secure a record-equalling 20th English top-flight title. Arne Slot's men were unbeaten in 26 league games and looked set to take another step towards the title when Alexis Mac Allister's stunning strike opened the scoring. But poor defending allowed Ryan Sessegnon, Alex Iwobi and Rodrigo Muniz to turn the game around for Fulham.

The Reds appear to be running out of steam after challenging in four competitions for most of Slot's largely impressive first season since replacing Jurgen Klopp.

But Liverpool are still almost certain to win their first title since 2020 with only seven games remaining for second-placed Arsenal to catch them.

After a Champions League exit to Paris Saint-Germain and League Cup final defeat to Newcastle, Liverpool edged Everton 1-0 in a feisty Merseyside derby on Wednesday to get back to winning ways.

However, their lethargic effort against Fulham might delay the title party for a little while longer. "In general we are not making many of these errors, let alone three in one game," Slot said.

"People want to make stories which is their job. Many teams find it difficult to play Fulham. The second half performance was outstanding. We had chances but in the end we lacked time." In north London, Brennan Johnson struck twice in the first half and Mateus Fernandes' late reply was too late to stop bottom-of-the-table Southampton crashing back to the Championship.

Beaten for the 25th time in 31 games, Southampton are the first Premier League team to be relegated with seven matches still to play. Ipswich and Derby were relegated with six games left in 1994-95 and 2007-08 respectively. Ivan Juric's side are also still one shy of matching Derby's 2007-08 record low Premier League total points of 11.

Juric, whose team are without a win in their last seven league matches, admitted this week that avoiding the record low points tally is Southampton's only target for the rest of their dismal season. "We have to avoid that record. Do our best. It cannot happen," Juric said. Southampton were pushed to the brink of relegation when fourth-bottom Wolves came from behind to beat Ipswich 2-1 on Saturday, leaving Saints 22 points from safety.

Saints demise Their slide down to the second tier was confirmed 315 days after they clinched promotion by beating Leeds in the Championship play-off final at Wembley. "It's a difficult day, a tough day

but I see the fans, how they love their players and their team. It's something incredible. This experience has to serve to create something stronger than this," Juric said.

Tottenham have been in turmoil themselves for much of the season, with fan protests against chairman Daniel Levy before and during the game underlining the depth of the problems in north London. But under-fire boss Ange Postecoglou, who was jeered by Tottenham fans during Thursday's defeat at Chelsea, earned a little breathing space at Southampton's expense.

Trying to avoid their lowest finish since 1993-94 -- when they came 15th -- Tottenham's first win in five league games lifted them to 13th place. It was a much-needed boost before their Europa League quarter-final first leg against Eintracht Frankfurt on Thursday. Cole Palmer was left on the bench for almost an hour as fourth-placed Chelsea's winless run on the road continued with a 0-0 draw at Brentford. Blues boss Enzo Maresca raised eyebrows by dropping England forward Palmer despite his side's battle to qualify for the Champions League.

Chelsea have a UEFA Conference League quarter-final trip to Legia Warsaw on Thursday, but Maresca's priorities were questioned following the Blues' insipid display. Chelsea will be knocked out of fourth place if fifth-placed Manchester City win at Manchester United in Sunday's late game.

Pogacar wins Van der Poel duel

OUDENAARDE (AFP): Tadej Pogacar won an epic see-saw showdown at the Tour of Flanders on Sunday, soloing home from 15km, with Mads Pedersen edging Mathieu Van der Poel to second at the line a minute later with Wout van Aert fourth.

The duel between the Slovenian and defending champion Van der Poel played out across the 17 hills in bright sunshine before Pogacar broke away.

World champion Pogacar, who won both the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France in 2024, collected his eighth one-day Monument, moving ahead of one-day specialist Van der Poel on seven.

"The goal was to win but at the end it's hard to realise. I cannot be more proud of the team," said a beaming Pogacar, who rides for UAE, at the end of the 270km slog before 750,000 boisterous roadside fans.

The event is not only a key event on the one-day calendar but a shared national experience in Belgium.

"Tadej pulled off a great show for cycling," said UAE manager Mauro Gianetti.

For once, the race embarked under bright blue skies heading into the lush green Flanders fields with windmills and happy weekend crowds gathered round beer tents.

Of the main contenders, Filippo Ganna, second at the Milan-San Remo in March, broke at 100km with fellow Italian Matteo Trentin.

They were caught and overtaken by Pogacar and Van der Poel with 60km to



go and the pair then began an infernal struggle to drop one another.

Van Aert caught the pair and briefly dropped them both. When Pogacar then retaliated, Van der Poel had nothing left in the tank.

Riding on his own into a head wind, Pogacar pulled a minute ahead of his rivals with four top riders unable to reel him in collectively.

"He's in a league of his own," said runner up Pedersen. "Quite frankly, I thought we'd be able to get him back."

The one-day circus now moves on to the Paris-Roubaix mudfest next Sunday where a similar set of contenders will scrap it out on the cobbled mining roads of the border region with Belgium and France.

It will be Pogacar's first appearance in the race.

"Roubaix is a completely different race but I will accept the challenge and try to do my best. Flanders suits me better but with the shape I'm in now I should give it a try," said Pogacar.

For the home fans, Belgian Lotte Kopecky won her third women's Tour of Flanders on Sunday in a sprint ahead of Frenchwoman Pauline Ferrand-Prevot.

The other big favourite, Italian Elisa Longo Borghini, who, like Kopecky, was in contention for a third victory, was forced to abandon after a crash 95 kilometres from the finish.

There are five ultra-long one-day bike races known as the Monuments, and the Tour of Flanders is considered the greatest because of the constant steep, narrow climbs coupled with crowds that even a 100 years ago began to tip over half a million.

The other four Monuments are Milan-San Remo, which calls for patience, the Paris-Roubaix with its perilous rough-hewn cobbles, Liege-Bastogne-Liege through the winding forested lanes of the Ardennes, and the Tour of Lombardy which is a climbers' classic.

Shuttle buses and extra trains were laid on throughout Flanders for what is regarded by many as an unofficial world championship.

On Saturday, two amateur cyclists died from heart failure in unrelated incidents on the "We Ride Flanders" mass ride that precedes the main event along the same roads.



LONDON: Alexis Mac Allister of Liverpool looks dejected after the Premier League match between Fulham FC and Liverpool FC at Craven Cottage.

Free entry for fans during ICC Women's WC qualifiers

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has allowed free entry for cricket fans to watch ICC Women's World Cup 2025 qualifiers at the Gaddafi stadium.

The ICC Women's World Cup 2025 qualifiers will be played between April 9 and April 19. Six teams including Pakistan, Bangladesh, West Indies, Ireland, Scotland and Thailand will vie for two top apots to qualify foe the main event in Spetmeber-October in India.

A total of 8 matches will be played at Gaddafi Stadium during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifying Round. Pakistan will play their first match against Ireland on April 9 at Gaddafi Stadium, with the match starting at 9:30 AM. The second match at Gaddafi Stadium will be between Ireland and the West Indies on April 11, starting at 9:30 AM. The third match will be between Bangladesh and Ireland on April 13, starting at 2:00 PM.

Pakistan will face the West Indies in a day-night match at Gaddafi Stadium on April 14, with the match beginning at 2:00 PM. The fifth match will be between Bangladesh and Scotland on April 15, starting at 2:00 PM. Pakistan will play Thailand at Gaddafi Stadium on April 17, with the match starting at 2:00 PM. The seventh match will be between Ireland and Scotland on April 18, starting at 2:00 PM. The final match of the qualifying round, between Thailand and the West Indies, will be held at Gaddafi Stadium on April 19, starting at 2:00 PM. Entry to all these matches will be free for cricket fans.

PCB announces illustrious commentary panel for PSL X



LAHORE (APP): Former England Test captain Sir Alastair Cook is all set to make his HBL PSL debut behind the mic as Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced a star-studded commentary panel for HBL PSL X here on Sunday.

The six-team tournament is scheduled to commence from 11 April at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium and will conclude on 18 May, with the final taking place at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

The 34 matches will be played in Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi. Cook will be joined by former MCC President Mark Nicholas – a renowned voice in cricket commentary since retiring from competitive cricket in 1995. Nicholas also remained associated with SKY Sports in England and Channel 9 in Australia. Joining Cook and Nicholas are fellow countrymen Dominic Cork and Mark Butcher, while South Africa's Jean-Paul Duminy and Mike

Haysman will also be part of the panel.

From Bangladesh, it will be Athar Ali Khan, and he will be joined by New Zealand's former Test cricketer Martin Gupta. Australia's two-time ICC Women's World Cup winner Lisa Sthalekar will also lend her voice to the tournament. Commentators from Pakistan: Four former Test captains – Aamir Sohail, Ramiz Raja, Waqar Younis and Wasim Akram will lead the commentary team from Pakistan. Waqar and Wasim are both ICC and PCB Hall of Famers as well. They will be joined by former Test cricketer Bazid Khan, former Pakistan women's team captain Urooj Mumtaz and cricket analyst Sikander Bakht.

In a historic move, this edition of the HBL PSL will also feature a full match broadcast in Urdu commentary for the first time. The Urdu commentary panel includes Ali Younis, Aqeel Samar*, Marina Iqbal*, Salman

Butt and Tariq Saeed, who will be joined by the above Pakistan's commentators for selected segments.

Erin Holland and Zainab Abbas will be the presenters during the league matches.

HBL PSL Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer: "We are excited to welcome a star-studded commentary team, featuring some of the most iconic names in the cricketing world — including legendary former Test captains and top-tier broadcasters. Their involvement not only enhances the quality of our coverage but also highlights the global stature of the HBL PSL."

"This year, for the first time in HBL PSL history, we will be broadcasting a full match entirely in Urdu commentary – a move that brings us even closer to our passionate fanbase across Pakistan. We are confident that the combination of iconic voices and fresh innovations will enhance the viewing experience for fans at home and around the world."

Gillespie says Pakistan experience soured his love for coaching

SYDNEY (Monitoring Desk): Former Australian fast bowler Jason Gillespie has ruled out taking up any full-time coaching roles in the near future, citing a frustrating and disheartening experience during his brief tenure with the Pakistan Test team.

Gillespie, who took charge as head coach in April 2024, stepped down just eight months later in December after his responsibilities were significantly curtailed. Speaking candidly on Wisden's Patreon podcast, Gillespie admitted that the Pakistan assignment has left a lasting impact on his love for coaching. "Right now, I'm



not sure I'm interested in coaching full time.

[Even if Australia come calling] No, I'm not interested," he stated emphatically. Gillespie revealed that the way his tenure ended had a deep emotional effect on him. "The Pakistan experience has soured my love for coaching, I'll be honest. I'll get it

back, I'm sure I will, but that was really a blow. It really disappointed me how that all ended," he said.

The former pacer's departure from the Pakistan Test setup came amid reports of internal restructuring and shifting priorities within the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), which allegedly led to a

diminished role for Gillespie within the team's strategic framework.

Once considered a rising figure in international coaching circles due to successful stints with domestic teams and a clear cricketing vision, Gillespie's disillusionment comes as a setback not only for his career but also for teams that may have sought his leadership in the future. While Gillespie hasn't ruled out a return to coaching entirely, his recent remarks make it clear that any comeback would require time and reflection. For now, the former Australian star appears set to step away from the professional coaching spotlight.

Final two places up for grabs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 is a few short months away and by April 19, all eight teams will have confirmed their places at the tournament.

Hosts, India are ready to welcome the best and the brightest of women's One Day International cricket as one of the six teams to have already qualified, said a press release.

Defending champions Australia, secured their ticket to the 13th edition of the World Cup by finishing top of the ICC Women's Championship (IWC) 2022-25. The IWC 2022-25 saw ten nations compete with

their ODI results across a three-year period totted up providing context to all ODI cricket played between these teams during that period. With 18 wins and just three losses, Australia finished two points above India, with England rounding out the top three.

While Australia and England contended a record-breaking final in Christchurch in 2022, India did not make it out of the group stages and continued their search for their first ICC Women's Cricket World Cup trophy. The only other team to have won the Women's Cricket World Cup besides multiple-

time winners Australia and England are New Zealand, the hosts in 2022, having triumphed on home soil in 2000.

The White Ferns, who are the holders of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2024, earned a place at the 2025 edition by virtue of finishing as one of the top five teams, excluding hosts India, in the Women's Championship table. Finishing above them were three-time, semi-finalists South Africa, who are also still searching for a maiden ICC World Cup trophy after two near-misses at the Women's T20 World Cups of 2023 and 2024.

The other team to have

already booked their spot is Sri Lanka, who failed to qualify for the previous edition of the tournament, with the final qualifying spots for the 2022 tournament done on ranking due to the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting the cricketing schedule.

Bangladesh missed out on a spot in the Women's Championship top six, and have joined the three other teams that competed in the Women's Championship in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 Qualifier in Pakistan set to begin next week. Captain Nigar Sultana will be hoping for an immediate return to the

Women's Cricket World Cup after Bangladesh made their debut at the 2022 edition. At least one team from the previous tournament will not make it to India, with the West Indies and Pakistan also taking part in the Qualifier. Ireland finished bottom of the ICC Women's Championship and are searching for a return to the World Cup for the first time in 20 years.

The two other teams vying to qualify have never played in an ODI World Cup before, with Scotland and Thailand reaching the qualifiers based on their ICC Women's ODI Rankings. The former have very recent experi-

ence on a World Cup stage, however, playing in the last year's Women's T20 World Cup, but are still searching for a win.

Thailand had a memorable debut at the 2020 edition of the Women's T20 World Cup, having come through the Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier of 2019, but like Scotland, went without a victory. Only the top two teams at the end of the round-robin format tournament will make it to India. Two venues in Lahore will host all of the matches, which begin on April 9 and sees hosts Pakistan take on Ireland, while Scotland face off against the West Indies.



In brief

63,300 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 63,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 63,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1410.27 feet which was 8.27 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17,000 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1089.50 feet, which was 39.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 18,600 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 37,900, 31,600, 16,600 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 5,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Proclaimed offender held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Sadiqabad Police on Sunday managed to nab a proclaimed offenders wanted in a murder and attempted murder case. The accused Aamir Sohail had stabbed Hamza to death and injured three other persons over exchange of hot words on a minor issue in December 2022 in the jurisdiction of the Sadiqabad Police Station and had been absconding since then. The police registered a case of the incident and used all means including the human intelligence to trace and arrest the accused, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. He said that efforts were underway to nab his accomplices.

Police arrest two gangsters

RAWALPINDI (APP): The R A Bazaar Police on Sunday arrested a two-member gang of criminals involved in snatching motorcycles from bike riding service providers. The police also recovered two motorcycles which they had snatched from the Bykea riders at gun point, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said. The arrested suspects were identified as Adeel and Azhar. They used to book bikes without using the app and snatch motorcycles at gunpoint.

PFA discards 200 litre adulterated food

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a continued effort to safeguard public health, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) conducted extensive inspections across Multan, targeting juice plants, milk shops, bakeries, and sweet shops. The operation led to the disposal of 200 liters of adulterated food products and fines amounting to Rs190,000 imposed on six food business operators for violating food safety regulations. According to the PFA spokesperson, the inspection drive covered areas including Pul Muzaffarabad, Bahawalpur Road, Chungi No. 5, Tatyapur, and Makhdoom Rasheed. A juice production unit was fined Rs50,000 for manufacturing substandard mango-flavored drinks in Bahawalpur road. A milk shop was penalized Rs15,000 for selling milk adulterated with water in Chungi No 5. Two bakeries were fined Rs80,000 collectively for using loose and prohibited ingredients in bakery items in Makhdoom Rasheed.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people viewing dinosaur replica while visiting Multi Garden Zoo. —APP Photo

Govt vows economic stability amid challenges: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, on Sunday, said the reduction in electricity prices reflects the government's commitment to provide relief to the public and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, with the support of PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, had kept the promise made to the people.

Addressing a public gathering in Dina, Kayani said the decrease in electricity rates will benefit all segments, including households, farmers and industries. He also said further cuts are expected in the coming months, especially when compared to June 2024. These reductions, according to him, are part of long-term planning.

He pointed out that despite economic challenges, the government had not only reduced electricity costs but also brought down petrol prices and controlled inflation. "The economic journey is on track. We are moving toward stability while making sure the public sees the results in their daily lives," he said.

Kayani said that power plants that were not generating electricity had been shut down to save public funds. He claimed that these savings have now been passed on to consumers in the form of reduced prices. "We did not just make promises. We took practical steps," he added.

Talking about past mismanagement, he said the previous government had pushed the economy toward default. In contrast, he said, the current leadership had not only avoided default but also stabilized the economy. "We believe in responsible economic management and will

continue to work for long-term improvements," he said.

The Minister also mentioned that a task force formed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had played a key role in achieving the electricity price cuts. Negotiations with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and other stakeholders were also part of this effort.

He said the government is planning more reforms, including the establishment of an open electricity market and a crackdown on power theft. These steps, he said, will bring further relief to the public and support the business sector.

Kayani said the PML-N government remains focused on job creation and public welfare. "Development in all sectors is the party's top priority. This has been our agenda and we have delivered on it before," he said.

He praised both Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif for their consistent efforts in providing relief to citizens, adding that the same commitment is now visible in Punjab under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. "You can see the results on the ground," he said.

He spoke about the "Clean Punjab" initiative and said it had improved cleanliness in both cities and rural areas. He also mentioned ongoing development work in sectors like water supply, healthcare and education. Major infrastructure projects like the Lahore-Sialkot-Rawalpindi Motorway are progressing, he added.

Kayani said the government is also focusing on ending misuse of public money and is working to modernize Pakistan through digital tools.

These goals, he said, are part of the Prime Minister's broader vision.

He claimed that international institutions, including the IMF and World Bank, have acknowledged Pakistan's recent economic performance. He said inflation is now under control and the policy rate has been reduced from 22 percent to 12 percent, making it easier for people to access credit and support businesses. "The economy is improving. We are working on structural reforms, boosting industry and supporting farmers. Every Pakistani will benefit from this progress," he said.

Kayani also touched on national security. He said the country is not only managing economic challenges but also fighting terrorism. He praised the sacrifices made by the people of Jhelum district in this regard.

He referred to a recent meeting with the father of Captain Hasnain Akhtar, who was martyred in an anti-terror operation in D.I. Khan. Kayani said he was deeply moved by the strength and patience shown by the martyr's family. "Jhelum has always stood at the front line for Pakistan. Every graveyard here holds the story of a sacrifice," he said.

He called on citizens to support the armed forces and law enforcement agencies and stand united in the fight against terrorism. "It is our duty to show them we are with them. We will win this war together," he said. Kayani ended his speech by thanking the local PML-N leadership for organizing the event.

He promised that demands raised by the people of the area would be addressed and better public facilities would be ensured.

Pakistan, Russia share common goals for peace: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has said that Pakistan and Russia share common goals for global peace, security and multipolarity in global affairs.

He made these remarks during a meeting with Valentina Matviyenko, Chairwoman of the Federation Council of Russia, held on the sidelines of the 150th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Tashkent.

He said that Pakistan's and Russia's evolving relationship is rooted in mutual respect and increasingly broad-based cooperation across defense, trade, energy, and multilateral platforms such as the SCO.

The two sides agreed to enhance institutional linkages between their respec-

tive parliaments, including exchange visits, the revival of Parliamentary Friendship Groups, and consistent dialogue to address shared challenges.

Gilani acknowledged the significance of ongoing defense collaboration and suggested greater focus on security dialogue, military training exchanges, and counter-terrorism coordination.

With bilateral trade showing positive momentum, both sides discussed diversifying economic ties in areas such as energy, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and IT. The Chairman advocated for establishing banking channels and improved connectivity under regional frameworks.

Pakistan expressed strong support for Russia's role in promoting

regional stability and multipolar global governance. Both sides emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts in forums like the SCO and UN, particularly regarding climate action, food security, and counter-narcotics.

The Chairman reiterated Pakistan's commitment to regional peace, highlighting the need for inclusive political solutions and humanitarian support in Afghanistan. He acknowledged Russia's role in promoting dialogue and stability in the region.

Gilani concluded by reaffirming Pakistan's readiness to work with Russia toward a comprehensive, forward-looking partnership and extended an invitation for future parliamentary exchanges in Islamabad.

Crackdown at Daman-e-Koh Vehicles fined, food outlets inspected

ISLAMABAD (APP): A coordinated operation was carried out at Daman-e-Koh, Islamabad, following the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon.

Teams from the Excise Department, Islamabad Transport Authority (ITA), and Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) participated in the joint crackdown to inspect vehicles, monitor food safety, and improve cleanliness in the popular tourist area, said the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration here.

The Excise Department examined several vehicles during the drive. Officials imposed fines amounting to Rs 200,000 on 20 vehicles for various violations. Two vehicles using unauthorized number plates were taken into custody and shifted to the police station.

The Islamabad Transport

Authority also took action during the inspection. A total of 16 vehicles were fined for failing to meet transport standards, while four were taken off the road for not complying with basic requirements.

In addition to transport inspections, the Islamabad Food Authority conducted food safety checks at eateries in the area. Items found to be expired or stored improperly led to heavy fines being imposed on the responsible outlets. Officials stated that these measures are part of ongoing efforts to ensure public health and food quality at busy locations.

Meanwhile, sanitation teams carried out a cleanliness campaign across Daman-e-Koh. Litter was removed from walkways, public areas were cleaned, and waste disposal was ensured. This was done to maintain hygiene standards for the increasing number of visitors during the

tourist season.

Speaking on the operation, officials said that such combined efforts aim to uphold law and order, ensure road and food safety, and keep public spaces clean. They added that similar actions would be conducted in other parts of the city in the coming weeks.

The presence of law enforcement and civic teams was noted by visitors, many of whom expressed support for the crackdown. Authorities have urged citizens to follow rules regarding vehicle registration, transport permits, and food safety. They emphasized that these rules are in place to protect both residents and tourists.

The operation ended with teams compiling reports and issuing warnings to those found in minor violation. Officials confirmed that follow-up visits will be conducted to check compliance.

OPF MD plans 3-day convention

ISLAMABAD (APP): Managing Director of Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) Mohammed Afzaal Bhatti Sunday informed about the hosting of a three-day Overseas Pakistanis Convention to be held in Islamabad from April 13-15, 2025, to bolster homeland ties. In an exclusive conversation with PTV news, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was all set to unveil initiatives addressing overseas Pakistanis' concerns.

Mohammed Afzaal Bhatti praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's concern for overseas Pakistanis, acknowledging their significant contributions to the country and described the upcoming three-day Overseas

Pakistanis Convention as a landmark initiative.

He said that this convention will provide a platform for overseas Pakistanis to share their experiences, ideas, and concerns and will help bridge the gap between the diaspora and the government, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening Pakistan's global connections.

He said this convention will showcase the government's commitment to strengthening ties with the overseas Pakistani community. OPF MD also highlighted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's past efforts as Chief Minister to engage with overseas Pakistanis.

He noted that Sharif is now spearheading the Overseas Pakistanis Convention 2025, a three-

day event in Islamabad

aimed at strengthening ties with the diaspora community. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will engage with overseas Pakistanis to understand and address their concerns, strengthening ties between them and their homeland, MD added.

This connection aims to resolve issues faced by overseas Pakistanis and explore opportunities for collaboration and investment, he mentioned. Mohammed Afzaal Bhatti further stated that OPF is playing a vital role in promoting Pakistan's prosperity. He emphasized the organization's efforts in promoting national development and leveraging the expertise and resources of the diaspora community to drive economic growth and innovation in Pakistan.

Robust security measures to be ensured during PSL, says IG

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

A police spokesperson told APP that the meeting was attended by SSP CTD Hamza Humayun, CTO Islamabad Captain (retd) Syed Zeeshan Haider, the Director of Safe City, and other senior officers.

He said the meeting discussed in detail a fool-proof security plan for the PSL matches. IGP Rizvi directed all officers to ensure strict security arrangements at sports venues, players' residences, and along their transportation routes.

He said all buildings and routes should be continuously monitored

through Safe City cameras and that the Counter Terrorism Force should remain on alert to respond to any untoward situation immediately.

IG Rizvi also instructed the CTO Islamabad to ensure effective traffic management, including the creation of alternative routes and parking arrangements, so that citizens do not face difficulties during the movement of players and matches. IG Rizvi reiterated that Islamabad Police would utilize all available resources to ensure the security of both foreign and domestic players and maintain law and order across the city. He added that protecting the lives and property of citizens remains among the top priorities of Islamabad Police.

Islamabad Police arrest 15 criminals, eight

involved in heinous crimes: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Sunday arrested 15 criminals, including eight suspects allegedly involved in heinous crimes, during separate operations across the federal capital.

An official told APP that the crackdown was carried out under the special direction of Inspector General of Police Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi to ensure the safety of life and property of the citizens and maintain peace in the city.

He said police teams from Koral, Aabpara, Sangjani, and Bhara Kahu police stations arrested eight suspects and recovered 1,250 grams of hashish, 290 grams of ice (methamphetamine), five liters of liquor, three pistols of different bores, and

a rifle along with ammunition from their possession.

He said cases have been registered against the accused and further investigations are underway. He said during a special campaign to apprehend proclaimed offenders and court absconders, eight wanted criminals were also arrested.

SSP Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan stated that the Islamabad Police is fully committed to protecting the lives and property of the public and no one would be allowed to disrupt peace in the city. He said ensuring the safety of citizens remains the top priority of the Islamabad Police.

Ramadan food packages worth Rs5m distributed

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a remarkable display of compassion and community service, the Tabeer Foundation, in collaboration with Kind Hearts Foundation USA, has successfully distributed Ramadan food packages to over 500 deserving families across Pakistan.

The relief effort, valued at over Rs 5 million, reached vulnerable communities in Swat, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Islamabad, Lahore, and Sheikhpura.

Tabeer Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to sustainable development and humanitarian assistance, operates with a mission to uplift

underprivileged communities through education, health, and emergency support initiatives. Known for its grassroots-level outreach, the foundation relies on dedicated volunteers and transparent processes to ensure aid reaches those who need it most—without compromising their dignity and self-respect.

The Ramadan food drive is part of the foundation's annual outreach program aimed at addressing food insecurity during the holy month. This year's collaboration with Kind Hearts Foundation USA enabled an even broader impact, delivering essential items such as flour, rice, sugar, lentils, and cooking oil to

families struggling to make ends meet.

"We are immensely proud of our volunteers across Pakistan whose tireless efforts made this mission possible," said a Khuram Shahzad spokesperson for Tabeer Foundation. "Their commitment to serving humanity continues to bring hope and comfort to hundreds of families during this blessed month."

The Ramadan package initiative not only reflects the values of empathy and solidarity but also highlights the powerful role of community-driven support systems in responding to local needs with respect and compassion.



ISLAMABAD: People busy in purchasing stationary items for their children at G-6 sunday bazar. —APP Photo

State land reclaimed

HELMAND (BNA): Authorities in Helmand reclaimed over 2,280 acres of state-owned land that had been illegally seized by private individuals, according to provincial Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock. A senior official from the directorate said that a government delegation, supported by security forces, conducted the operation across several districts, including Nawzad, Washir, Sangin, Khanashin, Nahr-e-Saraj, Babaji, Marjah, and others.

Private vehicles baned as taxis

KABUL (Pajhwok): The General Directorate of Traffic (GDT) has warned from now on, no one would be allowed to use private vehicles as taxis. Drivers, who are interested in using their personal vehicles for transporting passengers, must convert them into taxis, GDT said in a statement. The directorate informed all owners and drivers of private vehicles that after the release of this notification, they would not be allowed to pick up passengers on roads.

Breshna unveils new 503MW energy plan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Breshna Company has announced that it has initiated plans with a total capacity of 503 megawatts to boost domestic electricity production. Hekmatullah Maiwand, the company's spokesperson, emphasized that technical discussions with both domestic and foreign investors are currently underway for the implementation of these projects. "We have planned to generate 503 megawatts of electricity from domestic sources, and these projects are progressing under a defined frame-

work. Fortunately, part of these projects has already been contracted," he added. Although electricity is a fundamental need for sectors such as industry, trade, and agriculture, Afghanistan has so far paid limited attention to domestic energy production. Some economic experts stress that producing electricity from internal sources would be a significant step toward the country's self-sufficiency. "Unfortunately, Afghanistan still relies on imports for energy supply. If we can generate electricity from

domestic sources, it will create employment and prevent capital outflow," said Abdul Nasir Reshtia, an economic analyst. "Currently, Afghanistan imports its energy needs from neighboring countries. Therefore, investing in domestic electricity production can reduce this dependency," stated another economic expert, Qutbuddin Yaqubi. Earlier, Breshna had also announced that more than four billion Afghanis from the national budget have been spent on power distribution projects across the country.

120 killed in Badakhshan accidents last year

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): At least 114 traffic accidents occurred in northeastern Badakhshan during the past solar year, resulting in 120 deaths and 167 injuries. Police spokesman Ehsanullah Kamgar told Pajhwok Afghan News that traffic police installed 200 traffic signs last year to help reduce accidents on the roads. He added that the traffic police also issued 3,339 driving licenses to applicants and graduated 2,160 individuals from driving courses. Kamgar said that these measures by the traffic police contributed to a reduction in traffic incidents during the solar year 1403 (2024).

According to him, 114 traffic accidents took place in the center and districts of Badakhshan in 1403. He noted that in these incidents, 120 people, including women, children, and men, lost their lives, and 167 others were injured. In comparison, according to police reports, 163 incidents occurred in the province in 1402 (2023), resulting in 106 deaths and 297 injuries, including women, children, and men. Provincial police attribute the traffic accidents to poor road conditions, technical defects in vehicles, and driver negligence.

Officials assesses TAPI project progress

HERAT (BNA): A delegation led by Mullah Hedayatullah Badri, the Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, recently visited the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) project development in Herat province. The delegation included Sheikh Mawlana Islamjari, the Governor of Herat, Alhaj Mohajer Farahi, Deputy Minister of Publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture, and representatives from Turkmenistan. During the visit, the officials discussed the importance of expediting the work process to ensure the timely completion of this significant project. They highlighted the strategic role of the TAPI pipeline in enhancing regional energy security and fostering economic cooperation. As of now, approximately eleven kilometers of the gas pipeline have been completed within Afghanistan. The officials reiterated their commitment to advancing the project and addressing any challenges that may arise.

Over 1m Afghan refugees deported

KABUL (Khaama Press): Over one million Afghan refugees were deported by Iranian authorities in one year, highlighting escalating enforcement of strict immigration policies. Iranian media, citing government officials, reported that over 1.12 million Afghan migrants were deported from Iran during the solar year March 2024-March 2025, as part of Tehran's intensified policy to curb illegal immigration. Saeed Montazerolmehdi, spokesperson for Iran's law enforcement command, announced on Saturday that the expulsions were carried out under a nationwide crackdown targeting undocumented foreign nationals. Saeed Montazerolmehdi said the operations became more intensive throughout the year. According to Saeed Montazerolmehdi, spokesperson for Iran's law enforcement command, a total of 1,190 separate deportation rounds were conducted under the "Deportation Plan," contributing to what he claimed was a 7% reduction in kidnapping incidents nationwide.

162m afs terminal being constructed in Kabul



KABUL (Pajhwok): Construction work has commenced on a new terminal for passenger vehicles travelling to the eastern part of Kabul, with an investment of 162 million Afghanis, which began on Sunday. The terminal is being built on 7.3 jiribs (approximately 1.46 hectares) of land and is expected to take 18 months to complete. Sheikh Noor-ul-Haq Anwar, Chief of the Administrative Affairs Office, described the launch of the project as a hopeful and positive step for citizens. He reaffirmed the caretaker government's commitment to addressing the needs of the people. At the inauguration ceremony, Hafiz Sediqullah Abid, Deputy Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, explained that the terminal is being constructed by the private firm Elyas Wais, on land provided by the ministry. He said the terminal would include administrative buildings, separate mosques for men and women, vehicle parking areas, a restaurant, and other essential facilities. The MoTC had initiated the construction of several terminals in various provinces with 3.8 billion Afghanis from the government budget and 3.5 billion Afghanis from the private investment sector during the last solar year, he recalled.

Funded by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), 337 development schemes were launched across the country last fiscal year, according to Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, the acting Minister of Economy. He praised the private sector for its contributions to infrastructure projects and encouraged national investors to take an active role in the country's reconstruction. Kabul Governor Mullah Aminullah Obaid hailed the terminal's construction as a major achievement. Aminullah emphasised that the project would help protect passengers from issues such as theft and harassment.

He also highlighted that once completed, the terminal would contribute to reducing corruption and ensuring the transparent collection of revenues. Eng. Shahidullah Hand, a representative of Elyas Wais Company, expressed the company's commitment to completing the project to a high standard and within the agreed timeframe. He assured that their firm, with 21 years of experience in construction and road development, would deliver the project successfully. Previously, construction work had been initiated on a terminal in the Paghman district of Kabul at a cost of one billion Afghanis.

Afghanistan business sector eager to attend Kazan Halal Expo, Forum

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has confirmed that Afghanistan will participate in the XVI (16th) International Economic Forum 'Russia — Islamic World: Kazan' and the Kazan Halal Expo in Russia this year. The forum will run from May 13 to 18 and will bring together experts from Russian regions; the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states; and other countries to discuss various topics during the 120 sessions planned. The expo meanwhile will showcase thousands of goods from around the world that meet Halal standards. Abdul Salam Javad Akhundzada, the ministry's spokesman, said Sunday that Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi has stated that Afghanistan is ready to participate in the event and showcase Afghan products. According to Akhundzada, Azizi has discussed the event with members of the private sector who are eager to participate. The expo, which is held

annually alongside the forum, is Russia's largest trading platform for Muslims. Russia's President Vladimir Putin said in a statement on the forum and expo recently that "Russia values its traditionally friendly ties with Muslim countries. We highly appreciate their desire to pursue an independent foreign policy and increase their role in international affairs. "Together, we stand for the formation of a democratic multipolar world order, based on the rule of law and principles of justice, free from any form of dictatorship and discrimination. "Of course, we are also committed to expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in all areas, from trade and investment to sports and tourism," he said. Putin went on to say "I believe that the work of the forum will be meaningful and constructive as always and will be held in a spirit of openness and trust. It will serve to further promote the friendship and creative partnership between our countries and peoples."

down from 4,650afis to 4,600afis. Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said the local currency strengthened during the week as one US dollar was traded at 71.50afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 250afis. During the previous week, one US dollar accounted consumed 71afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees 250afis. The spike in the afghani value is essentially linked to periodic dollar auctions by the central bank.

Sugar and liquefied gas prices go up in Kabul markets

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of sugar and liquefied gas increased, but that of Russian gold declined during the outgoing week in Kabul, market sources said. Food items Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar went up from 2,500afis to 2,550afis. The price of a 49-kilogram sack of Kazakh flour cost 1,350afis, a 24-kilogram bag of Pakistani rice stayed stable at 2,600afis, a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking oil remained unchanged at 1,700afis, a kilogram of African black tea at 400afis and the same amount of Indonesian green tea at 350afis. Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kilogram bag of Kazakh flour at 1,400afis, a 24-kilogram bag of Pakistani rice at 2,650afis and a 49-kilogram sack of Indian sugar at 2,600afis. A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil accounted for 1,750afis, one kilogram of black tea for 400afis and the same quantity of green tea for 450afis, he added.

Fuel prices A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok the price of one litre of petrol stayed unchanged at 62afis and diesel at 57afis. He also said the rate of one kilogram of liquefied gas surged from 50afis to 52afis. Gold prices Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold stayed stable at 5,650afis and the same amount of the Russian variety edged

down from 4,650afis to 4,600afis. Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said the local currency strengthened during the week as one US dollar was traded at 71.50afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 250afis. During the previous week, one US dollar accounted consumed 71afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees 250afis. The spike in the afghani value is essentially linked to periodic dollar auctions by the central bank.

Afghan retirees gather to demand pension payments



KABUL (TOLONews): A number of retirees in Kabul have once again protested the non-payment of their pensions, continuing their series of protest gatherings. The retirees say they are facing severe economic hardship and are calling on the Islamic Emirate to pay their overdue pensions without further delay. Despite dozens of retirees gathering daily in front of the pension treasury in hopes of receiving their payments, the Islamic Emirate has not yet announced a specific date for when these payments will be made. Humaira, one of the retirees, said: "We ask the Islamic Emirate to give us

our rightful money. We've been living in poverty for four years. This money is from our salaries and it is our right." Gholam Eshan, another retiree said: "We call on the Islamic Emirate government to pay our pensions immediately. From the beginning of the year, they promised that payments would start on the second of Hamal (March 21), but now it's the 16th of Hamal (April 4) and nothing has been done. This is a recognized international principle, which is why retirees must be paid their pensions." Mohammad Arif, another protesting retiree said: "I'm over 70 years old. A native of Kabul. I live in a

rented house. My home collapsed 45 days ago, and my wife has cancer. There's no help, no job, no money." Rostam, another pensioner, said: "It is our right to receive this money, at the very least so we can afford some dry bread for our children." Despite earlier promises, no specific timeline has yet been announced by the Islamic Emirate regarding the start of pension payments. It is worth noting that on Jaddi 1st, 1403, the leader of the Islamic Emirate issued a decree instructing the Supreme Court to find a solution to this issue and to hold a special court session to address the pension problem.

Taliban orders increase in public punishments

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Taliban's reclusive leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, has ordered an intensification of public punishments as part of efforts to more strictly enforce the Taliban's morality law, sources familiar with the matter told Amu TV. The directive was reportedly conveyed to Taliban cabinet members during the Eid al-Fitr holiday and aligns with the objectives of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. According to the sources,

the move is also intended as a show of defiance against growing international pressure to uphold human rights in Afghanistan. While no public punishment has been officially reported since the Eid holiday, sources said that Taliban morality police recently raided a residence in the Ayno Mina area of Kandahar's Kabudari district, detaining three men and one woman. Although charges have not been formally disclosed, a source within the Taliban's Kandahar office

for Vice and Virtue said the individuals were arrested on suspicion of engaging in "relations outside of marriage." The sources added that some punishments are now being carried out secretly inside Taliban-run detention centers in Kandahar. International human rights organizations have repeatedly condemned the Taliban's use of corporal punishment and its broader record of human rights violations since returning to power in 2021.

Cycling competitions celebrate Orange Flowers in Nangarhar

NANGARHAR (BNA): Cycling competitions were launched among athletes from seven provinces as part of the Orange Flowers celebrations. This inaugural event featured 32 competitors from Kabul, Laghman, Panjshir, Paktia, Wardak, Parwan, and the host province, Nangarhar. Abdulsalam Wazirwal, the Director of Physical Education and Sports of Nangarhar Province, announced the commencement of these competitions, highlighting their significance in promoting sports and camaraderie among the provinces. The cycling races concluded with impressive performances from the Kabul cycling team, which secured the top three positions. Syedullah Sadat clinched first place, followed by Nagibullah in second, and Sharifullah in third. All winners were awarded prizes and gifts in recognition of their achievements.





ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's second consignment handed over to Myanmar authorities at Yangon International Airport on Sunday.

Iran rejects Trump call for direct nuclear talks

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran's top diplomat has dismissed direct negotiations with the United States as pointless, his office said Sunday, after US President Donald Trump said he preferred face-to-face talks over its nuclear programme.

Trump sent a letter to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last month calling for negotiations but warning of military action if diplomacy failed.

On Thursday, the US president said he favoured "direct talks", arguing they were "faster" and offered a better understanding than going through intermediaries.

But Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said direct talks made no sense with a country "that constantly threatens to resort to force in violation of the UN Charter and that expresses contradictory positions from its various officials".

"We remain committed

to diplomacy and are ready to try the path of indirect negotiations," he was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his ministry.

"Iran keeps itself prepared for all possible or probable events, and just as it is serious in diplomacy and negotiations, it will also be decisive and serious in defending its national interests and sovereignty."

On Saturday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said his country was willing to engage in dialogue with the United States on an "equal footing".

He also questioned Washington's sincerity in calling for negotiations, saying "if you want negotiations, then what is the point of threatening?"

Iran and the United States have had no diplomatic relations since shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution with some regional countries like Oman playing a mediating

role between the two sides.

Letter diplomacy

Trump's letter was delivered to Iran via the United Arab Emirates, and Tehran responded at the end of March via the Sultanate of Oman.

On Sunday, the chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, General Mohammad Bagheri, said Iran's response stressed that "we seek peace in the region".

"We are not the ones who start wars, but we will respond to any threat with all our might," he said of the content of Iran's response.

Western countries, led by the United States, have for decades accused Tehran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iran rejects the allegation and maintains that its nuclear activities exist solely for civilian purposes.

In 2015, Iran reached a landmark deal with the permanent members of the UN

Security Council, namely the United States, France, China, Russia, and the United Kingdom, as well as Germany, to limit its nuclear activities.

The 2015 agreement — known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme to guarantee that Tehran could not develop a nuclear weapon.

In 2018, during Trump's first term in office, the United States withdrew from the agreement and reinstated biting sanctions on Iran.

A year later, Iran began rolling back on its commitments under the agreement and accelerated its nuclear programme.

On Monday, Ali Larijani, a close adviser to Khamenei, warned that while Iran was not seeking nuclear weapons, it would "have no choice but to do so" in the event of an attack against it.

Sherani tribe to fully support Army for strengthening regional stability

DI KHAN (INP): In Darazanda, Dera Ismail Khan, a large Grand Peace Jirga was organized with the cooperation of the Pakistan Army, attended by a significant number of tribal elders, local notables, religious scholars, teachers, and people from various walks of life.

The participants unani-

mously pledged their full support to the Pakistan Army in maintaining regional peace and combating the forces of Khawarij.

The tribal elders and leaders paid tribute to the unparalleled sacrifices made by the Pakistan Army, security forces, and their martyrs in ensuring peace and security in the

region.

The gathering also expressed their commitment to collaborate with authorities to curb the activities of miscreants and extremist elements, ensuring their active cooperation in the ongoing efforts.

The local Brigade Commander specially attended the jirga, under-

scoring the importance of continued efforts for peace and development in the area.

Additionally, the elders, religious scholars, and community leaders extended their gratitude to the Pakistan Army for their efforts in promoting education, healthcare, especially the education of girls, in the region.

KP govt releases 80pc uplift funds by March: Muzamil Aslam

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to the KP Finance Minister, Muzamil Aslam said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had disbursed 80 percent of its development funds by the end of March, setting a record compared to other provinces.

In a statement, he said that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has approved an additional 27 percent increase in the

development budget, with Rs. 27 billion expected to be released soon for ongoing and new projects.

"In my two-decade-long career, I have never witnessed development funds surpassing initial estimates like this," he said.

He highlighted the provincial government's commitment to accelerated progress.

The swift fund release

aims to boost infrastructure, health, and education projects across the province, ensuring timely completion ahead of the fiscal year's end.

less pursuit of excellence and their unity under pressure. Alhamdulillah for this remarkable success.

Individual Matches - Medals of Honour

The individual events further underscored Pakistan's growing dominance in international



South African F-Class National Long Range Championship 2025 Pakistan Long Range Rifle team shines

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: With the gracious approval of the Patron-in-Chief, seven members of the Pakistan Long Range Rifle Team attended a four-day wind training camp in South Africa from 27th to 30th March 2025. This camp was conducted under the guidance of two newly appointed South African wind coaches, allowing the team to adapt and prepare for the formidable upcoming European F Class teams championship to be held in September in Bisley, UK and the F Class World Teams Championships in 2026.

Following the camp, the team participated in the prestigious South African F-Class National Long Range Championship - an event of high international standing; given South Africa's status as the reigning F-Class World Champions in both, individual and team categories.

Team Events - A Historic Double Gold Victory

In an extraordinary display of skill, precision, and teamwork, the Pakistan Team won both team matches, decisively outperforming all competitors - including the current world champion South African team on their home turf.

Team Members: Lt Gen Ahsan, Asad Wahid, Obaid Ibrahim, Huzaifa Gill, Junaid Waqas, Lt Col Junaid Ali, Sep Waleed; SA Wind Coaches, Hennie Gerber & Julius Hartman.

Vice President Team Match (800m + 900m): Score: 1168 / 1200 (97.3%) - Gold

Chairman's Team Cup (prestigious event): Score: 1174 / 1200 (98%) - Gold

These results are historic and deeply significant - defeating the reigning world champions in their own backyard not once, but twice, is a feat that reflects the team's relent-



less pursuit of excellence and their unity under pressure. Alhamdulillah for this remarkable success.

Individual Matches - Medals of Honour

The individual events further underscored Pakistan's growing dominance in international

long-range shooting. Four Pakistani marksmen delivered outstanding performances, collectively earning 11 medals including 5 Gold, 3 Silver and 3 Bronze.

Special recognition must be given to Lt Col Junaid Ali, whose excep-

Championship, accompanied by six individual medals including two European records.

This momentum continued in 2024 with another podium finish - Bronze at the European FTR Teams Championship, along with an impressive haul of 14 individual medals; again with two European records.

Now in 2025, the team has achieved a new milestone by claiming double gold in team matches and 11 individual medals at the South African Nationals - defeating none other than the reigning world champions in both categories.

This remarkable sequence of achievements stand as a profound testament to merit based team selection; that fosters a culture of discipline, resilience, and continuous excellence. It also reflects unwavering dedication to advancing Pakistan's stature on the international stage with selfless resolve

and National pride.

Individual Medal Summary:

Scottish Sword Match (300 + 600 + 800m): Gold - Sep Waleed

State President 1st Stage (300 + 500 + 600m): Silver - Obaid Ibrahim

Jack Mitchley Match (300m): Gold - Asad Wahid

Free State Bisley Match (300 + 600m): Gold - Lt Col Junaid Ali

Darjymple Cup (300 + 600m): Silver - Lt Col Junaid Ali

Col Bodley Match (900m): Gold - Lt Col Junaid Ali

State President 1st Stage: Bronze - Lt Col Junaid Ali

State President 2nd Stage: Silver - Lt Col Junaid Ali

State President Overall Trophy: Gold - Lt Col Junaid Ali; Bronze - Obaid Ibrahim

SA Championship Aggregate Overall: Bronze - Lt Col Junaid Ali

Sindh deports 307 illegal Afghans amid ongoing repatriation

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A total of 307 individuals were deported from the Amin House Transit Camp between April 1 and 6, 2025, as part of a crackdown on illegal Afghan immigrants by the Sindh government.

Initially, a list of 313 individuals was prepared; however, following verification, 307 were repatriated to Afghanistan after the completion of legal formalities.

Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that those deported included 79 children, 37 women, and 191 men.

He explained that the Afghan nationals were being deported due to their illegal residence in



the country.

He emphasized that the campaign to deport illegal immigrants will continue, adding that international laws and regulations are being strictly followed in this process.

He stated that interna-

tional laws concerning illegal immigrants are being observed, and Pakistan is repatriating illegal immigrants in line with these global principles.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further emphasized that

the Sindh government is taking lawful measures while upholding humanitarian values.

He added that the government's campaign will continue to ensure effective action against illegal immigrants.

Lebanon ministry says two dead in Israeli strike on south

BEIRUT (AFP): Lebanon's health ministry said two people were killed Sunday in an Israeli strike on the country's south, as Israel said it hit Hezbollah operatives amid a fragile truce.

The toll in the "strike launched by the Israeli enemy on the town of Zibqin rose to two dead," the health ministry said in a statement, adding that the toll was final after earlier reporting one dead.

The Israeli military said it carried out an air strike targeting two Hezbollah operatives in the Zibqin area, adding in a statement that they were "attempting to rebuild Hezbollah terror infrastructure sites."

A fragile ceasefire in late November largely halted more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, but Israel has continued to carry out strikes in Lebanon.

Balochistan govt warns to arrest Akhtar Mengal

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has warned that veteran politician and BNP-M chief Akhtar Mengal will be arrested if he proceeds with his planned march towards Quetta.

According to the provincial government spokesperson, the adminis-

tration informed Akhtar Mengal at 6am about his detention under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance. Despite the formal notice, Mengal reportedly refused to comply and declined to surrender.

Journalist Shahid Rind confirmed that Akhtar Mengal did not agree to voluntary arrest following

the government's directive.

The situation remains tense as authorities monitor developments closely.

Rind made it clear that if Mengal attempts to march towards Quetta, he will face immediate arrest.

The spokesperson also criticised BNP's call to block national highways, saying it would worsen public hardship.

PML-N steered country out of crises: Khawaja Asif

F.P. Report

SIALKOT: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that reduction in electricity prices and inflation is not less than a miracle.

Addressing a ceremony in Sialkot, he said that there were speculations that Pakistan would be bankrupted but the PML-N steered the country out of crises with the support of allies.

"The stock market of

America just crashed the other day but the market in Pakistan is on the continuous rise," said the senior PML-N leader.

The veteran politician said that the corruption stories are rife in PTI-led Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Khawaja Asif said that the PTI government was ousted in result of the no-confidence motion and then the PDM worked tirelessly for the betterment of the country.

He criticised former

prime minister Imran Khan and said that he used to avoid security meetings addressed by Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and Gen Qamar Bajwa.

"Now, he demands to become the part of security meetings," said Khawaja Asif.

He added that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are facing a wave of terrorism and Pakistan's armed forces are sacrificing their lives to protect the country.

Russia says Ukraine continues attacks

MOSCOW (Reuters): Ukraine continues to carry out attacks on Russian energy infrastructure despite a U.S.-brokered moratorium on strikes against energy facilities, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Sunday. According to the ministry, Ukrainian forces conducted seven such attacks over the last 24 hours in Crimea, Bryansk, Rostov, and Voronezh regions.

In the Voronezh region, the attack damaged a gas distribution pipeline, the ministry said. Reuters was unable to verify the reports.

In separate report the ministry said that Russian forces launched an overnight strike using long-range pre-

cision weapons and drones against Ukraine's central artillery armament base and defence industry enterprises involved in drone production. The location of the targets was not disclosed.

Putin's envoy says new Russia-U.S. contacts may continue next week, IEX reports

Russia-U.S. contacts may continue next week, Interfax reported citing Russian President Vladimir Putin's investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev. Dmitriev recently flew to Washington for a round of talks with officials from President Donald Trump's administration.

Following the discussions, Dmitriev said that he

saw a "positive dynamic" in relations between Moscow and Washington.

Russian missile strike kills one, injures three in Kyiv, Ukraine says

A Russian missile attack on Kyiv killed one man and injured three other people overnight, causing damage and fires in several districts in the biggest such attack on Ukraine for weeks, Ukrainian officials said on Sunday. The strike was the first large-scale attack using missiles and drones since the U.S. said late last month it had negotiated two ceasefire accords with Russia and Ukraine, including one that would on each other's energy infrastructure.