

Bilawal departs for Dubai
F.P. Report

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has departed for Dubai. It reports in media that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has left for Dubai on a personal visit. He is expected to stay abroad for around ten days. On April 4, Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto demanded that Prime Minister roll back the controversial canal project on the Indus River.

Bushra Bibi moves IHC
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, wife of PTT's incarcerated founder Imran Khan, has sought due facilities in Adiala Jail. In an application to the Islamabad High Court, Bushra Bibi says she sought due facilities from the authorities but the jail superintendent turned a deaf ear to her request. She pleads that Imran Khan also deserves better facilities by virtue of being a former prime minister.

Trump threatens 50% tariffs on China

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump on Monday threatened huge additional tariffs on imports from China if Beijing did not withdraw its retaliation plans, adding that Washington would begin negotiations with other countries that want them. "If China does not withdraw its 34% increase above their already long term trading abuses by tomorrow, April 8th, 2025, the United States will impose ADDITIONAL Tariffs on China of 50%, effective April 9th," Trump said in a Truth Social post.

Beijing has issued countermeasures after Trump announced another sharp tariff hike on goods from the world's second biggest economy last week.

Since returning to the presidency, Trump has imposed 20% added duties on Chinese imports over its alleged role in the fentanyl supply chain.

A fresh 34% levy on the country's products is due to kick in on Wednesday, bringing the added rate this year to 54%. It is not immediately clear how Trump's new threat factors into this calculation. China's response included export controls on rare earth elements, and Beijing plans for its own 34% tariff on US goods, stacking atop existing Chinese levies set to begin April 10.

Trump took aim at Beijing's economic practices on social media on Monday, criticizing its "non-monetary tariffs" and "illegal subsidisation of companies." He added that "all talks with China concerning their requested meetings with us will be terminated." But "negotiations with other countries, which have also requested meetings, will begin taking place immediately," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

The 27-nation bloc should "open the European toolbox, which is very comprehensive and can also be extremely aggressive," he said. German Economy Minister Robert Habeck likewise said Europe should be prepared to use its trade "bazooka" — a new anti-coercion mechanism allowing it to punish any country using economic threats to exert pressure on the EU. But signs of divergence emerged from Ireland, whose low corporate tax rate has attracted US tech and pharmaceutical companies.

Targeting services "would be an extraordinary escalation," said Irish Trade Minister Simon Harris. Trump on Sunday had doubled down, saying, "Sometimes you have to take medicine to fix something." He told reporters aboard Air Force One that world leaders were "dying to make a deal". Trillions of dollars have been wiped off stocks worldwide since Trump announced the tariffs last week, and the losses deepened on Monday.

JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon warned the tariffs "will likely increase inflation", in a letter to shareholders Monday. "Whether or not the menu of tariffs causes a recession remains in question, but it will slow down growth," he said. Taipei recorded its heaviest loss on record as it sank 9.7pc. The Stoxx Europe 600 index was down 5pc in early afternoon deals, with more than 1.5tr of market capitalisation going up in smoke over just a few days. The main US oil contract dropped below \$60 a barrel for the first time since April 2021 on worries of a global recession.

"The market's telling you in plain language: global demand is vanishing, and a global recession is on the cards and coming on fast," said Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management. US officials said more than 50 countries have reached out to Trump to negotiate. Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said on Monday he had held a call with Trump in which they agreed to more talks on the tariffs.

Benjamin Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel — hit with 17pc tariffs, despite being one of Washington's closest allies — was due on Monday to become the first leader to meet Trump since last week's announcement. Vietnam, a manufacturing powerhouse with a big trade surplus with the United States, has already reached out and requested a delay of at least 45 days to thumping 46pc tariffs.

Power tariff cut to boost economy: PM — says Maritime, energy sectors' reforms to boost strengthen, unlock Pakistan's potential



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the reforms in maritime and energy sectors would boost trade, reduce costs, and unlock Pakistan's economic potential.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting to review progress on the government's wide-ranging reforms in the maritime sector, emphasized that comprehensive efforts were underway to transform Pakistan's port infrastructure, streamline customs operations, and strengthen the country's maritime economy for long-term national benefit. He hailed the task force on maritime reforms for its diligent work and praised their efforts in preparing a comprehensive set of recommendations that aim to end decades-long stagnation in the sector.

"Pakistan has been blessed with a long coastline and vast maritime resources. With the right reforms, we can unlock immense economic potential and bring our ports to global competitive standards," Prime Minister Shehbaz said. He noted that reduction in electricity tariff of almost Rs. 7.5 per unit was a direct result of the focused work of a dedicated task force on reforms in energy sector.

He emphasized that the same results-driven model was now being applied to the maritime sector. "This electricity tariff reduction is a major relief not only for households but also for all sectors like agriculture, commerce, trade, and industry. It will bring down the cost of production, improve local manufacturing, generate employment, and enhance exports," he stated. He said that structural reforms remained central to the government's economic strategy, which had already stabilized Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators.

The prime minister also highlighted the opportunity presented by the recent drop in global oil prices, and assured that the government was working to harness its long-term benefits for Pakistan's economy. The meeting reviewed a detailed presentation on the roadmap for maritime sector reforms.

The participants of the meeting were briefed on introduction of the Pakistan Maritime Port Act, unifying regulations across all ports, creation of a national dredging plan, including the formation of a National Dredging Company to serve ports across the country. The forum also discussed modernization of the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) with a 25-year rehabilitation plan and inclusion of the private sector through public-private partnerships. It was informed that a hazardous waste disposal plant was set up in Gadani to manage chemical and industrial waste.

The prime minister instructed the authorities concerned to accelerate installation of modern scanning systems at all ports, and expedite customs clearance procedures, particularly in red and yellow channels. He also directed that a plan be developed to quickly auction long-held containers to free up port space and improve efficiency.

The taskforce also briefed on conducting financial, HR, and performance audits at national ports, enhancing training and human resource development at Karachi Port Trust, and reviewing trade tariffs to boost the competitiveness of Pakistani ports. The prime minister acknowledged the dedication of the maritime task force and other stakeholders involved in crafting the reform agenda.

He reaffirmed that maritime resources were key to global trade and Pakistan's economic future, adding that timely action was essential to remain competitive in an evolving global market. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, Azam Nazir Tarar, Ahad Khan Cheema, Junaid Anwar, Advisor to the PM Syed Tauqeer Shah, the Governor of the State Bank, and other senior officials from relevant ministries and institutions.

ECC okays Rs9b grant for finance division expenditures

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet met today under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb.

The meeting was attended by several key federal ministers, including Minister for Power, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, Minister for Petroleum, Mr. Ali Parvez Malik, Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain. Senior officials from various ministries and divisions were also present.

During the meeting, the ECC reviewed and approved several Technical Supplementary Grants (TSGs) for ongoing projects and initiatives from different ministries and divisions. The committee emphasized that, with the fourth quarter of the fiscal year underway, it would closely monitor and prioritize the allocation of future TSGs to ensure efficient utilization of government resources.

The ECC approved a TSG of Rs 9 billion for the Finance Division to address grants, subsidies, and miscellaneous expenditures for the fiscal year 2024-25.

A TSG of Rs 50 million was approved for the National Commission for Human Rights, based on a proposal moved by the Ministry of Human Rights.

The ECC approved a TSG amounting to Rs 23.434 billion (Rs 23.20 billion being the provincial share and Rs 622.36 million being the federal share) for the Federal Directorate of Immunization to support the immunization of over 8 million children under two years of age against 12 vaccine-preventable diseases.

This initiative is part of Pakistan's ongoing commitment to public health.

A TSG of Rs 1.06 billion was approved for the timely completion of the 'Transformation to National Forensic Agency' project, ensuring it is completed by June 30, 2025.

The ECC granted Rs 264.8 million in TSG for the maintenance and repair of government buildings, with funds allocated for buildings that have been shifted from the Pakistan Public Works Department (PAK-PWD) to the Capital Development Authority (CDA). The CDA has been directed to ensure proper and optimal utilization of these funds.

The ECC approved a TSG of Rs 3.57 billion to support the establishment of a 1,000-bed academic medical center, featuring centers of excellence, research, and education facilities, to be built by the Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Center Company in the capital.

The ECC considered and approved a proposal from the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for a TSG of Rs 54.5 billion to the Danish Education Trust to provide high-quality higher education to underprivileged students, ensuring academic excellence nationwide.

In conclusion, the ECC reiterated its commitment to advancing important public welfare projects, strengthening infrastructure, and supporting critical sectors including health, education, and forensic services.

Dar, Rubio discuss bilateral ties

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ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held a telephone call with United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday and discussed bilateral relations, regional security, and economic cooperation.

During the call, Deputy Prime Minister Dar reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its partnership with the United States. He emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation in areas such as trade, investment and counter-terrorism.

Secretary Rubio reciprocated the desire to collaborate with Pakistan in trade and investment in various sectors, especially critical minerals. He said that cooperation in economy and trade would be the hallmark of future relations between the two countries.

Ishaq Dar highlighted Pakistan's efforts in successfully fighting terrorism during 2013-18, which caused Pakistan huge economic and human losses. Secretary of State Rubio also appreciated Pakistan's efforts in the fight against terrorism and expressed the US desire to further enhance counter-terrorism cooperation.

The two leaders also discussed the situation in Afghanistan. Secretary Rubio agreed on the need to resolve the issue of US military equipment left behind in Afghanistan. They agreed to remain in close contact and to work together to advance the shared interests of both countries.

Security forces kill 9 Khwarij

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RAWALPINDI: Nine Khwarij, including high value target Kharij Ring leader Shireen, were killed by security forces during an intelligence based operation in Takwara area of Dera Ismail Khan District.

According to the ISPR, weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed Khwarij. Kharij Ring leader Shireen was highly wanted by the Law Enforcement Agencies due to his involvement in numerous terrorist activities. Besides being involved in target killing of numerous innocent civilians, he was also responsible for Shahadat of Captain Hasnain Akhtar.

The ISPR said the operation has avenged the heinous act and has brought the main perpetrator to justice. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Kharij in the area. The ISPR in its statement reaffirmed the determination to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have commended security forces for their successful operation against terrorists in Dera Ismail Khan. In his statement, the President said the security forces' operations will continue till the complete eradication of terrorism.

He said our resolve to eliminate terrorist elements and ensure country's defense will remain unwavering. In his statement, the Prime Minister said the entire nation stands by the security forces in the war against terrorism.

Israel controls 50% of Gaza

TEL AVIV (AP): Israel has dramatically expanded its footprint in the Gaza Strip since relaunching its war against Hamas last month. It now controls more than 50 percent of the territory and is squeezing Palestinians into shrinking wedges of land.

The largest contiguous area the army controls is around the Gaza border, where the military has razed Palestinian homes, farmland and infrastructure to the point of uninhabitability, according to Israeli soldiers and rights groups. This military buffer zone has doubled in size in recent weeks. Israel has depicted its tightening grip as a temporary necessity to pressure Hamas into releasing the remaining hostages taken during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that started the war. But the land Israel holds, which includes a corridor that divides the territory's north from south, could be used for wielding long-term control, human rights groups and Gaza experts say.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said last week that even after Hamas is defeated, Israel will keep security control in Gaza and push Palestinians to leave. The demolition close to the Israeli border and the systematic expansion of the buffer zone has been going on since the war began 18 months ago, five Israeli soldiers told The Associated Press.

"They destroyed everything they could, they shot everything that looks functioning ... (the Palestinians) will have nothing to come back, they will not come back, never," a soldier deployed with a tank squad guarding the demolition teams said. He and four other soldiers spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. A report documenting the accounts of soldiers who were in the buffer zone was released Monday by Breaking The Silence, an anti-occupation veterans group. A handful of soldiers — including some who also spoke to AP — described watching the army turn the zone into a vast wasteland.

"Through widespread, deliberate destruction, the military laid the groundwork for future Israeli control of the area," said the group. Asked about the soldiers' accounts, the

Israel strikes tents near hospitals

GAZA STRIP (AP): Israel struck tents outside two major hospitals in the Gaza Strip overnight, killing at least two people, including a local reporter, and wounding nine, including six reporters, medics said Monday. Fifteen others were killed in separate strikes across the territory, according to hospitals. A strike on a media tent outside Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis at around 2 a.m. set the tent ablaze, killing Yousef Al-Faqawi, a reporter for the Palestine Today TV station, and another man, according to the hospital. The six reporters were wounded in that strike. The Israeli military said it struck a Hamas militant, without providing further information. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames Hamas for their deaths because it is deeply embedded in residential areas.

Israel also struck tents on the edge of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central city of Deir Al-Balah, wounding three people, according to the hospital. Nasser Hospital said it received 13 other bodies, including six women and four children, from separate strikes overnight. Al-Aqsa Hospital said two people were killed and three wounded in a strike on a home in Deir Al-Balah. Israel has carried out waves of strikes across Gaza and ground forces have carved out new military zones since it ended its ceasefire with Hamas last month. Israel has barred the import of food, fuel, medicine and humanitarian aid since the beginning of March. Thousands of people have sheltered in tents set up inside hospital compounds throughout the 18-month war, assuming Israel would be less likely to target them. Israel has raided hospitals on several occasions, accusing Hamas of using them for military purposes, allegations denied by hospital staff.

Israeli army said it is acting to protect its country and especially to improve security in southern communities devastated by the Oct. 7 attack, in which some 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hostage. The army said it does not seek to harm civilians in Gaza, and that it abides by international law.

In the early days of the war, Israeli troops forced Palestinians from communities near the border and destroyed the land to create a buffer zone more than a kilometer (0.62 miles) deep, according to Breaking The Silence. Its troops also seized a swath of land across Gaza known as the Netzarim Corridor that isolated the north, including Gaza City, from the rest of the narrow, coastal strip, home to more than 2 million people.

When Israel resumed the war last month, it doubled the size of the buffer zone, pushing it as far as 3 kilometers into Gaza in some places, according to a map issued by the military. The buffer zone and the Netzarim Corridor make up at least 50 percent of the strip, said Yaakov Garb, a professor of environmental studies at Ben Gurion University, who has been examining Israeli-Palestinian land use patterns for decades.

Last week, Netanyahu said Israel intends to create another corridor that slices across southern Gaza, cutting off the city of Rafah from the rest of the territory. Israel's control of Gaza is even greater taking into account areas where it recently ordered civilians to evacuate ahead of planned attacks. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians used to live in the land that now makes up Israel's buffer zone, an area that was key to Gaza's agricultural output.

Satellite images show once dense neighborhoods turned to rubble, as well as nearly a dozen new Israeli army outposts since the ceasefire ended. Israel's bombardment and ground offensives throughout the war have left vast swaths of Gaza's cities and towns destroyed. But the razing of property inside the buffer zone has been more methodical and extensive, soldiers said. The five soldiers who spoke to the AP said Israeli troops were ordered to destroy farmland, irrigation pipes, crops and trees as well as thousands of buildings, including residential and public structures, so that militants had nowhere to hide.

Strengthening federating units crucial: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that strengthening the federating units is crucial for a stronger federation and called for consensus on all the national issues.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, the minister said all political parties, regardless of their positions in the House, had played a pivotal role in fortifying democracy and the federation through decades of sacrifice and struggle. He said, "Political differences and criticism are part of democratic discourse but the sacrifices made by political leaders and parties for democracy remain unparalleled. We are committed to democratic norms and do not believe in bulldozing opinions."

Referring to the 1991 Water Accord, he said the agreement, signed by all provinces, laid the foundation for the establishment of the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) under the IRSA Act of 1992 during the tenure of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. "The Constitution, the law, and a regulatory system are all in place to ensure fair water distribution," he added.

Addressing concerns raised by lawmakers from Sindh, the minister said that technical issues require technical solutions and must be approached through dialogue and mutual understanding. "We are democrat-

ic people and believe in consensus-building. We respect all provinces equally—Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir," he said. Criticizing the opposition leader, he said, "The Leader of the Opposition has proven through his conduct that he is not worthy of that position."

"His behavior has shown that he is not fit for the role," he said, accusing opposition members of undermining the sanctity of the House and lacking seriousness on public issues, particularly those concerning Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. He criticized the opposition for misusing impartiality and generosity extended by the Speaker of the National Assembly.

"Despite being granted the floor—five of their members were allowed to speak—they failed to address national concerns with the gravity they deserve," he said. The minister also condemned the use of inappropriate language by some opposition members, calling it a violation of parliamentary decorum. "We strongly denounce the disrespectful remarks made by certain members, which were an affront to the dignity of this House," he added.

Politics should not be mixed with sports: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Monday underlined the need to keep politics separate from sports for the betterment of both the fields, highlighting the government's commitment to youth development and sports promotion nationwide.

"Politics should be kept out of sports and sports out of politics; this is better for both the sports and politics," the minister said while speaking as the chief guest on the occasion of a friendly cricket match between the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA) XI and a UK Media team at the National Cricket Ground here.

Congratulating the match organizers, Tarar welcomed such initiatives, noting that increased sports activities foster positive societal attitudes. "Healthy activities are crucial to promote games, cricket, and sportsman spirit," he added. The minister highlighted the government's extensive efforts in sports promotion, calling it a "top priority" to encourage positive engagement among young people.

He noted the continuity of youth-centric programs during the tenures of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) tenures, saying "the Prime Minister's Youth Program, started during the era of PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif, is being carried forward by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif." Tarar said the Talent Hunt Program, initiated during the previous PML-N government, continued to receive support. He urged collaboration between political parties, the private sector, and the public sector to enhance talent discovery for sports advancement.

Saif calls for reforms in judicial system

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government on Information, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, has emphasized that political stability, modern legislation, reforms in the police and prosecution systems, and empowering local governments at the grassroots level are key elements in mounting an effective response to terrorism.

He expressed these views while addressing a seminar organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) on the topic, "Comprehensive Review of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Security and Governance Challenges." Dr. Saif stated that political unrest fuels terrorism and that political leadership bears a heavy responsibility in preventing such threats. He highlighted that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faces both internal and external threats, due largely to its sensitive geographic location, historical context, and complex social dynamics.

He underscored the critical importance of improving the performance of administrative institutions, noting that the province's stability and security are intrinsically linked to the strength of these bodies. Dr. Saif announced that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has allocated Rs. 30 billion to enhance the capacity of the police force, enabling law enforcement agencies to more effectively combat terrorism and crime.



LAHORE: A youngster beats the heat with a splash, bathing and swimming in a water canal to enjoy some relief from the scorching weather. —APP Photo

CM approves design for Korangi causeway interchange to boost traffic flow

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting regarding Shahrah-e-Bhutto, where he approved the design of its interchange at Korangi Causeway and authorised the construction of a four-kilometre elevated structure to protect the three villages in Malir.

The CM noted that the starting point for the Korangi Causeway leading to Shahrah-e-Bhutto is located 200 meters before the Jam Sadiq Interchange. To enhance connectivity between DHA and Korangi, it is crucial to construct a permanent interchange or a roundabout at the existing Korangi Causeway. "This will facilitate traffic flow from all directions, including Korangi, DHA, and Shahrae Faisal (KPT Interchange)," he said.

It is important to mention that the earthwork up to the limit of Shahrah-e-Bhutto is nearing completion. The Chief Minister instructed the Project Director (PD) of Shahrah-e-Bhutto to prepare the PC-I and submit it to the Planning & Development (P&D) Department for approval within the next three days. He also set a deadline for the completion of the Korangi Causeway Interchange roundabout by December 2025.

Murad Ali Shah was informed that work on the connectivity from Shahrah-e-Bhutto (Jam Sadiq Interchange) had been suspended pending his approval. Following a thorough discussion, he approved the design of the interchange.

Work on the Jam Sadiq Interchange has achieved 58 per cent progress but has been halted due to the Yellow Line project. The Chief Minister directed the Transport Department to complete their portion of the Yellow Line, which is one kilometre long, by June so that the interchange can become operational. The CM made a key decision to construct a four-kilometre elevated structure on the Malir Riverbed to prevent the displacement of Samoo Village, Lassi Village, and Old Shafi Village. The design for the elevated structure has been prepared by a consultant.

The 39-kilometer-long Shahrah-e-Bhutto is a high-speed, three-lane access-controlled road equipped with modern facilities. It represents the largest public-private partnership (PPP) project in Sindh, linking DHA and Korangi to the Hyderabad Motorway (M-9) near Kathore. Shahrah-e-Bhutto features six dedicated interchanges that facilitate

swift access for northbound traffic and various industrial areas of Karachi. The expressway is designed around a tolling mechanism, with provisions for toll plazas and gates at all entry and exit points.

The chief minister was informed that the work on the EBM Interchange has been completed, while the Quaidabad Interchange is 85 per cent complete. He instructed the concerned project director to finalise it by April 30, allowing it to be opened for traffic. It was noted that work on the Dumloti Interchange is ongoing, but progress on the Memon Goth Interchange has slowed due to interventions from Karachi Electric (KE) and local wells. The Chief Minister directed the Energy Department and local government to expedite the relocation of KE and well interventions.

Shahrah-e-Bhutto is a 38.661-kilometer, three-lane carriageway designed for a speed of 100 km/hour. It has a 100-meter right of way and features six interchanges, along with two main toll plazas and ten intermediate plazas. The first segment, from Korangi Causeway to Quaidabad, is 95 per cent physically complete, while the overall progress of the project stands at 78 per cent.

Commissioner orders tough Measures on anti-tobacco laws

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Divisional Commissioner Zaid-bin-Maqsood has emphasized the urgent need for strict enforcement of the Anti-Tobacco Laws across all public spaces, including offices, educational institutions, and modes of public transport. He was chairing a divisional-level meeting held under the National Tobacco Control Strategy, aimed at curbing tobacco use in society, here on Monday.

During the meeting, officials from the National Health Services Regulation & Coordination (Tobacco Control Cell), along with officers from the district administration, education, and other departments, briefed participants on the growing threat of tobacco consumption, particularly among the youth. The briefing highlighted that smoking is legally prohibited in schools, colleges, and especially public parks across Pakistan.

Punjab unveils robust security measures for Baisakhi festival

LAHORE (APP):The Punjab Home Department has announced comprehensive security measures to ensure the safety of thousands of Sikh pilgrims arriving from around the world for upcoming Baisakhi Festival.

According to Punjab Home Department's spokesperson, the Baisakhi festival will be celebrated from April 10 to 19, with 30,000 Sikh pilgrims from around the world and Pakistan participating.

During the period, 3,000 Sikh pilgrims will arrive from India to celebrate the festival in Pakistan. The Home department has issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and directed that complete security arrangements be ensured at all Gurdwaras and accommodations before the festival.

The department has also directed that walk-through gates and CCTV cameras be installed at all Gurdwaras. Three-tier

security measures should be implemented at sensitive locations, and searchlights should be installed.

The spokesperson further added that police and Rangers will work together to manage the movement of Sikh pilgrims. Power supply companies have been instructed to ensure an uninterrupted power supply to the Gurdwaras, he added.

The district administration has been ordered to remove all encroachments around Gurdwaras immediately. The spokesperson added that Intelligence committee meetings would be convened at the division and district levels to finalise the arrangements.

Combining operations will be completed in the relevant areas before the festival. The special branch and relevant agencies will monitor the premises of Gurdwaras and accommodations. Pilgrims will not be allowed to move away from designated areas or

residential zones, spokesperson added.

The Punjab Home Department has directed that the police and district administration link their control rooms to the central control room. In this regard, control rooms will be set up in Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Attock and Narowal. Customs and immigration officials will set up necessary counters for timely clearance, while Railway Police will ensure the safety of all pilgrims aboard trains and at railway stations, he added.

The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) and the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) will coordinate with other agencies. Deputy commissioners and district police officers of all relevant districts in Punjab have been directed to ensure strict implementation of the issued guidelines and security plan.

Hanif Abbasi announces reforms to revitalize Pakistan Railways

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has emphasized the need for immediate reforms in the railways and announced several critical decisions aimed at improving efficiency and service quality.

He chaired a meeting at the Pakistan Railways headquarters on Monday to review the performance of railway divisions and discuss ongoing and upcoming infrastructure projects across the country.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given

on the current state of railway infrastructure. One of the key areas of focus was the Main Line-1 (ML-1) project. Measures are being introduced to reduce travel time on the route, with a one-year target set to eliminate engineering restrictions. The removal of these restrictions is expected to significantly shorten train journeys.

Additionally, work on the Kemari-Hyderabad section has been ordered to commence without delay.

Track rehabilitation projects will be accelerated, and the Project Director has been tasked with preparing railway sleepers within six months. The administration has also been directed to compress a two-year project timeline into just one year. Four tamping machines will be made operational by the end of

the year to support these efforts.

Referring to Shahbaz Sharif's achievements in Punjab—where three-year projects were completed in a single year—Abbasi urged the railway administration to adopt a similar approach. He also stressed the need to boost revenue from freight trains while curbing leakages.

To enhance the customer experience, the online booking system for passenger trains will be upgraded, and freight train bookings will be moved online to eliminate human interference.

The minister also took a strict stance on illegal occupancy, demanding a list of unauthorized individuals residing in railway colonies and imposing a complete ban on unrelated or retired persons staying in railway rest houses.

LAHORE (APP): The traditional role of police stations has evolved, with a focus on public service and people-friendly initiatives, as highlighted by CCPO Lahore, Bilal Siddique Kamyana.

In a statement issued on Monday, Kamyana emphasised the significant role of the complaint cell in addressing the concerns of citizens. According to a Lahore police spokesperson, the complaint cell at the Capital City Police Headquarters has received 3,083 applications this year. Of these, 2,745 have already been resolved, with ongoing action on the remaining 338 cases. Additionally, 31 applications received through the Chief Minister's portal have resulted in the resolution of 30 cases, while one is still under process.

The spokesperson further shared that 1,147 applicants visited the CCPO office for issue resolution, with 1,000 cases successfully handled, and 147 still under review. Furthermore, of the 1,905 applications received by post, 1,715 have been processed and 190 are currently under review.

Resolution submitted against SBCA Act amendments

KARACHI (PPI): Opposition leader in Sindh, Ali Khurshidi, along with Najm Mirza and Dr. Fauzia Hameed, submitted a resolution in the Sindh Assembly against the amendments to the Sindh Building Control Authority Act.

In a statement issued by the Office of the Opposition Leader here today, Ali Khurshidi stated that the plan to convert residential areas into commercial zones is a conspiracy to destroy urban life.

He accused the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government of sacrificing Karachi's master plan for the interests of influential individuals. Ali Khurshidi said that the amendments to the Sindh Building Control Authority are part of the builder mafia's agenda rather than in the public interest.

He further added that efforts are being made to turn Karachi into a concrete jungle. Accusing the government of violating court orders, Ali Khurshidi said that the Sindh government has made a mockery of the rule of law. He stated that they will thwart the conspiracy to turn Karachi into a heap of commercial waste.

Ali Khurshidi expressed that they will expose those who are robbing the public of their residential rights. He questioned, when the rulers themselves become law-breakers, where should the public go? This is the question present in the mind of every resident of Karachi today.

LWMC staff transforms Lahore into a sparkling city on Eid

LAHORE: The dedicated efforts of the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) employees are playing a key role in transforming the city of Lahore into a beautiful and clean urban environment. Under the guidance of CEO Mr. Babar Sahib Din and the supervision of Deputy CEO Mr. Zulqarnain Haider, significant cleaning operations were carried out on the occasion of Eid ul-Fitr.

Special cleanliness initiatives were undertaken at key locations such as the entry and exit points of Lahore, the bus terminal, areas around Greater Iqbal Park, the Azadi Flyover, and the fruit market. Thanks to the commitment and hard work of LWMC during the nights of the moon and Eid, Lahore presented itself as a sparkling city.

Citizens expressed their gratitude to the Ravi Town team, including SM Rizwan Saeed, TM Nouman Patras, and ZO Khurram Shahzad, for their exemplary cleanliness efforts during Eid and commended their hard work. They pledged to honor the labor of LWMC employees and continue supporting sanitation staff in keeping the city clean in the days following Eid.

Police complaint cell resolves thousands of citizen issues

LAHORE (APP): The traditional role of police stations has evolved, with a focus on public service and people-friendly initiatives, as highlighted by CCPO Lahore, Bilal Siddique Kamyana.

In a statement issued on Monday, Kamyana emphasised the significant role of the complaint cell in addressing the concerns of citizens. According to a Lahore police spokesperson, the complaint cell at the Capital City Police Headquarters has received 3,083 applications this year. Of these, 2,745 have already been resolved, with ongoing action on the remaining 338 cases. Additionally, 31 applications received through the Chief Minister's portal have resulted in the resolution of 30 cases, while one is still under process.

The spokesperson further shared that 1,147 applicants visited the CCPO office for issue resolution, with 1,000 cases successfully handled, and 147 still under review. Furthermore, of the 1,905 applications received by post, 1,715 have been processed and 190 are currently under review.

CM approves 1,500 electric buses for major cities

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday chaired a high-level meeting of the Transport Department and granted principled approval for the launch of 1,500 electric buses across major cities of Punjab under a phased plan to modernize urban transportation.

In the first phase, 380 electric buses will be procured and launched in Lahore and Gujranwala, with directives issued to complete the procurement process as soon as possible. The CM set a deadline of June for the operational launch of the electric bus service in both cities.

In the following phases, the electric bus system will

be expanded to six more districts, including Sargodha, Sheikhupura, Sialkot, Gujrat, Rahim Yar Khan, and Dera Ghazi Khan. Approval was also granted for launching Orange and Red Bus Services in Faisalabad, with the Red Line to run from Samundri Road to Sargodha Road and the Orange Line from Jaranwala Road to Jhang Road.

CM Maryam Nawaz directed the authorities concerned to submit detailed plans for electric bus routes in Faisalabad and Gujranwala, and allowed 15 days for finalizing the planning of the Yellow Line electric bus track in Lahore. She also sought a comprehensive

plan for establishing electric bus charging stations across all selected cities.

Another major development approved in the meeting was the establishment of a modern Transport Tower Command and Control Center in Lahore to monitor and manage urban transport operations.

CM Maryam Nawaz reiterated her vision of inclusive progress, stating, "I am the Chief Minister of the entire province, not just Lahore. Every citizen in Punjab's major cities deserves a modern and efficient transport system." She added, "It is my desire that every major city in Punjab enjoys a world-class bus system."

Qari Ejaz martyred, Qari Shahid Injured KP IGP takes notice

PESHAWAR: A tragic shooting incident occurred in the jurisdiction of Pishtakhara Police Station, claiming the life of renowned religious scholar Qari Ejaz, while Qari Shahid sustained serious injuries. Following the incident, Inspector General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Zulfiqar Hameed, took immediate notice and has sought a detailed report from the Capital City Police.

The IGP condemned the attack, calling it a heinous conspiracy against religious harmony, and directed the formation of special investigative teams to ensure the immediate arrest of those involved. He also instructed the CCPO Peshawar to tighten the security of religious leaders, asserting that such elements will not be allowed to succeed in their malicious objectives.

IGP Zulfiqar Hameed stated that the safety of religious leaders, places of

worship, and the general public is the top priority of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, and all available resources will be utilized to achieve this goal. Police have cordoned off the area and begun collecting evidence, while Qari Shahid has been moved to a nearby hospital in critical condition.

The incident has spread fear and panic across the city, with citizens demanding that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

Major bureaucratic reshuffle expected

KP govt seeks services of five senior officers from federal govt

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has requested the federal government to deputize five senior officers, including four from the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) — Islam Zaib, Zahir Shah, Humayun Khan, and Saadat Hussain — and one from the Audit and Accounts Group, Shah Mehmood.

Sources reveal that this move aims to improve governance standards and ensure more effective administrative operations in the province. These officers bring a wealth of experience and administrative

acumen, which is expected to significantly enhance policy formulation and implementation in KP. Furthermore, a major reshuffle in the provincial bureaucracy is anticipated soon, which may include the transfer of several Deputy Commissioners and other high-ranking administrative officers.

The objective behind these changes is to accelerate public welfare projects and improve service delivery at the district level. Since the appointment of Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, the province has witnessed notable improvements in its administrative struc-

ture. Under his leadership, several policy reforms have been introduced, including merit-based postings and better inter-district coordination.

These measures are part of a broader strategy to strengthen grassroots-level governance and address public issues promptly. According to sources, the KP government is also considering appointing more key officials to strategic positions in the coming days to expedite the ongoing reform process.

A comprehensive plan is currently being developed under the supervision of the Chief Secretary.

Mayor demands Rs100 billion for Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab today urged Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori to fulfill his commitment of allocating Rs100 billion for Karachi's development and transferring KPT and railway land to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) for infrastructure projects.

Addressing a press conference at the KMC head office, Mr Wahab asked the governor to engage in direct dialogue instead of relying on spokespersons. He emphasized that he had been pursuing Karachi's development agenda with federal representatives over the past 20 days.

He referenced the past, highlighting that Karachi was no longer plagued by violence and instability, and noted that conditions have changed under the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Wahab rejected any return to the politics of fear and division.

The mayor reiterated that he, Deputy Mayor Salman Abdullah Murad, and other PPP workers were carrying out development work according to the party's manifesto. He stated that two years, two months, and ten days remained in his tenure, during which major development work would be completed.

Wahab addressed criticism from Governor Tessori's spokesperson, former mayor Farooq

Sattar, who held a press conference earlier in the day. He remarked that rather than issuing threats and inappropriate language, political leaders should focus on governance.

He questioned the governor's approach, referencing blocked roads due to convoys and the use of public platforms for statements. Wahab argued that such actions did not align with the responsibilities of public office.

The mayor pointed out that development proposals for Karachi had been sent to the governor's office, including projects for the Northern Bypass, Port Qasim, and Martin and Pakistan Quarters. He noted that no funds had been released and instead press conferences were

being used as responses.

Wahab questioned the governor's announcement of establishing a university, suggesting that he use his own land and clarify the source of degrees it would issue. He also criticized political opponents for taking credit when electricity prices fall while avoiding responsibility on core issues.

He declared that his administration would focus on infrastructure projects, including a new canal from Hub Dam, the K4 water supply project, and the development of Bakhtiyari Youth Center. The mayor also referred to administrative issues inherited from previous leaderships, such as irregular recruitment and mismanagement.

محکمہ انتظامیہ خیبر پختونخوا

تصیح

سرکاری گاڑیوں کا نظام عام (98واں مرحلہ)

مطل کیا جاتا ہے کہ روزنامہ شرق اور دیگر اخبارات میں مورخہ 19-03-2025 کو شائع ہونے والے اشتہار نمبر INF(P)1074/25 کے تحت 7 گھنٹہ کا وقت ملا کر سیریل نمبر 6 میں مندرجہ ذیل جے پی کی جاتی ہے۔

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement of Goods, Works and Services Rules, 2014 کے مطابق Procuring Entity کی جی پی یا Tendering Entity کے پبلک جی پی وقت مسودہ کر سکتا ہے۔ تاہم Procuring Entity کسی Consultant یا Contractor کی درخواست پر جی پی کی سزئی کی وجہ سے تائید یافتہ ہوگا۔

INF(P)1276/25

CS stresses for accelerating governance reforms, investment initiatives

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah chaired a high-level meeting with administrative secretaries and senior officials to review departmental progress and issue directives aimed at strengthening governance, promoting transparency, and expediting public service delivery across the province.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary announced that the implementation mechanism for the province's paperless government initiative under the E-Office system is in place, with the formal launch scheduled for April 30.

The system is currently undergoing testing, and once operational, it is expected to significantly

enhance transparency, save time, and improve administrative efficiency through complete digitization. In a key move to attract domestic and foreign investments, the Chief Secretary highlighted the importance of a Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) cell within the Planning and Development Department. Lead department working groups have been notified under the SIFC investment acceleration framework.

A comprehensive project inventory document, detailing investment-ready projects and sectoral priorities, is set to be launched by May 30.

The Chief Secretary directed departments to prioritize high-impact projects and those nearing completion to accelerate

benefits to the public.

Reviewing the release and utilization of development funds, the Chief Secretary stressed the need for timely expenditure, particularly on schemes aimed at public welfare.

A centralized project tracking system has been put in place to monitor progress on critical initiatives, with all departments instructed to ensure strict compliance with timelines.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives also featured prominently in the meeting.

Officials presented tourism-related PPP projects, including recreational parks and motorways. Additionally, the province is moving forward with plans to outsource eight newly established primary schools through the PPP model.

The Chief Secretary instructed the concerned departments to develop a timeline-based implementation mechanism for all new PPP projects to ensure streamlined execution.

In procurement reforms, the E-PADS e-procurement system—already launched in eight major departments—will be made mandatory for all future tendering processes and extended to all departments by July 1, in a bid to ensure transparency and efficiency.

Updates were also shared on major infrastructure developments, including progress on the Northern Section of the Ring Road and development plans for Regi Model Town and Hayatabad's Model Sector, under the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA).



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major retired Sajjad Barkwal addressing a press conference.

Govt's new annual development programme to be farmer-friendly

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major retired Sajjad Barkwal, on Monday announced that the provincial government's new Annual Development Programmed (ADP) will prioritize farmer welfare and agricultural advancement.

He assured that similar efforts would soon extend to other regions. "Our focus is to maximize relief for farmers through targeted projects under the ADP," Barkwal stated.

Sheikh Waqas Akram, Barkwal outlined key initiatives aimed at transforming the agriculture sector. Provincial minister revealed that new seed varieties are being introduced across the province, with free seeds already distributed to farmers in seven districts.

He assured that similar efforts would soon extend to other regions. "Our focus is to maximize relief for farmers through targeted projects under the ADP," Barkwal stated.

Highlighting an innovative approach, the Provincial minister announced the launch of a "kitchen gardening" initiative in schools to train students in growing vegetables in limited spaces.

"This will empower children to cultivate their own produce and promote sustainable practices," he explained.

Barkwal emphasized that the provincial government is working on the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan and Chief Minister Ali Amin

Gandapur, prioritizing agricultural growth, resolving landowner issues, and boosting crop yields.

"We are mobilizing all resources to ensure farmers' challenges are addressed and food security is strengthened," he added.

Provincial minister reiterated the administration's commitment to modernizing farming techniques, enhancing productivity, and aligning policies with public needs to position KP as a model of agricultural progress.



PESHAWAR: Members of Pakistan Markazi Muslim League outside Peshawar Press Club protesting against Israeli atrocities against Palestinians.

KPBC to boycott court proceedings in protest against Israeli atrocities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) has announced a complete boycott from courts proceedings today (on Tuesday) across the province in protest against Israel's brutal bombing on Gaza, on Monday.

KPBC argued the Muslim world to play a role in achieving a ceasefire. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council will boycott from courts proceeding across the province to show solidarity with the Palestinians.

KPBC directed All district and tehsil bar associations to hold protest demonstrations against

Israeli atrocities. The bar council strongly condemns Israel's actions and calls for the Muslim world to play a role in achieving a ceasefire in Palestine.

KPBC urges the Muslim world to raise their voices to stop the genocide of Palestinians and condemned silence of human rights against

innocent people.

In a statement, the bar council expressed its outrage, questioning why the world remains silent on the issue, with innocent children and people being killed daily. They emphasized that the genocide of Muslims in Palestine must stop, and it's time for Muslims to speak out.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Education Faisal Khan Tarakai chairing a meeting of all boards chairmen before the start of SSC examinations.

Over 7,600 patients treated, 130 surgeries performed at ATH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: During the Eid ul-Fitr holidays, Ayub Teaching Hospital successfully managed a significant increase in patient care, with 7,616 patients examined and 10,132 laboratory tests conducted.

The emergency, medical, surgical, neurosurgery, orthopedic, ENT, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmology,

respiratory diseases, brain, and gastrointestinal departments remained fully operational throughout the holidays.

A total of 130 surgeries were performed, and 242 patients underwent CT scans. In addition, under the Health Facility Plus Program, 2,217 patients were admitted and received free medical services as part of the hospital's efficient healthcare strategy.

The hospital's obstetrics and gynecology department saw the birth of 174 babies during the Eid break.

The hospital's CEO and Dean, Prof. Dr. Saqib Malik, along with Director Dr. Dawood Iqbal, regularly visited the emergency department during the holidays. Deputy Director and Emergency In-charge Dr. Junaid Sarwar Malik, Head of Emergency Nursing BB

Taj, and their dedicated teams remained on the front lines, working tirelessly to serve the public around the clock.

To ensure continuous and uninterrupted healthcare during the holidays, the hospital assigned duties to doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other staff across various wards and critical units, all of whom performed their duties with excellence.

Kundi, HEC Chairman discuss Skills University Campus

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Professor Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, met with Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, at his residence here on Monday.

The meeting focused on matters related to the establishment of a campus of the National Skills University in Dera Ismail Khan.

Professor Dr. Aurangzeb Khan, Vice Chancellor of

Kalam Bibi International Women Institute, Bannu was also present in the meeting who has been appointed as the Project Director for the proposed university campus.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi emphasized the importance of promoting education in the southern districts of the province and expressed confidence that the Kalam Bibi Institute would play a vital role in providing quality

education and training in the region.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad praised the Governor's vision for educational development and assured full support from the HEC.

During the meeting, it was also decided that HEC would support the installation of AstroTurf at Gomal University's hockey ground and that one match of the upcoming international hockey event organized by HEC would be held

in Peshawar.

Progress on the establishment of an Air University campus in Khan was also reviewed on this occasion.

The participants discussed initiatives to broaden the vision of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's youth, including inter-provincial study tours and the promotion of joint academic and extracurricular activities among universities across the country.

Tarakai reviews preparations for 2025 Matric Exams

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important high-level meeting of the chairpersons of all the educational boards of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held under the chairmanship of the Provincial Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education, Faisal Khan Turkai. The meeting reviewed the preparations for the Annual Matriculation Exams 2025. The meeting was attended by Secretary Education Masood Ahmed, Special Secretaries Qaiser Alam and Khuda Bakhsh, Additional Secretaries, all the Chairpersons of the Boards, Director of Education, Communication Specialist from the Department of Education, and other senior officials. The annual matriculation exams will begin across the province on April 8. The Minister of Education was informed that 475,807 students will appear for the 9th-grade exams, while 444,404 students will take the 10th-grade exams. A total of 3,634 examination centers have been set up across the province, and the supervisory staff will number 25,810. All the board chairpersons briefed the meeting about their preparations, stating that all arrangements for the exams had been completed, including seating arrangements for students, washrooms, electricity, water, duties of the supervisory staff, stationery, formation of inspection teams, paper delivery, and other related matters. Addressing the meeting, Minister Faisal Khan Turkai emphasized that a zero-tolerance policy would be adopted against cheating and the use of illegal means during the exams.

Water scarcity: A threat to food security in Pakistan

PESHAWAR (APP): Water scarcity has emerged as a major issue in Pakistan, exacerbated by factors such as climate change, rapid population growth, deforestation and inefficient water management.

Once endowed with abundant water resources, the country is facing a growing water crisis due non construction of dams, and waste of irrigation water that threatens food security and the livelihoods of people.

Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and the ongoing water shortage worsened by insufficient snowfall and rainfall, has far-reaching consequences for food production.

As the population continues to increase, the

experts said the challenge of ensuring adequate water for agricultural needs becomes even more daunting.

"Pakistan is home to one of the largest irrigation systems in the world, drawing heavily from the Indus River and its tributaries. However, the available water per capita has drastically decreased over the past few decades," explained Sumbal Riaz, an economist, in an interview with APP on Sunday.

She highlighted the snowless winter in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which has intensified the water scarcity problem, leading to lower water levels in reservoirs.

According to the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), the

country's per capita water availability has plummeted from 5,000 cubic meters in 1951 to less than 1,000 cubic meters today. This sharp decline has pushed Pakistan into a state of water scarcity, compounded further by population growth, urbanization, and inefficient water usage.

Sumbal Riaz said that one of the primary causes of the water scarcity is the over-extraction of water from the Indus River system and car washing machines.

Approximately 90% of the country's available water is used for agriculture, with a significant portion wasted due to outdated irrigation techniques.

Furthermore, the construction of large dams and canals in neighboring

countries has negatively impacted on the natural flow of water, reducing Pakistan's access to these critical resources.

The southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and the Cholistan Desert in Sindh hold great potential to meet the nation's food requirements, provided that irrigation water is made available.

Riaz welcomed the Green Pakistan Initiative launched in Cholistan in February by the Chief Minister of Punjab, which aims to transform agriculture in the region by providing local farmers with high-quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and affordable agricultural machinery, including drones.

A 5,000-acre state-of-the-art agricultural farm

will serve as a model for modern farming techniques, focusing on water-efficient practices and advanced irrigation systems to reduce costs and increase agricultural yields.

Gulzar Rehman, a former Conservator of Forests, emphasized that Pakistan is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including erratic rainfall patterns, extended droughts, and the rapid melting of glaciers in the Himalayas. These shifts disrupt water availability and complicate agricultural production.

Gulzar noted that Pakistan's agriculture relies heavily on irrigation, with major crops like wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane requiring substantial water.

"Water scarcity has resulted in lower crop yields, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. This shortage also affects livestock farming and the fisheries sector, reducing food availability and variety."

The water crisis, Gulzar argued, requires a multifaceted approach, including both short-term and long-term strategies for improving water management and safeguarding food security.

These strategies should encompass overhauling outdated irrigation systems, constructing new dams, implementing better water conservation practices, desalination, and water recycling, while also adapting to climate change and investing in infrastructure.

Ibrahim Khan, Deputy

Project Director of the 10 Billion Trees Afforestation Project, highlighted the progress of the Green Growth Initiative (GGI), which began in 2014. Since then, Rs. 675 billion has been invested in protecting and promoting forest resources, resulting in 26.7% of the province's land being covered by forests, exceeding international standards.

He noted that the province's forests harbor vast mineral reserves and agricultural potential, which could generate Rs. 215 billion annually if commercialized.

Additionally, carbon credits from these forests are valued at around Rs. 100 billion annually. The project has created more than 175,000 green jobs, contributing to land culti-

vation and improved water resource management.

Ongoing initiatives, such as the plantation around the Chashma Right Bank Canal (CRBC) project, which aims to cultivate 300,000 acres of barren land, and the Rs. 5 billion Mohmand Dam Canal project, set to irrigate over 200,000 acres, are vital to addressing Pakistan's water needs.

Experts remained hopeful that the swift completion of major dams like the Mohmand, Diamer-Bhasha, and Dasu dams will significantly alleviate Pakistan's water problems, ensuring food security and protecting the livelihoods of millions who largely depend on agriculture for their survival.



In brief

Tribute paid to Malak Qasim F.P. Report

KARAK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major (R) Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal has said that the senior politician and former provincial minister for Prisons Late Malik Qasim was a great and humble person and the entire Karak district is mourning his sad demise. The presence of huge number of people in his funeral prayers is a clear proof of the people's deep love and devotion to the deceased, he said. He added, the valuable services rendered by late Malik Qasim for the development of the area will always be remembered. He said that the deceased was a man of words and he had truly fulfilled the right to representation of the people. The Minister Agriculture while paying glowing tributes to the services of the late Malik Qasim, prayed that Allah Almighty may shower His special blessing on him for his selfless services and grant the courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with patience and fortitude.

10 injured in three incidents F.P. Report

ATTOCK: At least 10 people, including women and children were injured in three different incidents in various parts of Attock district, according to police and rescue 1122 sources. The first incident occurred on the Rawalpindi-Kohat road near Pind Sultan, where a mini truck collided with a Suzuki van, injuring six people on board, including women and children. In another incident, two people, identified as 60-year-old Akbar and 20-year-old Ikram, sustained critical injuries after being attacked with axes by rivals in Mari Kanjour village. A third incident occurred on GT road near Burhan, where a speedy dumper knocked a Suzuki van, injuring a couple, Abdul Qaseer and his wife. The couple was shifted to the tehsil headquarters hospital Hassanabdal for treatment. Police have registered separate cases and launched further investigations into the incidents.

Free cattle distributed F.P. Report

BAHAWALPUR: The Government of Punjab held a ceremony in Tehsil Ahmedpur East and Tehsil Yazman of district Bahawalpur for the second phase of distributing livestock assets to 186 rural, needy, widowed, and divorced women. Cows (heifers) and buffaloes (calves) were given to them free of charge through balloting. MPA Khalid Mahmood Waran and MPA Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood Jajja attended the ceremony. Additional Secretary Livestock South Punjab Farooq Qamar, Deputy Secretary Admin South Punjab, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue, Additional Director Livestock, other officers and staff, and rural women attended the event. MPA Khalid Mahmood Waran and MPA Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood Jajja said that the free provision of livestock assets to empower rural women is a remarkable initiative of the Chief Minister of Punjab. They congratulated the rural women who received free livestock and said that the assets received from the government of Punjab should be taken care of in a better way. They said that needy, widowed, and divorced women will be able to earn a better livelihood by getting free livestock assets and the production of good breeds of animals will further increase.



BANNU: KP Minister, Pakhtunyar Khan addressing Quami Aman Jirga.

Balochistan plans public-friendly budget

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti emphasized that the culture of "parachute schemes" in public sector development program should be stop and included the public interest projects in the next provincial budget.

He shared these views during a meeting on the progress of the Public Sector Development Program and governance improvements in the province. The meeting, chaired by the Chief Minister, was attended by Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Noshervani, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, Additional Chief Secretary for Planning and Development Hafiz Abdul Basit, Additional Chief Secretary for Home Zahid Saleem, Principal Secretary to CM, Baber Khan, and secretaries of all departments.

During the meeting, the progress, completion, and reforms in service delivery systems of development projects were reviewed in detailed. Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan briefed the meeting on governance improvements, revealing that out of 3,400 closed schools in the province, 1,400 have been reopened.

He also mentioned that following the recruitment of teachers under the School Education Department, an additional 1,800 schools would be operational by the end of this month and the remaining 200 schools are expected to be reopened in the third phase. Secretary of Education, Saleh Muhammad Nasar, added that appointment orders for teachers selected on merit would be issued by April 18.

Expressing concern over absenteeism in government departments, the Chief Minister directed strict action against habitual absentee employees and remarked that such behavior is unacceptable, especially in rural areas where people suffer due to officials' absence from duties, leaving the public facing difficulties. He called

this situation unacceptable and directed local government representatives to monitor the attendance of teachers, doctors, and employees in line departments. Bugti instructed them to compile reports on absenteeism and governance issues, with recommendations for improvement.

In his briefing, Additional Chief Secretary for Planning and Development, Hafiz Abdul Basit, said that following the directives issued in previous review meetings, the pace of expenditures and progress on development projects has accelerated, with 90 percent of the projects expected to be completed by next month. For the first time, Chief Minister Bugti noted, there has been rapid progress on development projects in Balochistan. He mentioned that long-standing ongoing projects would be completed within the current financial year by releasing funds, which would eliminate their long-term financial burden.

He further explained that delays in funds due to departmental obstacles often lead to increased costs for projects, and this issue must be addressed. Bugti emphasized that the construction companies working on slow-moving projects would be blacklisted, and departments failing to utilize allocated resources in a timely manner would face strict accountability. He also clarified that while the government is responsible for setting policies, it is the officers' responsibility to implement them effectively.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister also instructed the launching of a standard public transport system and ordered the swift completion of the Mangi Dam project to ensure the commencement of water distribution. He reiterated that the next fiscal year's budget would be designed to align with the needs of the public, urging all departments to take the needs of the common public into account during their planning.

Resident requests against DSP, SHO

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: A woman resident of Hakimabad area of Nowshera named Noshaba Younus claimed that Station House Officer (SHO) Cantt Waqas Khan and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Muqadim Khan on February 28th raided her home in plain clothes individuals and took her father, Malik Yunus, and brother, Malik Tanveer, into illegal custody.

This she claimed while

addressing press conference at Nowshera press club and added that after a month, when she finally met her father, she saw signs of severe physical abuse. The police had registered a fake robbery case against her father and brother, she claimed.

The SHO, Waqas Khan, repeatedly called her, using inappropriate language, demanding documents of their house and vehicle. She claimed that SHO wanted them to vacate their rented properties, using

police presence to intimidate tenants.

She appealed to Chief Justice of Pakistan, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Regional Police Officer, Mardan to take stern actions against SHO Waqas Khan and DSP Muqadim Khan.

The resident claimed that DSP Muqadim Khan and SHO Waqas Khan will be responsible in case of any harm or damages to her family.

Grand Jirga to play role for sustainable peace

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: In Darazanda, Dera Ismail Khan, a 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 unanimously 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, ensur-

ing their active cooperation in the ongoing efforts. The local Brigade Commander specially attended the jirga, underscoring 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.

Two killed over family dispute

F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: In the Kandaro Kali area of Takht Bhai, a woman who had been angry with her in-laws for the past two years and had come to her parents' house in Kandaro Kali. During the efforts to reach a compromise in the Jirga, the husband of the woman Jangriz and her brother Khalid son of Farid a resident of Nowshera were killed in a firing incident.

Upon receiving information about the incident, SHO Police Station Takht

Bhai Murad Khan along with a police contingent and a medical team from Rescue 1122, reached the scene of the incident and shifted the bodies of the deceased to THQ Takht Bhai for postmortem. Police took action on the spot and arrested two accused involved in the double shooting incident, Nasir son of Bahadur, resident of Qandaro Kale, Takhtbhai, and Omar son of Jangriz resident of Azakhel Nowshera along with weapons.

Bhai Murad Khan along with a police contingent and a medical team from Rescue 1122, reached the scene of the incident and shifted the bodies of the deceased to THQ Takht Bhai for postmortem. Police took action on the spot and arrested two accused involved in the double shooting incident, Nasir son of Bahadur, resident of Qandaro Kale, Takhtbhai, and Omar son of Jangriz resident of Azakhel Nowshera along with weapons.

Rs170m approved for road infrastructure

F.P. Report

KOHAT: District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat Chairman Shafiullah Jan said that with the joint efforts of former Federal Interior Minister and Senior PTI Leader Shehryar Afridi MNA, Rs.170 Million have been approved for the roads of Kohat city including Garhi Mowaz Khan and the Hangu Roads and work on it will start very soon.

In a statement, Shafi Jan MPA, said that he is jointly working with Shehryar Afridi MNA for the development of the area and the trust that the people have posed in him will never be harmed and he will try his level best to come-up to their expectations.

Chairman DDAC, Kohat said that Rs.90 Million have allocated for the City Roads including the Garhi Mowaz Khan Road while Rs.80 Million also been approved for the repair of Hangu Road to Kachha Pakka and a formal tender of it has also been made. Practical work on it will be started soon, he added.

Official looted on gun point Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: Three unidentified gunmen took Ghulam Mustafa Soomro, Regional Director, Health department Sindh, hostage, robbed him of cash, costly mobile phone and valuable items.

This he disclosed while talking to the media, while to the media, victim said that someone in Sachal Colony, which is considered to be a defense area of Larkana city, even the policeman was not seen due to which the criminals took actions without any fear and escaped easily.

Foreign tourists visited Mohan Jo Daro: A 14-persons foreign tourist delegation from the Netherlands and Belgium arrived at Mohan Jo Daro to visit the ancient site of the Indus Valley, on this occasion. Sindh Government's posted guide Javed Ahmed Sheikh gave a complete briefing to the foreign delegation about the 5 thousand years old antiquities, culture and civilization of Mohenjo Daro, after getting the information.

JUI organizes 2-days training workshop: Jamiat Ulema Islam under the chairmanship of District Ameer Maulana Nasir Khalid Mahmood Soomro held a 2-day training workshop on Jamia Islamia Publication of Quran and Hadith at Dodai Road, other internationals expressed their views on the national and political situation and other topics.

Addressing the workshop, Maulana Rashid Mahmood Soomro and others jointly said that the government policies have destroyed the peace and order situation and made the people a disgrace. The training process of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam is conducted under a systematic and communal plan, the purpose of which is not only to provide religious and moral training but also to guide the workers on the political and cultural aspects.

Unidentified armed men abducted tribesman in Birmal

F.P. Report

WANA: A resident of Lower South Waziristan Jan Muhammad Wazir has been abducted by unidentified armed men from the Warai Noor area of Tehsil Birmal. The incident has triggered widespread fear and anxiety throughout the region.

Local residents have expressed strong outrage over the abduction, demanding the immediate recovery of the kidnapped individual. Community leaders and public representatives have issued urgent appeals to the district administration and police department to take swift and effective action to ensure the safe return of Jan Muhammad Wazir.

Locals emphasized that such incidents severely impact the region's law and order situation and contribute to a growing sense of insecurity among the population. They urged the government to apprehend the perpetrators without delay, bring them to justice, and take necessary measures to restore peace and stability in the area.

The District Police Officer (DPO) of Lower Waziristan informed the media that security forces have launched a search operation aimed at the safe and dignified recovery of Jan Muhammad. He further stated that efforts are ongoing to rescue the polio officer from his abductors as soon as possible.

World Health Day observed: World Health Day was observed at the Wana Headquarters Hospital in Lower South Waziristan, where local elders, political leaders, journalists, and people from all walks of life actively participated.

On this occasion, MS Dr. Jan Muhammad, Dr. Akbar, and Dr. Zahin-ul-Abidin addressed the gathering and emphasized the lack of awareness about health protection in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They stressed the

importance of initiating public health campaigns to raise awareness and improve health conditions, enabling people in remote and underdeveloped areas to lead prosperous and healthy lives.

The speakers highlighted the critical role of mothers in early child development, stating that continuous breastfeeding for the first two years of a child's life is essential for building a strong immune system. Healthy children, they said, are a nation's true wealth and are significantly less prone to infections and illnesses. They also warned that due to a lack of proper care and awareness, many newborns are lost every year—a tragedy that is preventable with timely action.

Spring plantation ignored: The Department of Agriculture and Forestry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has completely ignored this year's spring tree plantation campaign without providing any reason. This has caused a wave of deep disappointment among farmers and landowners in the newly merged tribal districts.

Spring is considered a golden opportunity for planting fruit-bearing and wild trees, but unfortunately, the provincial government and the concerned departments took no practical steps this season. Neither were saplings provided, nor was any strategy presented for plantation.

Local farmers and gardeners stated that for the past two decades, the Agriculture and Forestry Department has continuously shown indifference toward the farmers of the tribal districts. They said that whenever saplings or agricultural seeds are distributed at the government level, they are given only to selected and favored individuals, while the actual deserving ones are left out. Farmers also alleged that valuable seeds and saplings are often sold in local markets, raising serious questions about the transparency of the entire system.

PML-N govt places nation on developmental track

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Mardan president Syed Inayat Bacha advocate has said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif, the country has embarked on the path of development. A year ago, when the PML-N came to power, the country was on the verge of bankruptcy and was not ready to give any loan including too friendly countries. Today, the wheel of development has started again.

He was addressing a gathering of party workers at his residence regarding the one-year performance of the Federal Government. A large number of party workers from Mardan Takht Bhai, Katlang, Garhi Kapura and Rustam tehsils participated in the gathering. City President Taj Ghani Advocate, General Secretary Noor Hakim, Tehsil President Fakhr-uz-Zaman Tahir Kheli, Naem Anwar, Haji Abdul Rehman and others also addressed the gathering and appreciated the federal government's one-year performance.

District President Syed Inayat Bacha said that today is a historic day for Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif. On the instructions of Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif and Party KP President Engineer Ameer Muqam, a one-year celebration of his achievements is being celebrated across the district. He said that a year ago, our situation was like Sri Lanka's, the country was on the verge of default, but the Muslim League leadership brought the country back on track and stabilized the economy. He said that due to the federal government's better policies, the inflation rate has come down from forty percent to minus four, and the price of electricity and flour has decreased significantly.

The district President of the Muslim League said that the PTI is a destructive group that tried to prevent overseas Pakistanis from sending remittances, but overseas Pakistanis are smart and patriotic and by rejecting the destructive group friendly countries provided full support, while the trust of the IMF was

restored. He said that with the cooperation of the federal government, free flour was distributed to the poor up to the UC level. The PML-N leaders strongly criticized the provincial government and said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has incurred a debt of 80 billion dollars in thirteen years.

There is no such thing as development. No work is being done without bribery and commission. They said that Maryam Nawaz has made Punjab Europe compared to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister will soon visit Mardan. They will inform the leaders about the problems and demands of the workers. Workers are the asset of the party. The district president of the Muslim League directed the party officials and workers to go from street to street and village to village and inform the people about the one-year work of the federal government. The next period will also be of the Muslim League and there will be a green flag government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well.

‘Judges to take decision with honesty’

F.P. Report

BANNU: Peshawar High Court Bannu bench judges including Justice Muhammad Tariq Afridi and Justice Abdul Fayaz said that judges should make their decisions with such honesty and added that Allah Almighty has said in the Holy Quran that if you do justice, you will go to Paradise, if you make bad decisions, you will go to Hell. If the people get justice immediately, inequalities will be eliminated from the society and the positive face of the society will come out.

They expressed these views while addressing a ceremony held at the District Court Bannu on the retirement of District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Muzammil Khattak. On this occasion, newly

appointed District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Naseem, Additional Sessions Judge Admin Muhammad Asghar Ali Mehsud, Senior Vice President of the Judicial Employees Union Naseeb Niaz Khan, and female judges were also present. They said that if judges and judges weigh the scales of justice and make decisions, not only will the courts and judges be respected in the society but also in this world and the hereafter. We will be successful in the days and worlds.

The guiding principles of the Holy Quran and Islam are there for judges. We have to do justice without any pressure. When there is justice in the society, peace will prevail. He said that in the true sense, Advocate Supreme Court Shah Nawaz Khan Sikandri, and the party vote bank.

solve most of the problems of the society.

Bar Association elections to held today: District Bar Association elections will be held today. All arrangements are complete. There will be a clash between ANP and Grand Alliance. Allah Nawaz Khan Advocate will be contesting for the presidency from ANP, while Akbarullah Advocate from Grand Alliance will be contesting for PTI.

A contest is expected between prominent lawyer Usman Khan Sikandri Advocate of Malgari Lawyers and Inamullah of Grand Alliance for the general secretary. However, Usman Sikandri's position seems strong due to the influence of Usman Khan Sikandri's father, Advocate Supreme Court Shah Nawaz Khan Sikandri, and the party vote bank.

PFA conducts 3532 inspects in March

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) teams in Toba Tek Singh carried out a total of 3,532 inspections during the month of March. As a result, 1,250 food businesses were served with improvement notices.

Under the supervision of Deputy Director (Operations), 19 units involved in adulteration and food fraud were sealed, while legal cases

were registered against six. A total of Rs 4.526 million in fines were imposed on various food outlets for poor hygiene conditions and violations of food safety standards.

During the operations, 2,140 litres of adulterated and fake milk, over 170 kilograms of meat and fat from sick and dead animals, 5,400 substandard ice lollies, 827 litres of counterfeit and low-quality beverages, 91 kilograms of unsafe spices, 1,400 packets

of prohibited Chinese salt, 101 litres of substandard oil and ghee, and 228 kilograms of expired and unhygienic food items were discarded on the spot. Moreover, 45 machines and tools used in food adulteration were confiscated. DG PFA Muhammad Asim Javid stated that strict actions have been taken against those producing fake milk and khoya, selling meat of sick animals and manufacturing counterfeit beverages.



Thousands of Ukrainian civilians still held by Russia

MOSCOW (AP): When she heard her front door open almost two years ago, Kostiantyn Zinovkin's mother thought her son had returned home because he forgot something. Instead, men in balaclavas burst into the apartment in Melitopol, a southern Ukrainian city occupied by Russian forces.

They said Zinovkin was detained for a minor infraction and would be released soon. They used his key to enter, said his wife, Liusiena, and searched the flat so thoroughly that they tore it apart "into molecules." But Zinovkin wasn't released. Weeks after his May 2023 arrest, the Russians told his mother he was plotting a terrorist attack. He's now standing trial on charges his family calls absurd.

Zinovkin is one of thousands of civilians in Russian captivity. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy insists their release, along with prisoners of war, will be an important step toward ending the 3-year-old war. So far, it hasn't appeared high on the agenda in US talks with Moscow and Kyiv. "While politicians discuss natural resources, possible territorial concessions, geopolitical interests and even Zelenskyy's suit in the Oval Office, they're not talking about people," said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Center for Civil Liberties, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022. In January, the center and other Ukrainian and Russian rights groups launched "People First," a campaign that says any peace settlement must prioritize the release of everyone they say are captives, including Russians jailed for protesting the war, as well as Ukrainian children who were illegally deported.

"You can't achieve sus-

tainable peace without taking into account the human dimension," Matviichuk told The Associated Press. It's unknown how many Ukrainian civilians are in custody, both in occupied regions and in Russia. Ukraine's human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets in 2023 estimated over 20,000. Matviichuk says her group received over 4,000 requests to help civilian detainees. She notes it's against international law to detain noncombatants in war. Oleg Orlov, co-founder of the Russian rights group Memorial, says advocates know at least 1,672 Ukrainian civilians are in Moscow's custody.

"There's a larger number of them that we don't know about," added Orlov, whose organization won the Nobel alongside Matviichuk's group and is involved in People First. Many are detained for months without charges and don't know why they're being held. Orlov said, Russian soldiers detained Mykyta Shkriabin, then 19, in Ukraine's Kharkiv region in March 2022. He left the basement where his family was sheltering from fighting to get supplies and never returned. Shkriabin was detained even though he wasn't charged with a crime, said his lawyer, Leonid Solovyov. In 2023, the authorities began referring to him as a prisoner of war, a status Solovyov seeks to contest since the student wasn't a combatant.

Shkriabin's mother, Tetiana, told AP last month she still doesn't know where her son is held. In three years, she's received two letters from him saying he's doing well and that she shouldn't worry. She's hoping for "a prisoner exchange, a repatriation, or something," Shkriabina

said. Without hope, "how does one hang in there?" Others face charges that their relatives say are fabricated. After being seized in Melitopol, Zinovkin was jailed for over two years and charged with seven offenses, including plotting a terrorist attack, assembling weapons and high treason, his wife Liusiena Zinovkina told AP, describing the charges as "absurd."

While vocally pro-Ukrainian and against Russia's occupation, her husband couldn't plot to bomb anyone and had no weapons skills, she said. Especially nonsensical is the treason charge, she said, because Russian law stipulates that only its citizens can be charged with that crime, and Zinovkin has never held Russian citizenship, unless it was forced upon him in jail. A conviction could bring life in prison. Ukrainian civilian Serhii Tsyhipa, 63, was convicted of espionage and sentenced to 13 years in a maximum-security prison after he disappeared in March 2022 while walking his dog in Nova Kakhovka in the partially occupied Kherson region, said his wife, Olena. The dog also vanished.

Tsyhipa, a journalist, was wearing a jacket with a large red cross sewn on it. Both he and his wife, Olena, had those jackets, she told AP, because they volunteered to distribute food and other essentials when Russian troops invaded. Serhii Tsyhipa protested the occupation, and Olena believes that led to his arrest. He was held for months in Crimea and finally charged with espionage in December 2022. Almost a year later, in October 2023, Tsyhipa was convicted and sentenced in a trial that lasted only three hearings.

Medical copter crashes into sea off Japan, killing three

TOKYO (AP): A medical transport helicopter fell into the sea in southwestern Japan, killing the patient and two other people, the Japan coast guard said. The pilot, Hiroshi Hamada, 66; Kazuto Yoshitake, a helicopter mechanic and a 28-year-old nurse, Sakura Kunitake, were rescued by the coast guard after they were found in the waters clinging to inflatable life-savers. The three suffered hypothermia but were conscious, an official with the coast guard told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Yoshitake's first name was initially given with a different spelling, but the coast guard corrected it later. The bodies of medical doctor, Kei Arakawa, 34; Mitsuki Motoishi, 86, the patient, and her caretaker Kazuyoshi Motoishi, 68, were later recovered by a Japan Air Self-Defense Force helicopter. The coast guard deployed two planes and three ships to the area as part of the rescue operation. The helicopter was heading to a hospital in Fukuoka from an airport in Nagasaki prefecture when it crashed, according to the coast guard. The cause of the accident remains under investigation, the coast guard said.

US judge scolds Trump officials

WASHINGTON (BBC): A US judge has issued a scathing opinion against the Trump administration after immigration officials admitted to having mistakenly deported a man living in the US to a prison in El Salvador. The opinion issued by US District Judge Paula Xinis reaffirms her earlier ruling that demands Kilmar Abrego Garcia be returned to the US.

The judge said Mr Garcia was seized "without any lawful authority" and held "without legal basis", in "direct contravention" of US law. She calls his situation a "grievous error" that "shocks the conscience". Trump officials argue that they are unable to return him because they lack the authority to remove him from jail in El Salvador. The Justice Department has asked an appeals court to dismiss Judge Xinis' order. The appeals court is expected to rule.

Mr Garcia was among 238 Venezuelans and 23 Salvadorans the Trump administration deported to El Salvador's notorious megaprison, the Center for the Confinement of Terrorism (Cecot). Officials alleged they were gang members and thus subject to deportation. Mr Garcia was found to have been wrongly removed in part because a US immigration judge had granted him legal protection from deportation in 2019. His lawyer has denied any gang ties and said Mr Garcia has never been charged with a crime.

Mr Garcia's family, including his wife Jennifer Vasquez Sura, a US citizen, have been calling for his release since his deportation in mid-March. Judge Xinis' 22-page opinion chastises US officials for claiming that there was little they could do to remedy what they have described as an "administrative error" that led to his deportation. "As defendants acknowledge, they had no legal authority to arrest him, no justification to detain him, and no grounds to send him to El Salvador - let alone deliver him into one of the most dangerous prisons in the Western Hemisphere," Xinis wrote. "Having confessed grievous error, the defendants now argue that this court lacks the power to hear this case, and they lack the power to order Abrego Garcia's return."

She added that the government's arguments "fail as a matter of law." "Surely, Defendants do not mean to suggest that they have wholesale erased the substantive and procedural protections of [federal immigration law] in one fell swoop by dropping those individuals in Cecot without recourse," Xinis wrote. White House officials continued to defend the deportation. Attorney General Pam Bondi appeared on Fox News and reiterated the government's claim that Mr Garcia is a member of the MS-13 gang, which has been designated a terrorist organization by the Trump administration.



IWO TO: Japanese Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, center, escorted by a member of Japan Self Defense Force as they arrive at the island of Iwo Jima, now officially called Iwo To in Japan.

Venezuelan migrants in US shipped to an El Salvador prison

NEW YORK (AP): It was just a few sentences in a meandering, hourlong presidential speech. Along with talk about falling egg prices and a vow to expel "corrupt forces" from the US government, President Donald Trump noted that hundreds of members of the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua had been arrested.

"You'll be reading a lot of stories tomorrow about what we've done with them," he said at the Justice Department on March 14. "These are tough people and bad people and we're getting them out of our country." Trump was previewing drama to come that would involve clandestine flights to another continent, a notorious prison, innocents among criminals and a dramatic confrontation between his assertions of presidential power and a federal judge who Trump said had overreached.

The president's invocation of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to justify deporting more than 130 Venezuelan men, some of them gang members and others who claim to have been in the United States legally and were seemingly expelled because of their ordinary tattoos, played out over a frenetic 24 hours. By the time Trump had spoken, hundreds of detained immigrants had been quietly shuttled from across the US to South Texas. Planes had been chartered to take them to their ultimate destination, El Salvador, under a deal with President

Nayib Bukele, who proudly calls himself "world's coolest dictator." The men were herded into a maximum security mega prison in El Salvador, where officials quickly made a show of the new inmates having their heads shaved, then standing shoulder to shoulder in cells so crowded that some prisoners do not have beds.

But soon, stories began to surface that the scene was not quite as it appeared. Some of them men had long insisted they had no gang ties, and their families had produced documents showing they had no criminal records. "I've been doing this for a long time, and I've seen some pretty weird stuff," said Texas attorney John Dutton, who represented a man who disappeared into the Salvadoran prison. "But to do this in the middle of the night, to send people to another country, and straight to a prison when they haven't been convicted of a crime?" It makes no sense." Trump has been promising for years that he would invoke the Alien Enemies Act to combat illegal immigration. He repeatedly insisted, falsely, that the US was facing an invasion of criminal immigrants. Tren de Aragua became the face of that threat, and the first target of that law in decades.

Crafted during the presidency of John Adams, the law gives the president broad powers to imprison and deport noncitizens in times of war. It

has been used just three times: during the War of 1812 and the two world wars. The Trump administration had begun edging closer to calling the criminal migrant issue a war, most notably by designating eight Latin American criminal groups, including Tren de Aragua, as "foreign terrorist organizations." The administration was telegraphing its logical next move. Immigration lawyers prepared to fight back.

The flights began arriving in the small South Texas city on March 12. Using jets chartered by a branch of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the ICE Air flights landed in Harlingen from Dallas, Phoenix, El Paso, Texas, and Nashville, Tennessee. At least three came from Alexandria, Louisiana, a hub for that state's network of immigration detention centers. But it wasn't, March 15, that it became clear to a retired financial executive in Ohio that something unusual was happening. Two flights, Tom Cartwright noticed, were scheduled from Harlingen to El Salvador. Deportations are fairly rare, as are deportation flights from Harlingen to El Salvador, said Cartwright, a flight data analyst for the advocacy group Witness at the Border, whose social media feeds are closely watched in immigration circles. "All that came together and said to me: There's something weird here."

Texas county that swung to Trump grapples with immigration crackdown

LOS FRESNOS, Texas (AP): Leonardo Baez and Nora Avila-Guel's bakery in the Texas community of Los Fresnos is a daily stop for many residents to share gossip over coffee and pick up cakes and pastries for birthdays, office parties or themselves.

When Homeland Security Investigations agents showed up at Abby's Bakery in February and arrested the owners and eight employees, residents of Los Fresnos were shocked. But the bakery's owners, Baez and Avila-Guel, a Mexican couple who are legal US permanent residents, could lose everything after being accused of concealing and harboring immigrants who were in the US illegally. It's a rare case in which business owners face criminal charges rather than just a fine.

"I was surprised because I know that they're not taking advantage of the people," Esteban Rodriguez, 43, said after pulling into the bakery's parking lot to discover it was closed. "It was more like helping out people. They didn't have nowhere to go, instead of

them being on the streets." The reaction in the town of 8,500 residents may show the limits of support for President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown in a majority Hispanic region dotted with fields of cotton, sugarcane and red grapefruit where Republicans made gains in last year's elections. Cameron County voted for a GOP president for the first time since 2004. For neighboring Starr County, it was the first time since 1896. Los Fresnos, which is 90% Latino and counts the school district as its largest employer, is about a half-hour drive from the US-Mexico border. Hundreds of school bus drivers, painters, retirees and parishioners from the nearby Catholic church came into Abby's Bakery each day. Customers with silver trays and tongs select pastries from glass-door cabinets.

Six of Abby's eight employees were in the US on visitor visas but none had work permits when Homeland Security Investigations agents came to the business Feb. 12. The owners acknowledged they knew that, according to a

complaint. Employees lived in a room with six beds and shared two bathrooms in the same building as the bakery, according to an agent's affidavit. Baez, 55, and Avila-Guel, 46, have pleaded not guilty. They referred questions to their attorneys, who noted the workers were not held against their will and there was no attempt to hide their presence, as a smuggler would. As green card holders, the couple could be deported if they are convicted. They have five children who are US citizens. The bakery closed for several days after their arrest, drawing about 20 people to protest on an uncharacteristically chilly evening.

Monsignor Pedro Brisen'o of St. Cecilia Church often visited before early morning Mass for the campechana, a flaky, crunchy pastry dough layered with caramelized sugar. His routine was interrupted when plainclothes immigration agents arrived in unmarked vehicles. "A woman came here crying. She said, 'Father, Father, they're taking my broth-

er,'" Brisen'o said. The priest walked over and saw agents use zip ties to bind employees' hands. There is overwhelming bipartisan support to deport people who are in the US illegally and have been convicted of a violent crime, with 82% in favor, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll in January. Support softens considerably for deportations of all people in the country illegally, with 43% in favor and 37% opposed.

Trump and top aides repeatedly emphasize they are deporting criminals. But, as Homan often says, others in the country illegally who are there when officers arrest criminals also will be deported, a departure from the Biden administration's practices. So far, Trump has avoided the large-scale factory and office raids that characterized his first term and that of Republican President George W. Bush. Scattered reports of smaller operations included the recent arrests of 37 people at a roofing business in northern Washington state.

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, 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.

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."

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. 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.

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.

Moroccans protest Israel's offensive in Gaza

RABAT (AP): Tens of thousands of Moroccans protested Israel's latest offensive in Gaza, putting fury toward US President Donald Trump near the center of their grievances. In the largest protest Morocco has seen in months, demonstrators denounced Israel, the United States and their own government. Some stepped on Israeli flags, held banners showing slain Hamas leaders and waved posters juxtaposing Trump alongside displaced Palestinians fleeing their homes.

Organizers condemned Israel's ongoing military operation in Gaza. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed since Israel renewed air and ground strikes last month, aimed at pressuring Hamas to release remaining hostages. Such protests have erupted across the Middle East and North Africa, where leaders typically worry about demonstrations undermining domestic stability. Pro-Palestinian rallies were also staged this weekend in the capitals of Tunisia and

Yemen as well as in Morocco's most populous city Casablanca.

In countries that have historically aligned with the US, anti-Trump backlash has emerged as a theme. Demonstrators in Rabat condemned his proposal to displace millions of Palestinians to make way for the redevelopment of Gaza, as well as the US efforts to pursue pro-Palestinian activists. Still, many Moroccans said they saw Trump's policies as mostly consistent with his predecessor, Joe Biden's. "(Trump) has made the war worse," said Mohammed Toussi, who travelled from Casablanca with his family to protest. "Biden did some things but Trump has shown it all," he added, likening their positions but not their messaging.

Protestors, Toussi said, remain angry about Morocco's 2020 decision to normalize ties with Israel. Abdelhak El Arabi, an adviser to Morocco's former Islamist prime minister, said the reasons Moroccans were protesting had grown throughout the

war. He predicted popular anger would continue until the war ends. "It's not a war, Gaza is getting erased from the earth," the 62-year-old Tamesna resident said. Demonstrations have included a range of groups, including the Islamist association al Adl Wal Ihsan. Moroccan authorities tolerate most protests, but have arrested some activists who have rallied in front of businesses or foreign embassies or implicated the monarchy in their complaints.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages. Most have since been released in ceasefire agreements and other deals. More than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed as part of Israel's offensive, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't say whether those killed are civilians or combatants. The war has left most of Gaza in ruins, and at its height displaced around 90% of the population.

Le Pen calls embezzlement conviction a 'witch hunt'

PARIS (BBC): France's far-right National Rally (RN) leader Marine Le Pen has called a court ruling banning her from running for office for five years a "witch hunt". "I won't give up," she told thousands of flag-waving supporters in Place Vauban, close to the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

She was found guilty of helping to embezzle 2.9m (£2.5m) of EU funds between 2004 and 2016 for use by her party. Le Pen has appealed. At the rally she claimed the ruling was a "political decision", adding: "We are not asking to be above the law, but to not be below the law." Bardella, the president of the RN party, told the rally that the court ruling was "a direct attack on democracy and a wound to millions of patriotic French people".

He said he did not want to "discredit all judges" but claimed that the judgement against Le Pen was aimed

at "eliminating her from the presidential race" in 2027. In reply Gabriel Attal, the head of French President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Renaissance party, responded by saying "you steal, you pay". Attal also denounced "unprecedented interference" in France's affairs, pointing to support for Le Pen from several right-wing leaders, including Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Hungary's PM Viktor Orban.

US President Donald Trump called her conviction a "very big deal". A poll by BFMTV after ruling showed that many people in France believe that justice was service in the Le Pen case without bias - 57% according to the poll. The Paris Court of Appeal said it should be able to provide a decision on the case by the summer of 2026 - several months

before the 2027 presidential election. Le Pen was gearing up to run for the presidency for a fourth time and had a good chance of winning. On top of the ban on running for public office, Le Pen was also handed a 100,000 (£82,635) fine and four-year prison sentence, of which two years will be suspended. This will not apply until the appeals process is exhausted, which could take several years. RN spokesperson Laurent Jacobelli said that although the party would fight to have Le Pen as candidate, its 29-year-old president, Bardella, was "the most naturally legitimate" alternative. Bardella has steered clear of being drawn into the discussion at this stage, refusing to say whether he was National Rally's "plan B" and saying after the ruling that the French should be "outraged" by the sentence.

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Are Americans angry with Trump's tariffs?

THE protests that have erupted across the United States against President Donald Trump's policies – and not just the tariffs – seem to suggest the businessman-turned-president has lost his popularity which enabled him to win the presidential election in November 2024 for a second time.

Of course, Trump made no secret of what he intended to do if there was no clarity as to how he would do it. He promised to cut the size of government, but it was a surprise that he created an agency called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and got businessman and tycoon Elon Musk to head it.

Then he took swift action against immigrants, deporting them. He has not been able to deport all the illegal immigrants in the country, but he has made an example of the few whom he deported. For example, illegal immigrants were sent to a prison on El Salvador, and another batch of illegal immigrants was sent in an US Air Force plane to India in chains.

Then he announced reciprocal tariffs against all countries which had been trading with the United States, resulting in absurd and comic results of making the poorest countries in Africa pay the highest tariffs. The other big thing is that he has closed the federal education department saying that it is for the states to decide what is to be taught in schools.

There is a pattern in all of these diverse acts of President Trump. He has taken attention-grabbing one-dimensional decisions, which attract public outcry, and this seems to give him immense satisfaction. So, the protests are against all of the policy decisions he has taken in the last two-and-a-half months, and most of the protesters that the London-based news agency spoken to were older citizens who were worried about the social security payments and their medical bills.

And there are the usual suspects – the liberals who oppose Trump and the Republicans with conviction and zeal. The liberals have sensed that ordinary Americans, who are more conservative in the traditional sense than liberals, are both unhappy and angry with Trump's policy antics. The protests would be much less effective if they include only the traditional anti-Trump, anti-Republican liberals. The protests are supposed to continue and if they gather momentum, and if more ordinary citizens who had voted for Trump as president last November come out against the president's policies, then it means that Trump is losing ground. President Trump cannot be expected to do any kind of course correction because of the negative fallout of his decisions.

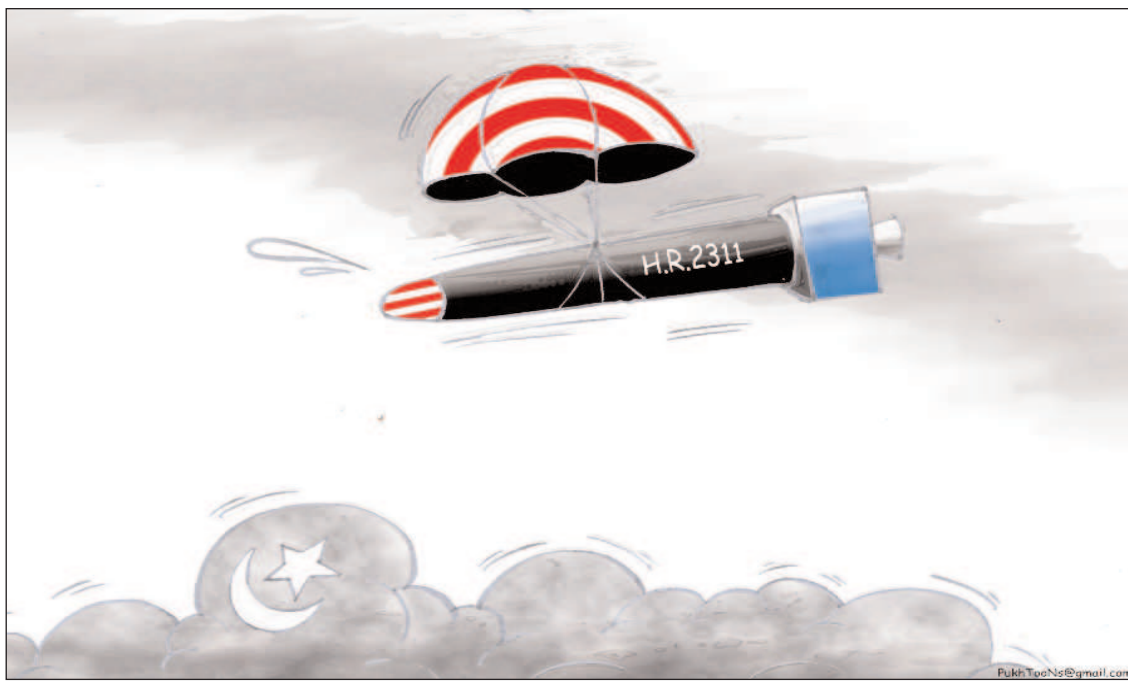
He is likely to stick to his positions rather than change them. More than the protests, it is the state of the American economy which will push Trump into a corner. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has already indicated that the hiked tariffs could push up inflation. Trump's tariffs would get implemented from April 10. But 10 per cent base tariff has already kicked in.

What Trump has accomplished is that he has raised a storm in the global markets, which could settle faster than expected. Trump is only too willing to bargain with other countries, and get some benefits for Americans buying global goods and services.

What is doubtful is whether Trump's policies will achieve the emotive target of Making America Great Again (MAGA). American manufacturing is unlikely to revive because of the tariff protection that Trump has created. But it is a deeply-held conviction that Trump has held for more than 40 years – he said in an Oprah Winfrey interview in the 1980s that Americans are being cheated because of low tariffs which enabled other countries to sell in America – and it is unlikely to be shaken because it has failed on the ground.

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How Musk ushered 4chan into US politics

Ayman Makarem

IN the past few days, US media have been reporting that billionaire Elon Musk will step back from his leading role in President Donald Trump's administration. This is after his highly publicised stint as unofficial head of the nongovernmental agency DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) and various political initiatives – most recently, his campaign for the election of a conservative judge to a vacated Supreme Court seat in the state of Wisconsin – backfired.

How and when Musk will make his exit remains to be seen, but one thing is for sure: He will leave behind lasting damage that goes way beyond the disruptive work of his invention, DOGE. Through his behaviour online and offline, Musk has introduced incredibly toxic and cynical politics from the obscure fringes of the internet into the chambers of power in the world's foremost superpower.

His Nazi gesture at an event following Trump's inauguration on January 20 was a perfect illustration. Musk immediately weighed in on the accusation that he made a Nazi salute with a mix of denial and humour, making a slew of Nazi-themed jokes on his X account.

Doing something outrageous and then denying the obvious is a clear case of "trolling" – a favourite practice in fringe internet spaces where toxic and cynical political views dominate. Among them is an infamous website called 4chan, which Musk is believed to frequent. Just at the start of this year, he decided to change his X account name to "Kekius Maximus" and his profile picture to a Pepe the Frog image – memes taken straight from 4chan. He has also openly referred to the site on his X account.

Although many have heard of the website 4chan, there is still very little public understanding of what it is and how it is connected to the rise of the far right in the US. Simply put, it is a website where people can share

text and image messages anonymously with no registration or login for users. It is a space for discussions, humour and the creation of an online community. Founded in 2003, 4chan reached 8.2 million visitors monthly in 2010 and 22 million in 2021. Due to the anonymous cover afforded by the website's structure, users feel confident to express problematic and fringe political views usually mixed with a veil of humour. This irony-laden form of political expression has come to define the website. Often you would see racist, sexist and/or homophobic slurs posed as jokes. Anyone who calls these out is mocked even further for their naivety or sincerity. The disclaimer under the main forum on 4chan, /b/, states: "The stories and information posted here are artistic works of fiction and falsehood. Only a fool would take anything posted here as fact." This is exactly why journalists and commentators who took Musk's denial of his Nazi salute at face value completely missed the point. To those far-right fans of Musk, the appeal of his actions was in fact reinforced by the very denial, by the fact that he did a fascist gesture so brazenly and then "got away with it". Musk engaged in a transgressive act against what he describes as the "woke mind virus" or more traditionally "PC [political correctness] culture". By adding humour to the equation, Musk and his fans were able to further obfuscate and derail any serious discussion about the implications of normalising Nazi symbols.

All of this is the primary function of "trolling". Posed as merely a form of play, a way of pushing people's buttons "for the lolz" (laughs), far-right actors are able to use this technique to shift the Overton window – or the range of acceptable terms or opinions – to the right.

Immediately after Musk's salute, far-right figures such as Nick Fuentes and Andrew Tate, mimicked the same salute and used the same dis-

tancing excuses that Musk employed. These are people who have gained tremendous amounts of social and political capital through online subcultures.

However, it is not only the far right that employs memes and other expressions developed online to further its political goals. In fact, some may argue that these subcultures emerged as a response to what is described as the "memefication" of politics. In her book Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right, Angela Nagle traces the origins of these subcultures to the US election cycle of 2008. Many will remember the "Hope" posters of Barack Obama's presidential election campaign, which went viral across the internet. To Nagle, this was a crucial turning point in the use of memes, which at that point were a fresh and exciting new medium, in US politics.

Despite the rhetoric of hope and change, the Obama administration did not deliver on its vague, utopian promises. This mismatch between the messaging and the reality spurred online debates that promoted mistrust as a healthy response to the insincerity of the political class. Thereafter, on 4chan and other platforms, anyone who expressed strong support for any one party, cause or movement became the object of ridicule. This essentially formed a type of cynical, nihilistic view of the world and our place in it. Fast forward to the 2024 election cycle, these dynamics were very much present again. Kamala Harris's campaign relied on a rebranding of the Obama campaign and used the same empty memes, instead of focusing on policy or anything else rooted in reality. Not only did she rely heavily on celebrity endorsements, but also had her X account banner written with the same font and colour as the "brat" meme, a trend inspired by pop star Charli XCX's Brat album cover.

The liberal political establishment in the US, which has further revealed its deep flaws over the past year and a half with its disregard for the struggles of poor Americans and triumphalist support for Israel's genocidal war in Gaza, has not learned the lessons of the past decade and a half. Relying on hollow messaging while issues compound for most Americans – from skyrocketing inflation to growing inequality to climate collapse – does not invigorate voters.

Politics is not simply a meme battle. This is a lesson that should also be heeded by the wider public, especially those who re-shared the infamous Musk salute as a form of satire or ridicule. Even though many may have believed they were disparaging him by adding insults or jokes to it, in fact, they helped spread and legitimise the act itself as a spectacle. It is time to acknowledge that we cannot meme our way out of fascism. The only way to defeat fascist trolls is to refuse to enter the arena, to refuse to play on their terms. That is, to insist on grounding discussions and actions in reality, to reject any of their obfuscations and to build actual (offline) power to resist the rise of the far right.

It is definitely no easy task, especially when the far right has entered the highest chambers of power in the US and has made strong gains in South America and Europe. The marriage of far-right discourse and symbolism matched with an unprecedented capture of wealth by the billionaire class and the rising authoritarianism within these countries has thrown many into hopelessness and despair.

In response to the rise of the likes of Musk, we need a kind of repoliticised hope to combat the intentional despair feeding the far right. We need a sincere hope that is rooted in an acknowledgement that we cannot afford to do nothing and that there is a way to resist through collective action, to build new alternatives and to embrace new visions of the future.

World's new diet of trade wars and protectionism

Chris Doyle

DID Americans feel liberated on April 2? It is hard to determine from what exactly. What did President Donald Trump mean by the US having been "looted, pillaged, raped and plundered by nations near and far?"

It was not just the motivation behind the extraordinary blanket imposition of tariffs that was not clear. Everything about the announcement was opaque, confusing and counterproductive.

All economies have to be prepared for shocks that can precipitate sudden stock market crashes, but it is hard to recall an act of such great self-inflicted financial harm.

This was no small event. This was the world's most powerful leader ripping up the global economic order that had prevailed ever since the end of the Second World War; the era of Bretton Woods, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the World Trade Organization. It spells the death of globalization and a return to the sort of protectionism not seen since the 1930s. It was, in many ways, a trashing of the very economic order that had propelled the US economy to being the most dynamic, most competitive and most powerful on the planet.

But given the nature of decision-making in the

Trump White House, uncertainty remains. Many still ask if it will actually happen as set out in the Rose Garden. Trump is not immune from the impact of stock market falls. His administration has not been averse to sudden shifts and reversals of policies, including on tariffs.

On the assumption this all goes ahead, what could be the impact? It certainly raises questions about doing business with the US. Businesses want stability, to be able to plan ahead, but how is that possible with this form of decision-making? Investors may take their money elsewhere.

Does the US risk creating bad blood with erstwhile allies? This will hit the US economy, but it will also risk a global recession, even depression. Few leaders were calling for the US to do this. Few want a trade war even now, but it looks inevitable. It is just a question of the extent.

China, which was hit by tariffs of 34 percent in addition to the 20 percent previously imposed, did not wait to consider the ramifications. In all probability, the EU will respond too. Some other states have pressed the pause button. The UK, for example, has decided not to retaliate at this stage but to push for a trade deal with the

US, notably not described as a "free trade deal" in Westminster. Other states may also look for trade deals with the US to offset the worst effects, but on what sort of terms?

Anomalies abound. Reunion, the island in the Indian Ocean, got hit by a 10 percent tariff even though it is part of France and therefore the EU, whose rate is 20 percent. Countries like Lesotho, whose major exports are diamonds, were also hit hard, but this only means that US consumers will have to pay more for their diamonds.

And just what is the point of imposing a 41 percent tariff on Syria, which the US has sanctioned for decades? In 2024, the US imported just \$11 million of goods from the crisis-stricken state.

Israelis may want an explanation why their great ally and protector has decided to impose a 17 percent tariff on their goods. Myanmar, which has just endured an appalling earthquake, was hit by a massive 45 percent.

Perhaps most bizarre of all was the identity of one of the few countries not on the list: Russia.

It is sanctioned, said administration officials, but in 2024 US-Russia trade was valued at \$3.5 billion.

There are other unfore-

seen consequences. While the EU got hit by a blanket 20 percent tariff, the UK will only suffer 10 percent. Brexiters claim this is a wonderful benefit of leaving the UK, but the reality is that it is now harder and more expensive for Britain to trade with both the EU and the US than it was before Brexit. Will the trickier challenge will be Northern Ireland, which gets a lower tariff than the Republic of Ireland to the south. This will reopen the whole border issue that bedeviled the Brexit talks.

This is politics determining economic policy. It is about trying to impose US economic dominance, but with serious questions as to whether it can work. Who wins out of this? Inflation is likely to spiral, most economists say. Trump came to power promising to reduce the cost of living but, according to the Federal Reserve chair, this will slow growth. Even some of his richest supporters will have been hit hard by the stock market crash, the worst since the COVID-19 pandemic. And what about the dollar? Is its status as the world's strongest and most stable currency waning?

For the moment, it feels like the world will have to face a diet of trade wars and protectionism. It will be a case of battenning down the hatches.

India, OIC and Pakistan

Hanif Khan

THE Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an international organization which comprises of fifty seven Muslim countries. Its creation took place on 25th September, 1969, after the brutal arson of Majid-e-Aqsa in occupied Jerusalem. The then president of Bangladesh, Ziaur-Rehman conceived the idea of creation of the OIC with certain objectives. The core objectives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation includes: protection of the interest of Muslims across the globe, promoting international peace and solidarity, promoting human rights, and advancing education and technology. It represents more than twenty two per cent of the world population and two per cent of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The number of its members increased over the time and recently, India has aimed to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for certain reasons.

Process of Securing Membership of OIC:

The article 3 and 4 of the charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation state that any country seek membership of the organization should submit an application for membership. However, it will require the approval of the Council of Foreign Ministers on the basis of agreed criteria. A mutual consensus of all the member states is required for a state to secure membership of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation.

Thirst of India for Joining OIC:

India has been striving hard for the last several years to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). There are several key factors due to which India wants a membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). It includes economic ties with member countries, boosting energy sector, representation of Indian Muslims at both regional and international levels and most prominently, to become a competitor against Pakistan within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to challenge Kashmir's Cause.

The thirst of India for joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is not new. Rather she has been trying hard for the last many years to become 58th member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). History reveals that India made attempts in 1984, 1993 and 2004 to become member of the OIC but in vain. There are numerous factors due to which India thinks the membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation is vital. However, the following factors are of Prime Importance:-

Firstly, India's population grows at a rapid pace and it requires a strong economy in order to meet the need of massive population. The need for food, employment, education and health of huge populace have compelled India to approach the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for membership. India thinks that joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) can reduce pressure of fragile economy by exploring trade and business with the member countries.

Secondly, the 21st century is considered as the era of blocs and alliances. The sensitive geopolitical landscape of South Asia calls for making alliances. No country can excel in safeguarding its national interests without entering into blocs and/or alliance. India is no exception and for this purpose, it has been struggling hard to become a member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. It wants to achieve its foreign policy goals in economic, political and strategic arena. It is already a member of BRICS, G-20, SAARC, etc.

Thirdly, India is the third largest Muslim country in the world. According to the 2021 census, more than 200 million Muslims live in India which make its fourteenth per cent population. As the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is purely an organisation of Muslim countries and it represents Muslims community across the globe, that is why, India claims that being a country with huge Muslim population, the membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Should be given to her.

Finally, Kashmir is the bone of contention between

Pakistan and India since the partition of Indian sub-continent. Till today, both Pakistan and India had fought four wars over Kashmir. The stances of both parties regarding Kashmir are crystal clear. Pakistan has, time and again, raised voice for Kashmir by using the platforms of the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Being a strategic ally of the US, India has occupied Kashmir illegally despite several resolutions of the United Nations against the brutalities of India. Indian think Tank thinks that it should deter Pakistan within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and in order to achieve this very goal, it is crucial to become a part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Prospects for India's Inclusion in OIC:

There are certain prospects of India's membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Most of the gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) enjoy cordial trade and economic ties with India. Consequently, these Gulf countries are inclined to give membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries to India. Recently in 2019, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) invited the then Foreign Minister of India, Sushma Suraj to participate in the summit of the Organization of Islamic Countries in the United Arab Emirates despite the displeasure of Pakistan. Hence, it is analysed that most of the Muslim countries do not hesitate to give membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to India due to trade and economic ties of the formers with the latter.

Challenges to India in Joining OIC:

However, Pakistan is the main challenge to India's inclusion to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Pakistan rightly thinks that India can jeopardize its longstanding stance regarding Kashmir by becoming a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. India can better utilise the platform of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation as a launching pad to deteriorate Pakistan's diplomacy regarding Kashmir issue. Hence, it is believed that Pakistan is the most visible challenge to India's inclusion in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Moreover, Pakistan has enjoyed cordial relations with all the members of the Organization of Islamic Organization especially Kingdom of Saudi Arab and the United Arab Emirates and ill today, both the countries rescued Pakistan at the time of every financial difficulty. Hence, it is not less than a challenge for India to persuade these countries for granting membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Options with Pakistan:

Pakistan has certain options, if utilized efficiently, can and should deter India's inclusion in the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation. Pakistan, being a member of the organization, can exercise its legal right to veto the inclusion of India to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Moreover, it should efficiently enter into an effective diplomacy with member states, especially, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangladesh in order to persuade them regarding the consequences of India's inclusion to the organization for Pakistan.

To sum up, India has been trying diplomatically for the last couples of years to become a new member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in order to cultivate economic, social and geopolitical fruits. In this connection, various developments like the participation of the then foreign Minister of India in the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the United Arab Emirates in 2019, have been made. However, there are certain bottlenecks which prevent India from becoming a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Pakistan is one of those stumbling blocks. In order to keep the cause of Kashmir alive, Pakistan should try its level best to keep India away from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation by using its legal rights provided by the charter of the organization.

The author is an MS/Mphil Scholar in Agriculture and a writer.

Trump says he’s ready to talk as new stock market losses fuel tariff chaos

THE big question as global stock sell-offs point to another week of plunging markets in the US is how much pain President Donald Trump is prepared to inflict to test his tariff theories.

Trump said Sunday evening that he’s “open to talking” to world leaders about new deals as he put a brave face on the chaos unleashed by his trade wars after a weekend playing golf at his exclusive Florida properties. Trump also claimed that he’d spoken to “many countries” and that despite fury abroad over his “Liberation Day” trade attacks, “They’re being very nice.”

But as he flew back to Washington aboard Air Force One, stocks tumbled at the opening in Tokyo, leading Asian markets downward, and US futures suggested more huge losses are likely on Wall Street on Monday.

“What’s going to happen with the market? I can’t tell you, but I can tell you, our country has gotten a lot stronger, and eventually it’ll be a country like no other,” Trump said, while downplaying stock losses that have damaged the retirement accounts of millions of Americans.

“I don’t want anything to go down. But sometimes you have to take medicine to fix something,” he said.

With markets closed over the weekend after days of pummeling losses, the administration had the chance to take stock. But there is no fresh clarity over its strategy as the political stakes become more fraught.

Top officials sent conflicting signals Sunday over whether Trump sees the economic warfare he unleashed last week as a lever for near-term deal-making — or whether he’s serious about a bid to remake the world economy that could take years.

The confusion came against a backdrop of rising discomfort among some Republican lawmakers about the trade onslaught and as massive crowds across the country held anti-Trump protests in the largest show of dissent of his second term.

The president and his senior aides also seem oblivious to anxiety in the country over the possibility his policies could cause a recession — or feel so sure in their views they don’t really have to care. Trump posted a video of himself teeing off in Florida, and the White House put out a bizarre statement noting his win in

a golf club championship match.

It was a reminder that Trump and his millionaire and billionaire friends don’t share the worries of regular American families, who are concerned about their retirement savings and how they’ll afford groceries and cars when tariffs hike prices. While the president insists his plans for tax cuts will leave everyone more prosperous, he’s still taking a gamble after winning a second term in part because voters felt the Biden administration did a poor job tackling inflation.

The rationale for Trump’s tariffs on 185 nations and territories is that the rest of the world has spent decades ripping off America and that the most aggressive protectionism in decades will return jobs to hurting US industrial heartlands.

It’s true that the profits of globalization — which saw many US jobs disappear overseas — have not been equally shared. But the United States is the richest, most powerful nation in history, and profited most from the free trading system Trump seeks to destroy.

And the impact of his bigger-than-expected tariffs threatens to cause so much disruption that it throws the US and the world into a recession, causing huge job losses and wrecking the finances of millions of people. Such fears are partly behind the meltdown on global markets last week and fears that worse is to come.

It was left up to Trump’s Cabinet on Sunday to try to explain the method behind his tariff warfare, an approach he’s long wanted to implement but that many economists regard as foolish and dangerous.

CNN’s Jake Tapper asked Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins how long the tariff chaos would last and whether it was a negotiating tactic. Her answer laid bare the policy contradiction that is causing deep uncertainty and haunting stock markets.

“This is a national security issue. This is about reshoring thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of jobs,” Rollins said on “State of the Union,” seeming to confirm that Trump is bent on a fundamental reordering of the global economy with an attempt to re-create the manufacturing strength of the height of the industrial era.

But Rollins then said that 50 countries were

Stephen Collinson

“burning the phone lines into the White House” and implied the tariffs were meant simply as leverage. “This is the ultimate deal-maker who is a businessman at the head of our government,” she said.

This was consistent with Trump’s later remarks on Air Force One that he was willing to talk to China and the European Union about reducing trade deficits with the United States. The comments might be seen in some quarters as an attempt to limit the damage expected to hit stock markets Monday.

Bilateral negotiations with scores of countries could conceivably yield new trading conditions that could improve the position of the United States. But such an approach would not be sufficient to re-create the late 19th century golden age of manufacturing that Trump is promising. And it’s questionable whether the gains would justify the economic destruction the president is wreaking.

The administration seems to be interested only in the kind of “deals” that would require other countries to embrace total capitulation. “This is not a negotiation,” Trump’s top trade adviser, Peter Navarro, said on Fox News’ “Sunday Morning Futures.” He warned that offering the US a zero tariff wouldn’t be sufficient, and signaled nations must cede to White House demands on other issues, including non-tariff barriers and currencies.

While Trump’s concern for Americans left behind by the 21st century economy is laudable, his obsession with trade deficits and the trade in goods represents an archaic worldview. It ignores how the US economy has become a tech and services behemoth and how it will never be able to produce basic goods such as clothes as economically as lower-wage economies abroad. Making basic goods in the United States would cost more, would raise the cost of living and would harm the prosperity of many Americans.

While Rollins seemed to be following the example of Trump last week by suggesting tariffs were leverage, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick dug in on Sunday.

“There is no postponing,” he said of the duties due to come into force Wednesday. “They are definitely going to stay in place for days and weeks,” Lutnick said on CBS’

“Face the Nation.” He added: “The president needs to reset global trade. ... The countries of the world are ripping us off, and it’s got to end.”

Lutnick appears to be betting that US strength can force weaker nations to fold. He told CNN’s Pamela Brown last week that it would be unwise to retaliate. “If you’re angry and you fight back to the greatest customer in the world, you’re going to lose. We are the sumo wrestler of this world.”

Such is the power of the US that it might triumph in one-on-one showdowns with most other nations. But the administration rarely talks about the impact of multifront tariff retaliation simultaneously from all the great trading powers. China, for instance, now faces a cumulative 54% tariff on its imports to the US, which means that buying power of US shoppers will be severely constrained since — despite Trump’s insistence that other countries pay for tariffs — consumers will foot the bill. This could hammer US retailers and squelch consumer confidence, setting up the conditions that could lead to a recession. China also imposed a 34% tariff on US imports, making a tough-to-crack market even more difficult for American firms.

Enormous losses on US stock markets last week — the Dow and the S&P 500 were both down by more than 5% on Friday alone — alarmed millions of Americans whose retirements depend on their 401(k) plans.

But Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent insisted there didn’t need to be a recession and dismissed the long-term impact of stock market losses, using words like “choppiness” and “adjustment process” to explain the panic. And speaking on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” Bessent rejected the idea that people who want to retire soon had taken a serious blow. “Americans who have put away for years in their savings accounts, I think they don’t look at the day-to-day fluctuations of what’s happening,” Bessent said. He added: “The reason the stock market is considered a good investment is because it’s a long-term investment. If you look day-to-day, week-to-week, it’s very risky. Over the long term, it’s a good investment.”

Technically, Bessent is correct, and over years and decades, stocks have been a sound investment,

through market corrections and recessions. But his comments were the latest remarkably tone-deaf commentary from a multimillionaire Cabinet member. Bessent is a wealthy former hedge fund manager.

Such attitudes raise the question of whether the president’s strategy will cost him public support — especially if the tariffs remain in place for months and price hikes begin to really punish families. Recent national surveys from The Wall Street Journal, CBS News and Marquette University Law School, all taken before Trump’s “Liberation Day” announcement, found majorities of Americans disapproved of the president’s tariff policies.

Some Republican senators are already nervous. Several have signed on to a measure backed by GOP Sen. Chuck Grassley to require presidents to justify new tariffs to Congress. Lawmakers would have to approve them within 60 days or they would expire.

Sen. Maria Cantwell, a Washington state Democrat co-leading the effort with Grassley, said Sunday that bipartisan momentum was growing behind the bill and that seven GOP senators were now listed as co-sponsors in an unusual break with Trump.

“I’m sure they listen to their constituents. Consumer challenges are already starting to surface, and certainly the stock market’s impact on retirement income is shaking a lot of people,” Cantwell said on CBS. The measure, however, faces a far harder path in the House, and it’s doubtful at this point it could amass veto-proof majorities.

After months of mourning their November loss, Democrats are showing signs of life. A liberal candidate won a wide victory in a race for a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat last week. And the size of protests against Trump and Elon Musk in many cities Saturday may augur an awakening of a resistance movement more a year and a half before the 2026 midterm elections.

But Trump is showing no sign of a course correction. He wrote on his Truth Social network on Saturday that “we have been the dumb and helpless ‘whipping post,’ but not any longer.” The president added: “THIS IS AN ECONOMIC REVOLUTION. AND WE WILL WIN. HANG TOUGH.” The next day, he was back on the golf course.

— CNN

The politics behind Netanyahu’s Shin Bet scandal

WITHIN the space of 24 hours last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nominated Eli Sharvit as the new chief of Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security agency, only to quickly retract the nomination.

This episode highlights the lack of coherence in Netanyahu’s leadership, reinforcing the perception that decisions at the highest levels of government are made impulsively and without a clear plan.

It also serves as further proof that Netanyahu is easily manipulated — not just by his right-wing extremist allies in the coalition, but also by external forces, foreign governments and, as reported by Israeli media, even his wife Sara.

This chaotic decision-making process helps explain the deep lack of trust Israelis have in their leadership. Recent public opinion polls show that a significant percentage of Israelis lack faith in their government and are calling for new elections or Netanyahu’s resignation.

This distrust has been attributed to Netanyahu’s failure to prevent the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks and his inability to win the war-torn-genocide in Gaza.

But the issue goes beyond these failures. Israelis have lost confidence in Netanyahu because they do not see him as a leader acting in the national interest. He has become so entrenched in power that he is willing to incite civil strife in Israel just to maintain his position.

As a result, it should come as no surprise that Netanyahu is also willing to sacrifice the lives of more than 15,000 children in Gaza, along with tens of thousands of innocent civilians, just to buy himself more time in office. However, the Shin Bet scandal is the clearest example to date of Netanyahu’s corruption and poor judgment.

Israel’s politics is notoriously unstable and coalitions rarely last long. In that context, Netanyahu’s fractious government could be seen as a reflection of Israel’s history of political instability.

The ongoing conflict between the government and the military, while unusual, can also be understood as part of a growing trend in which the Israeli right seeks to control all institutions — including the military, which has historically been seen as separate from politics.

The events of Oct. 7 and the failed war that has followed — both of which

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

are now the subject of critical investigations — have shattered the fragile balance that allowed Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition to hold power without provoking mass dissent.

Israeli public pressure has proven to be a key factor in this balancing act. For example, a public outcry forced Netanyahu to restore former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to his position in April 2023.

However, 18 months of war in Gaza, Lebanon and now Syria have given Netanyahu the leverage to use the state of emergency as a tool to crush opposition, stifle dissent and ignore calls for the war to end and for a final agreement to be reached.

He has now turned the war into a platform for pursuing an internal political agenda that he had failed to implement in the years leading up to Oct. 7. But Shin Bet is another matter entirely.

Founded by Israel’s

Israel’s politics is notoriously unstable and coalitions rarely last long. In that context, Netanyahu’s fractious government could be seen as a reflection of Israel’s history of political instability. The ongoing conflict between the government and the military, while unusual, can also be understood as part of a growing trend in which the Israeli right seeks to control all institutions — including the military, which has historically been seen as separate from politics. The events of Oct. 7 and the failed war that has followed — both of which are now the subject of critical investigations — have shattered the fragile balance that allowed Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition to hold power without provoking mass dissent. Israeli public pressure has proven to be a key factor in this balancing act. For example, a public outcry forced Netanyahu to restore former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to his position in April 2023.

first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, in 1949, Shin Bet has long been the cornerstone of Israel’s internal security.

While the agency’s primary mission involves countering terrorism, gathering intelligence and providing security for Israeli officials, its role carries much greater significance for the stability of the state.

One of Shin Bet’s objectives is to prevent espionage and internal subversion. Given the intelligence failures exposed by the events of Oct. 7, any significant restructuring of such a critical agency could be disastrous for Israel.

Though the head of Shin Bet reports directly to the prime minister, it has always been understood that the position should remain above political infighting. Netanyahu’s move to fire Ronen Bar last week, therefore, sent shockwaves through Israeli society, even more so than

his decisions to oust former army chief of staff Herzl Halevi or Gallant.

Netanyahu’s actions have violated a long-standing taboo, further exacerbating Israel’s already unprecedented internal crisis.

Former Shin Bet chief Nadav Argaman has even threatened to reveal secret information, signaling that the agency is prepared to engage in this internal power struggle, which some fear could escalate into a civil war.

But the cancellation of Sharvit’s nomination to fill Bar’s position is perhaps the most revealing aspect of this crisis. It underscores Netanyahu’s erratic decision-making and empowers his opponents, who are eager to bring him down. As Israel’s opposition leader Yair Lapid has put it, Netanyahu has become “an existential threat to Israel.”

Some analysts have suggested that Netanyahu’s reversal was due to US pressure, espe-

cially since Sharvit had written an article criticizing US President Donald Trump.

While some see this as evidence that Netanyahu’s agenda is largely dictated by the US, such conclusions are oversimplified. Although Washington wields significant influence, Netanyahu’s decisions are shaped by a complex array of factors. Netanyahu is keen on presenting the withdrawal of Sharvit’s nomination not as a sign of political subservience, but rather as a strategic concession or overture to Trump. His aim is to maintain full US support for his war agenda in Gaza and across the Middle East.

Ultimately, this perpetual war strategy is not driven by any coherent political ideology. Netanyahu’s singular focus remains on maintaining his political coalition and ensuring his political survival — nothing more, nothing less.

— Arab News

Trump’s tariffs could hit Americans hardest

DONALD Trump’s imposition of tariffs on US imports from most countries is destructive on the global level and can be expected to impact negatively the Eastern Arab World and North Africa. Ironically, US consumers are likely to be the main victims of Trump’s tariffs. The majority of countries in this region have been charged 10 per cent reciprocal tariff on goods exported to the US. Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey, the UAE, and Yemen have been given the lowest rate. Algeria has been charged at 30 per cent as it imposed 59 per cent tariff on US imports. Iraq has attracted a 39 per cent tariff as it charges 78 per cent on US imports, Israel 17 per cent as it imposes 33 per cent on US imports. Jordan must pay 20 per cent as it is accused of charging 40 per cent tariffs on US imports although Amman and Washington signed a free trade agreement in 2000.

Libya is charged 31 per cent in retaliation for 61 per cent tariffs on US goods. Syria — which is under US and international sanctions — has been slammed with 41 per cent tariffs in

response to 81 per cent on US imports and Tunisia 28 per cent as it charges 55 per cent in tariffs on US imports. Syria, Iraq, and Algeria are unlikely to suffer greatly as they import

Workers in such countries have been shifted to high tech and other firms. This regime has benefited both workers and consumers. By slapping tariffs on most US imports, Trump has doomed tariff-free or low-tariff trade and elicited reciprocal retaliatory responses, risking trade wars which are harmful to the entire world and can cause inflation, a global recession, and antagonism against and isolation of the US. Trump’s 25 per cent tariff on imported cars has a global resonance. The US imports cars and car parts from neighbouring Canada and Mexico as well as Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Germany, and Britain. As the US is a country highly dependent on cars, its own citizens are going to be hit by higher prices and discouraged from buying new cars at short intervals. Trump believes that tariffs will boost the US economy and return manufacturing plants which have gone abroad due to high US labour and other costs. However, this will take time and could outlast Trump’s reign, leaving US consumers with price rises for imports used on a daily basis. The boost in the prices of morning cups of coffee and tea would impact millions of consumers and restaurant chains. Economists have predicted that tariffs could cost each US family \$5,000 extra a year. This is far more than poorer and even middle-class households can afford and could mean that millions of US citizens may stop buying high tariff items which are not necessities. Retaliatory tariffs could hit US high-tech industries and farmers whose soybeans, maize, fruit and vegetables account for 20 per cent of agricultural production by value and account for 8.4 per cent of goods exported. In 2024, the US sold \$176 billion to 189 countries, 47 per cent going to Mexico, Canada, and China. Forty-nine per cent of agricultural exports are to countries with which the US has free trade agreements which could be impacted by Trump’s tariffs. It is ironic that US farmers voted for Trump in the 2024 election. Tariffs are his payback. US policy in this region has become erratic and destabilising since Donald Trump moved into the White House on January 20th. Trump has again proved a disaster. He has extended uncritical backing for Israel’s Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in his deadly and devastating, never-ending war on Gaza and the occupied West Bank. Israel has also lashed out at Lebanon and has occupied southern Syria and bombed Deraa, Damascus, Hama, and other Syrian sites.

few US goods and do not export multiple goods to the US. The formula used to calculate the tariff rates is based on a country’s trade surplus with the US, divided by its total goods exports to the US. This formula has punished Jordan which exports far more in clothing, fertiliser and other items to the US than the US exports to Jordan. Jordan is included among a host of African and Asian countries exporting clothing

to the US, which relies on imports for 94 per cent of its clothing. Even when rare items of clothing are manufactured in the US, fabrics and yarn could be imported.

Gulf states run sur-

which has for decades bound countries to open their markets for goods by placing low ceilings on tariffs. No tariff and low tariff trade has ratio-

nalised global commerce by enabling poorer countries with low wages to export items which would command far higher prices if made in the US and rich countries where wages are high. Workers in such countries have been shifted to high tech and other firms. This regime has benefited both workers and consumers. By slapping tariffs on most US imports, Trump has doomed tariff-free or low-tariff trade and

elicited reciprocal retaliatory responses, risking trade wars which are harmful to the entire world and can cause inflation, a global recession, and antagonism against and isolation of the US. Trump’s 25 per cent tariff on imported cars has a global resonance. The US imports cars and car parts from neighbouring Canada and Mexico as well as Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Germany, and Britain. As the US is a country highly dependent on cars, its own citizens are going to be hit by higher prices and discouraged from buying new cars at short inter-

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Trump has threatened to bomb Iran, risking regional conflagration. While maintaining his “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign against Iran he has paradoxically called for negotiations over its nuclear programme. Iran has rebuffed direct talks with the US and talks under pressure. Oman has offered to broker negotiations, but the US and Iran have not agreed so far. Tensions remain high. Trump has repeatedly bombed Yemen, the poorest Arab country, in retaliation for Yemeni Houthi attacks on Red Sea voyages by Israeli vessels and cargo ships bound for the Israeli port of Eilat. US attacks have made life even more impossible for Yemen’s already hard-pressed population.

Minister for focusing to boost fruit exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Monday met with Fruit Juice Council for focusing on Strengthening formal industry and boosting exports.

Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan chaired an important meeting with the Fruit Juice Council and leading manufacturers, including representatives from Pepsico and Nestlé, to discuss key challenges facing the industry—particularly the need to support the formal sector against informal competition and address tariff-related concerns.

The council members highlighted the growing threat posed by the informal sector, which undermines the formal industry's ability to meet global standards and expand export potential.

They emphasized that without government support the formal sector would continue to face an uneven playing field.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan expressed full agreement with the council's concerns and stressed that empowering the formal industry is essential to increasing exports and aligning Pakistan's products with international standards.

"Only by strengthening our formal industry can we meet global benchmarks

and unlock export potential," he said.

He also acknowledged the broader global challenges that pose risks to food security but noted that Pakistan remains one of the more sustainable nations capable of weathering these difficulties.

The minister assured the participants that the government is committed to holding regular consultations with the industry to address their issues effectively. He welcomed the proposals presented and appreciated the industry's willingness to contribute toward national economic growth.

Industry representatives affirmed that with appropriate government support—particularly in reducing tariff burdens and tackling informal sector encroachment—they could significantly boost exports.

They pointed to strong demand in regions such as the Gulf, European Union, Central Asia, and the Americas, calling them high-potential markets for Pakistan's food and beverage exports.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to closer coordination between the government and the formal food and juice industry, aimed at building a stronger export base and enhancing Pakistan's global trade footprint.

Stocks savaged as China retaliation to Trump tariffs fans trade war

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian and European equities collapsed on a black Monday for markets after China hammered the United States with its own hefty tariffs, ramping up a trade war many fear could spark a recession.

Trading floors were overcome by a wave of selling as investors fled to the hills, with Hong Kong's loss of 13.22 percent its worst in nearly three decades. Taipei socks suffered their worst fall on record, tanking 9.7 percent, while Frankfurt dived 10 percent and Tokyo shed almost eight percent.

Futures for Wall Street's markets were also taking another drubbing, while commodities slumped.

US President Donald Trump sparked a market meltdown last week when he unveiled sweeping tariffs against US trading partners for what he said was years of being ripped off and claimed that governments were lining up to cut deals with Washington.

But after Asian markets closed on Friday, China said it would impose retaliatory levies of 34 percent on all US goods from April 10.

Beijing also imposed export controls on seven rare earth elements, including gadolinium -- commonly used in MRIs -- and yttrium, utilised in consumer electronics.

On Sunday, vice commerce minister Ling Ji told representatives of US firms that Trump's tariffs "firmly protect the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises, including American companies".

Hopes that the US president would rethink his policy in light of the turmoil were dashed Sunday when he said he would not make a deal with other countries unless trade deficits were solved.

"Sometimes you have to take medicine to fix something," he said of the ructions that have wiped trillions of dollars off company valuations.

The savage selling in Asia was across the board, with no sector unharmed -- tech firms, car makers, banks, casinos and energy firms all felt the pain as investors abandoned riskier assets.

Among the biggest losers, Chinese e-commerce titans Alibaba tanked 18 percent and rival JD.com shed 15.5 percent, while Japanese tech investment giant SoftBank dived more than 12 percent and Sony gave up 10 percent.

Hong Kong's 13-percent drop marked its worst day since 1997 during the Asian

financial crisis -- while Frankfurt plunged 10 percent at one point.

Shanghai shed more than seven percent, with China's state-backed fund Central Huijin Investment vowing to help ensure "stable operations" of the market.

Singapore plunged nearly eight percent, while Seoul gave up more than five percent, triggering a so-called sidecar mechanism -- for the first time in eight months -- that briefly halted some trading.

Sydney, Wellington, Manila and Mumbai were also deep in the red, while London and Paris both dropped around five percent.

"We could see a recession happen very quickly in the US, and it could last through the year or so, it could be rather lengthy," said Steve Cochrane, chief Asia-Pacific economist at Moody's Analytics.

"If there's a recession in the US, of course, China will feel it as well because demand for its goods will be hit even harder," he added.

Concerns about demand saw oil prices sink more than three percent at one point Monday, having dropped around seven percent Friday. Both main contracts are now sitting at their lowest levels since 2021.

Copper -- a vital component for energy storage, electric vehicles, solar panels and wind turbines -- also extended losses.

The losses followed another day of carnage on Wall Street on Friday, where all three main indexes fell almost six percent.

"Over Thursday and Friday, the S&P 500 fell by a massive 10.53 percent in total, making it the fifth-worst two-day performance since World War Two," said analysts at Deutsche Bank.

"Indeed, the only other times we've seen a double-digit loss over two sessions were during Covid-19, the height of the global financial crisis), and Black Monday 1987."

That showing came after Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell said US tariffs will likely cause inflation to rise and growth to slow, and warned of an "elevated" risk of higher unemployment.

"Powell's hands are tied," said Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management. "He's acknowledged the obvious -- that tariffs are inflationary and recessionary -- but he's not signalling a rescue."

While Powell has so far refused to announce any rate cuts, markets are betting he will do soon.

Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum set to boost mining sector

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, announced that the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum, starting today (Tuesday), aims to showcase the country's mineral resources to potential investors.

The forum will introduce a harmonized framework designed to attract investment in the mining sector, developed with input from all provincial governments. Malik noted that the focus will be on promoting sustainable and responsible mining.

During a news conference with OGDCL MD Ahmed Hayat Lak, Malik highlighted that participants from countries such as Türkiye, China, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, the US, Denmark, Finland, Kenya, and the UK are expected, with about 300 foreign delegates anticipated. The forum will also witness the signing of MOUs and agreements, including those focused on skill development in the mining sector.

The event will feature technical sessions and exhibitions showcasing technological solutions. Ahmed Hayat described the response to the forum as overwhelming and emphasized Pakistan's emergence as a serious destination for the mineral sector. He stated the forum would become an annual event.

Addressing inquiries, Ahmed Hayat said that the first phase of the Reko Diq project is set for completion by 2028, with the second

phase due by 2034, promising a new revenue stream for the country.

Numerous MOUs are anticipated to be signed during the forum, paving the way for new opportunities in mineral sector development and investment. Additionally, a detailed action plan for the sector's future has been prepared, with the government, in collaboration with military institutions and the SIFC, assuring security to both local and foreign investors.



KARACHI: Stockbrokers monitoring stock prices at Pakistan Stock Exchange.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships, X-Press Kohima, MSC Positano, Chem Houston, Seamec Gallant, Southern Shark and Khairpur carrying Container, Soya Bean oil, DAP, Chemicals and Gas oil, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal, Grain Terminal, Engro Vopak Terminal and FOTCO oil Terminal respectively Sunday. Meanwhile another ship 'Riva Wind' carrying Coal also arrived at outer anchorage on Monday morning.

A total of eight ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a Liquefied Natural Gas carrier 'Orion Saint' left the on Monday morning, while three more ships, MSC Positano, X-Press Kohima and Southern Shark was expected to sail on Monday.

Cargo volume of 158,241 tonnes, comprising 137,620 tonnes imports cargo and 20,621 tonnes export cargo carried in 3,353 Containers (2,140 TEUs Imports 1,213 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 07 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them bulk cargo carrier 'Riva Wind' three more ships, Kaisa-I, MSC Aquarius and Seaspan Santos carrying Coal, Chemicals and Container were expected to take berths at PIBT, EVTL and QICF are respectively on Monday, while two more container ships, GFS Ranna and SM Mahi due to expected arrive at outer anchorage on Tuesday.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 3,882 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 3,882.17 points, a negative change of 3.27 percent, closing at 114,909.49 points as compared to 118,791.66 points on the last trading day.

A total of 710,788,421 shares were traded during the day as compared to 553,668,391 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs43.023billion against Rs35.492 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 450 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 52 of them recorded gains and 357 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 41 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 55,274,278 shares at Rs1.28 per share,

Cnergyico PK with 53,401,922 shares at Rs7.83 per share and Bank of Punjab 34,156,511 shares at Rs10.39 per share.

Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs98.20 per share closing at Rs1,080.18 whereas runner-up was The Thal Industries Corporation Limited with Rs24.28 rise in its share price to close at Rs374.28.

Bata Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs157.05 per share price, closing at Rs1,528.76, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs149.98 decline in its per share price to Rs7,200.02.

Rupee sheds 10 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs280.56 against

the previous day's closing of Rs280.46.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.60 and Rs282.10, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs0.87 to close at Rs309.21 against the last day's closing of Rs308.34, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.92, whereas a decrease of Rs2.43 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs362.27 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs364.70.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham increased by 03 paise and closed at Rs76.38 whereas the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 paise and closed at Rs74.73.

SECP proposes reforms to expedite issuance of bonus

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Monday issued a consultation paper seeking public feedback on the proposed amendments to the existing regulatory framework governing the issuance of bonus and right shares. These proposed reforms

are aimed at significantly reducing the time taken between the announcement of such corporate actions and the actual crediting of bonus or right shares to shareholders' accounts.

The consultation paper outlines the current regulatory provisions related to the issuance process, presenting a comparative analysis of the existing and proposed timelines for each procedural step. It identifies specific requirements within the current framework that may be contributing to undue delays.

According to the SECP's analysis, existing end-to-end process—from the board's announcement to the credit of shares—can extend up to approximately 181 days for right issues, 85 days for interim bonus shares, and 51 days for final bonus shares.

However, these time-

lines can be reduced by over 50%. The SECP has noted that the existing framework does not fully reflect the technological advancements and the increasing digitalization of Pakistan's capital markets.

In certain instances, the absence of specified timelines under the current regime has resulted in inordinate delays, even after a bonus or right issue has been approved by the board. Consequently, shareholders may face considerable wait times in receiving their entitlements, despite companies acting in accordance with the prescribed regulations.

To address these concerns, the SECP proposes to revise the regulatory framework to streamline and expedite the issuance process by leveraging technology and enhancing operational efficiency.

HFP, HPS organized online Int’l Children Health Conference



FP Report

KARACHI: Hamdard Foundation Pakistan (HFP) and Hamdard Public School (HPS) organized an online International Children Health Conference to commemorate the April 7 the International Health Day, focusing on the WHO's theme for this year: "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures." The conference, which brought together young speakers from the USA, Russia, Iran, Malaysia, Australia, and various cities of Pakistan, as well as representatives from the World Health Organization, was presided over by Dr. Mukhtiar Hussain Bhayo (Head of WHO Office Sindh), with Prof. Dr. Zeryab Setna (Hilal-e-Intiaz) serving as the esteemed Chief Guest.

Ms. Sadia Rashid, President of HFP, delivered the opening statement, emphasizing the importance

of health and well-being for future generations. She said: "This conference carries forward a legacy of three decades dedicated to raising awareness, advocating for, and promoting children's health. In view of this year's theme, we must collectively put our efforts into providing vital resources to create a healthier world for mothers, infants, and future generations. The urgency for action is evident in the alarming rates of maternal and infant mortality worldwide, particularly in Pakistan. Every year, thousands of women die due to childbirth and pregnancy-related complications, while over a million newborns lose their lives within the first month. These deaths are largely preventable through timely interventions, sustained commitment, and collective action. There is an urgent need for decisive

measures. The combined efforts of bureaucrats, politicians, and all relevant stakeholders are essential to bring meaningful and lasting change."

Dr. Mukhtiar Hussain Bhayo said: "The 33rd consecutive year of Hamdard's support is truly commendable. Once again, Hamdard leads the way by hosting the first international conference to commemorate April 7th as International Health Day. This is a remarkable achievement and a proud milestone for Hamdard, marking its global leadership in health advocacy. This year's theme focuses on women and children. While maternal mortality has declined, it still falls short of the desired levels. It is heart-breaking that mothers continue to die from natural childbirth.

The scale of this issue is immense-within just two

hours of this event, over a thousand mothers have died worldwide due to cultural taboos, lack of basic healthcare, conflict, and other man-made calamities. Beyond governments, all sectors of society must contribute-NGOs, universities, media, social influencers, and advocacy groups must come together to create an effective awareness strategy. We must also ensure that children are vaccinated and public awareness is improved. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan emerged as a success story. That experience proves we have the potential to overcome even the most daunting challenges."

Prof. Dr. Zeryab Setna expressed heartfelt gratitude to HFP for organizing this thought-provoking conference. He said: "It has been a pleasure to hear young voices from around the world, reminding us that we are one community beyond race, nationality, religion, or culture. The health sector in Pakistan was championed by Shaheed Hakim Said, a visionary whose legacy lives on through Hamdard Pakistan's continued dedication to national health development.

This year's theme encour-

ages us to confront the health challenges facing our youth. Malnutrition not only hinders physical growth but also impairs cognitive development. It is deeply concerning that vaccine-preventable diseases still claim lives in Pakistan. Schools must play their role by incorporating health awareness programs, promoting sports, and ensuring access to quality healthcare. Meaningful progress is only possible through collective effort."

In the recorded messages, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the WHO, Dr. Hanan Balkhy - Regional Director, and Ms. Ellen Thom - Deputy WHO Representative in Pakistan commended Ms. Sadia Rashid and HFP for their outstanding efforts in spearheading various active initiatives and social awareness campaigns aimed at promoting general health and well-being throughout the country.

The Director-General expressed his appreciation for the significant contributions made by Ms. Sadia Rashid and Hamdard Pakistan towards advancing public health and enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities across the nation.

Fatema Munir Ahmed,

Managing Director/CEO of Hamdard, Dr. Mohammad Babar Alam, Head of the WHO Sub-office, KPK, Dr. Jamshaid Ahmed, Head of the WHO Sub-office, Punjab and Dr. Asfandyar Sherani, Head of the WHO Sub-office, Balochistan also expressed their views in the conference and said: life begins at birth, and the health of both mother and child at this stage is crucial. It lays the foundation for lifelong growth and well-being. Comprehensive maternal and child care plays a vital role in ensuring long-term health benefits. Investing in child healthcare is a powerful tool to build a progressive, inclusive society and reduce poverty. Healthy, well-supported individuals form strong, resilient communities. Therefore, healthy beginnings are not just a moral imperative-they are a strategic investment. Governments and international bodies must view this as an investment in our shared future. Children's health refers to their mental, physical, and spiritual well-being. Every child needs a positive and compassionate environment in which they can grow and receive mental, intellectual, and physical development.

This healthy start is a basic right of every child. For a

Fatima Shahbaz (Govt. Central Model School, Lahore), Abdullah Khalil (Warsak Model School & College, Peshawar), Fawad Hassan (Frontier Model School Boys, Peshawar), Hussna Subhan, and Zainab (SOS Children's Village School, Quetta).

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is published through this Notice that I Mst. Maria Ayub Wife of Israr Ahmad Resident House no. 295 Bahzaadi Chikar Kot District Kohat is the owner of Plot no. 139 Sector no. C-2 Size 10 Marla Phase 11 KDA/UADA Kohat has Appointed Mst. Razia Begum Wife of Muhammad Ayub Resident of Nasrat Khel District Kohat Through (Special) Deed no. 143 Bani no. 04 Volume no. 296 Dated 20/03/2025 which is registered in the Office Kohat of Tehsildar/Sub Registrar The Attorney/Holder now wants to Transfer The Above Said Plot if any Bank/ Institution/ Firm/ Person has any objection About The Transfer he Should Contact The Housing officer UADA Within 15 Days in Writing with Proofs otherwise Plot will be Transfer and no objection will be Accepted (Housing Officer Urban Area KDA Kohat)



In brief

Young tennis talents compete in Memorial Tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Tennis Federation (ITF) Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Juniors Tennis Championship kicked off on Monday at the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) Complex, featuring promising young athletes from 14 countries. According to a press released issued PTF, the tournament, honoring the memory of Zainab Ali Naqvi, a young tennis player who tragically passed away last year, has drawn 38 boys and 21 girls from across the globe. PTF President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi officially opened the championship, personally welcoming international participants and wishing them success. In the first-round matches, five Pakistani boys and one girl advanced to the second round. Notable local performers included Mikael Ali Baig who defeated China's Yuxuan Li and Soha Ali who won a challenging three-set match against Kazakhstan's Zhaniya. The tournament represents a significant opportunity for junior tennis players to showcase their skills on an international stage, with participants representing diverse countries including Kazakhstan, Singapore, Turkey, Japan and China. Play continues Tuesday at 10:00 a.m with spectators and tennis enthusiasts eagerly anticipating the upcoming matches.

Martinez fined 5,000 euros for blasphemy

MILAN (AFP): Lautaro Martinez has avoided a suspension for blasphemy after the Inter Milan captain agreed a fine with the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) for offensive language during a defeat to arch-rivals Juventus. Argentina striker Martinez has agreed to pay 5,000 euros (\$5,463) as part of a plea bargain with the FIGC, whose rules ban taking the Lord's name in vain. The 27-year-old had previously denied twice using blasphemous language during February's 1-0 loss in Turin, saying the following week, after he scored the winning goal for Inter against Genoa, that "I have never done it, ever". "I try to teach respect to my children, these accusations have caused me great irritation," he said. Martinez is not the first player to fall foul of the FIGC's anti-blasphemy rules, as goalkeeping icon Gianluigi Buffon was banned for one match in March 2021 after being caught being foul-mouthed with Juventus teammate Manolo Portanova. Monza keeper Stefano Turati was given the same punishment in August 2023 for blasphemous swearing during a defeat to Napoli while playing for his old club Frosinone.

Dhoni breaks silence on retirement rumors
NEW DELHI (INP): Former India captain MS Dhoni has opened up on reports about his retirement after the CSK vs DC clash in the IPL 2025. Rumours about his retirement began making rounds on Indian media after the former India captain's parents went to the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai to watch CSK's game against Delhi Capitals. The wicket-keeping batter has now put the rumours about his retirement to rest, by asserting that he planned to play the whole of the 2025 edition of the IPL. "No, not right now. I am still playing the IPL. I have kept it very simple, I take it one year at a time, I am 43, by the time IPL 2025 finishes.

Punjab seeks deployment of Army, Rangers for PSL 10 security

LAHORE (INP): Punjab home department has sought the deployment of Pakistan Army and Rangers for the security of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10. As per details, Punjab home department has requested the interior ministry for the deployment of Pakistan Army and Rangers troops during PSL 10 matches to ensure the security of the players and officials. The request includes the deployment of security personnel in Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Multan, where the matches will be held. The troops have been sought to assist the police in ensuring foolproof security arrangements.

One wing of Rangers and two companies of the Army have been requested for each of the three cities. Additionally, the services of SSG commandos and Army Aviation helicopters have also been sought. The matches of PSL Season 10 are scheduled from April 11 to May 18, while the security forces have been requested to be deployed from April 6 to May 19. On Sunday, Karachi Kings revealed the team jersey for the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10. "With its striking blue and red palette, the kit pays tribute to the franchise's rich legacy while intro-

ducing a fresh and confident new identity," as per the franchise. According to the statement by Karachi Kings, the kit has been designed by The Peace Club and blends fashion and function with a uniquely bold perspective. "Blue serves as the dominant color, representing strength and resilience, while bold red stripes inject energy and movement into the design," the statement said. The franchise revealed the jersey on their social media handles, featuring David Warner, who was made captain of the side ahead of the PSL 10.

Spurs boss Postecoglou glad of Johnson revival ahead of Europa quarter-final

LONDON (AFP): Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou said he was delighted that Brennan Johnson returned to goalscoring form against Southampton ahead of Thursday's Europa League quarter-final with Eintracht Frankfurt. Johnson struck twice in the first half of a 3-1 win for Spurs on Sunday that condemned the struggling Saints to relegation from the Premier League. They were his first home goals of 2025, with Johnson now having scored 16 this season in total. Spurs host Eintracht in the quarter-final first leg, hoping to keep alive their last remaining chance of silverware this term. "I was really pleased for him, not just goals but his general (play) was really good," said Postecoglou of Johnson, who ended an eight-match goal drought against Southampton. "He's important for us. As a wide player, there



aren't many around that are a constant goal threat like he is. "With Brennan, he's always in the areas we need him to be. He's probably one of the most disciplined players we have in terms of making sure he's always in the right positions and that's why he gets his goals." Wales' Johnson enjoyed a fine start to the season and scored in seven consecutive matches for club and country. But he suffered a calf injury in January and has only netted in two games since, against Southampton and relegation-threatened Ipswich. "There have been times this season when his form has suffered because of the team more than anything else," added Postecoglou. "I think like we played in the first half, Brennan becomes a really important player for us as we're a constant threat, breaking lines, making half-space runs, we were getting balls into the box in the areas we need to and every time we went forward we looked like scoring." Tottenham sit 14th in the Premier League table with seven games remaining.

Multan Sultans' Ali Tareen visits Sohan Halwa shop



F.P. Report

LODHHRAN: Multan Sultans owner Ali Tareen, accompanied by team coaches Catherine Dalton and Nathan Leamon, visited a local Sohan Halwa shop in Lodhran's

Makhдум Aali area. During the visit, Ali Tareen, along with the foreign players, enjoyed traditional Sohan Halwa and tea at the popular local outlet. "Sohan Halwa tastes amazing," remarked Nathan Leamon

and Catherine Dalton.

The foreign guests mingled warmly with the local people, taking photos and selfies with fans. After the Lodhran visit, Ali Tareen and the coaching staff departed for Multan.

11th JA Zaman Memorial Open Golf C'ship gets underway

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The 11th JA Zaman Memorial Open Golf Championship is set to get underway at Lahore Gymkhana Golf Club from Tuesday and will culminate on April 13. Now in its 11th iteration, the JA Zaman Memorial – a PGA and PGF sanctioned event - garners interest of top golfers from across the country. The match has progressed to become one of the most anticipated matchups in the Pakistan golfing calendar with top professional and amateur golfers competing for merited prize money and honors. The salient features of the 2025 edition are - the top 100 ranked professionals will compete in the main draw for a total purse of PKR 9.0 million from 10th April to 13th April over 72 holes. Top amateur golfers will compete for glory and honors in victory over 54 holes with the results contributing towards the World Amateur Golf Ranking

(WAGR). A chance to win a Haval Jolion 1.5T for a hole-in-one on designated holes. Seven categories including juniors, senior amateurs, lady amateurs, junior and senior professionals along with the main draw of professional and men amateur golfers makes the tournament one of the most inclusive matches in golf. Ladies WAGR category to encourage ladies golf in Pakistan with over 30 participants. Live streaming on Youtube of selected holes and live scoring makes for enjoyable viewing as per international standards of golf and 550+ participants make the tournament one of the most popular events in Pakistan golf. The tournament is held in memory of Mr. JA Zaman (late) who was a man of boundless dignity and dexterity. He was a notable entrepreneur and a philanthropist who believed in sharing generously of the good fortune bestowed on him by the

Almighty. His family cherish his memory and continue to take inspiration from how he found success and balance in this world and, God willing, the hereafter. The Zaman family – the principal sponsor of this championship – is willing to make possible with the cooperation of Lahore Gymkhana Golf Committee, such a prestigious event where only the best in the sport will be showcased. At the press conference to start the event, Hamid Zaman (sponsor) highlighted the passion for golf his late father had which his descendants carry forward in this shape of this tournament. He also thanked the Lahore Gymkhana committee, Mr. Taimour Anwar and Mr. Aahyan Mumtaz – tournament organizer – for their all-out support in the organisation of the tournament. He also expressed his goal of making this an international tournament in the coming years.

The golf course at Lahore Gymkhana Club is one of the oldest courses in Pakistan tracing its origins to the 19th century. It's a par-72 championship level 18-hole golf course which is tree lined demanding excellence from start to finish. Star players on the national circuit like Pakistan No 1 Shabbir Iqbal, Ahmed Baig, Matloob Ahmed, Minhaj, Muhammad Alam and Zubair, amongst others, will be competing against one another to see who emerges victorious. The tournament welcomes spectators to watch the play as a part of its inclusive approach towards promoting golf in Pakistan. The final round will be held on Sunday (April 13, 2025) followed by the prize ceremony where the Zaman Family will be the hosts. Chief Tournament Organizer is Mr. Aahyan Mumtaz on behalf of the sponsor while Ms. Munazza Shaheen is the chief referee.

Brook named England white-ball captain

LONDON (AFP): Harry Brook has been appointed as England's new white-ball captain, with team chief Rob Key lauding his "excellent cricket brain". The England and Wales Cricket Board confirmed Monday that Brook would lead both the one-day international and T20 teams.



The 26-year-old Yorkshire batsman was the favourite to succeed Jos Buttler, who stood down in February after a woeful Champions Trophy campaign in Pakistan ended with England failing to reach the semi-finals. England failed to retain either their T20 or 50-over World Cup titles under Buttler's captaincy. Brook was already Buttler's deputy and stood in as skipper during an ODI series against Australia in September. Unlike several other potential candidates, Brook is also a first-choice selection across all formats. Concerns had been raised about whether it would hamper Brook's career as a Test batsman were he to be given the white-ball captaincy. England director of men's cricket Key even floated the idea that Test skipper Ben Stokes could take over as captain in the shorter formats as well

while speaking during a press conference at Lord's last month. But 33-year-old all-rounder Stokes is currently recovering from a second major hamstring tear in the space of six months and should now be able to concentrate solely on getting ready for upcoming red-ball series at home to India and away to Australia. Stokes was one of the first to publicly endorse Brook's appointment, with England's red-ball skipper tweeting: "Yes Brooky lad" above a story confirming the England rising star's new role. Brook has played 26 ODIs for England, scoring 816 runs at an average of 34.00, with a top score of 110. In T20s, he has earned 44 caps and made a highest score of 81. He was also a member of the England team that won the 2022 T20 World Cup. "It's a real honour to be

named England's white-ball captain," said Brook. "Ever since I was a kid playing cricket at Burley-in-Wharfedale, I dreamed of representing Yorkshire, playing for England, and maybe one day leading the team. To now be given that chance means a great deal to me." He added: "There's so much talent in this country, and I'm looking forward to getting started, moving us forward, and working towards winning series, World Cups and major events." Key said: "I'm delighted that Harry Brook has accepted the role as England's white-ball captain across both formats. He's been part of our succession planning for some time, albeit this opportunity has come slightly earlier than expected. "Harry is not only an outstanding cricketer, but also has an excellent cricketing brain and a clear vision for both teams that will help drive us towards winning more series, World Cups and major global tournaments." Brook will begin his reign as full-time white-ball captain with an ODI series against West Indies, starting at Edgbaston on May 29. That will be followed by a three-match T20 series.

The 14-year-old gunning for O'Sullivan's Crucible record



SHEFFIELD (Agencies): The 14-year-old is hoping to make history this week by breaking Ronnie O'Sullivan's long-standing record to become the youngest player to qualify for the World C'ships at the Crucible. The Pole has been making waves on the snooker circuit, winning the U16 and U18 European Championship titles in March. But the teenager really caught the eye by reaching the final of the open age event, which saw him beaten by 34-year-old Liam Highfield. That remarkable run was enough for Szubarczyk to be offered a two-year card offer on the World Snooker Tour (WST). His performances earned praise from three-time World

Champion Mark Williams, who said the teenager is "not far away", external from the level of Ronnie O'Sullivan at the same age. But now Szubarczyk is aiming to break O'Sullivan's 33-year record by qualifying for the 2025 World Championships. Seven-time winner O'Sullivan is the youngest-ever qualifier at the Crucible, doing so at the age of 16 in 1992. With qualifying held months in advance of the tournament proper, he was then 17 years and five months old when he made his debut at the event, losing 10-7 to Alan McManus. 2023 Champion Luca Brecel holds the record for the youngest player at the Crucible's main event, playing at the age of 17

years and 45 days in 2012. Szubarczyk can comfortably beat both of those records as he heads into qualifying at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield on 8 April, with final round matches being played on 15 April. The Pole faces Scotland's Dean Young in the first round, with the winner of the best-of-19-frames tie going through to face Stan Moody. The teenager needs to win four consecutive matches to earn a spot at the Crucible. But a victory against Young would see Szubarczyk become the youngest player to ever win a qualifying match at the World Championships, beating the record previously held by Liam Davies, who was 15 years and 277 days old when he beat Aaron Hill in 2022. How qualifying works 144 players enter the qualifying event at the English Institute of Sport for the World Championships. They are hoping to secure one of the 16 places on offer at the 32-player tournament, with 16 players already automatically qualified via their ranking. There are four qualifying rounds and players begin their campaigns at different points defending on their world ranking.

Fowler hits the target as Matildas down South Korea

NEWCASTLE (AFP): Manchester City striker Mary Fowler hit the target as Australia's Matildas secured consecutive wins against South Korea with a 2-0 victory on Monday. The injury-hit hosts needed an own goal to bank a 1-0 friendly win against the visitors in Sydney on Friday but were more assertive in front of a 28,000-strong crowd at Newcastle's McDonald Jones Stadium. Fowler put them one up just before the break, with an own goal from Lim Seon-joo doubling the lead in the 63rd minute. It was another confidence-boost for a side

that has tumbled to 16th in the world after the euphoria of making the semi-finals of the 2023 World Cup on home soil. With superstar Sam Kerr watching from the stands as she continues to recuperate from a serious knee injury, the Koreans proved lively at the start and dominated territory. But Australia held firm and slowly settled. The chances were few and far between until Emily van Egmond threaded a ball through to Fowler in the box and she took one touch before rifling home in the 43rd minute. The introduction of feisty Arsenal midfielder

Caitlin Foord at half-time added an extra spark and she went close to making it 2-0 soon after the restart, with her near-range shot well stopped by goalkeeper Kim Min-jung. Foord was in the thick of the action and hit the bar in a goalmouth scramble before Kaitlyn Torpey pounced on the rebound, with her shot taking a deflection off Lim into the net. The match could have been interim coach Tom Sermanni's last in charge, with Football Australia set to announce a permanent senior coach soon. Lyon's Joe Montemurro is seen as the frontrunner.





In brief

IRSA releases 66,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 66,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 71,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1410.07 feet which was 8.07 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1090.80 feet, which was 40.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 21,800 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 28,900, 31,600, 19,200 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 17,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 9,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police nab 14 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Monday continued operations against criminal elements and netted 14 accused including liquor suppliers, illegal arms owners, and gamblers. According to the police spokesman, six accused were taken into custody with 80 litres of liquor. The Civil Lines Police nabbed two accused Majid and Zeeshan with 60 litres of liquor. The Bani Police also arrested three accused Altaf, Sikandar and Imran recovering 15 litres of liquor from them. The Airport Police held accused Akmal and recovered 5 litres of liquor from him. Likewise, four accused were held for having illegal weapons and ammunition. The Race Course, Wah Saddar, Kahuta and Kallar Syedan Police recovered a 30-bore pistol each from accused Ghulam Murtaza, Naseerullah, Abdul Wahab and Hassan Abbas respectively. Meanwhile, the Gujjar Khan Police caught red handed four accused Basit, Khalid, Shahroz and Subhan for gambling on cards. Besides the amount at stake of Rs 2,400, three mobiles and playing cards were recovered from the accused.

Police nab murder accused, 2 Pos

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Kahuta Police on Monday arrested an accused who had shot dead a citizen over land dispute a week ago, and two proclaimed offenders wanted in murder and attempted murder cases. According to the Rawalpindi Police Spokesperson, the accused, Ehtesham, had a land dispute with Sufyan. Last week the accused along with his accomplices opened fire on Sufyan killing him on the spot. The accused went into the hiding after the incident. The Kahuta Police used all resources to arrest the accused. Efforts were underway to nab his accomplices, the spokesman said. Similarly, the arrested proclaimed offender Muhammad Saeed along with his accomplices had shot dead Afza Bibi in February 2023 over a dispute on paving a street. Nine of his accomplices had already been arrested. Likewise, the other arrested accused Owais had shot injured Hafeez over a land dispute. The case of the incident was registered in November 2024. Three of his accomplices were already in the police custody.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Junaid Anwar Chaudhry talking to Danish Ambassador Jakob Linulf who called on him at his office. —APP Photo

Naqvi for setting up NECTA centers at provinces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi presided over the fifth meeting of the Board of Governors of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NECTA) in Islamabad. The session witnessed critical decisions aimed at strengthening Pakistan's counter-terrorism framework.

During the meeting, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, along with senior government officials, actively participated. NECTA's National Coordinator, Dr. Khalid Chauhan, delivered a detailed briefing on the Authority's performance and future plans.

One of the most significant outcomes of the meeting was the approval for the establishment of the National Intelligence Fusion and Threat

Assessment Center (NIFTAC). The new entity, developed after thorough consultations with security stakeholders, will serve as a specialized hub for intelligence coordination and threat analysis.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Mohsin Naqvi underscored that the creation of NIFTAC is a vital step toward achieving NECTA's strategic objectives. He further revealed that similar centers, referred to as PIFTACs, will be set up across all provincial capitals to bolster regional intelligence efforts.

The establishment of NIFTAC is expected to ensure effective implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) and address emerging security challenges comprehensively.

Minister of State Talal Chaudhry emphasized that

NIFTAC would enhance NECTA's operational capacity, making it a more robust institution in the fight against terrorism.

The meeting was attended by Senators Manzoor Ahmed and Ponjo Mal Bheel, the Interior Secretary, the Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, and Home Secretaries from all provinces. Additionally, the Inspector Generals of Police from Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan participated.

All recommendations presented by Dr. Khalid Chauhan were unanimously approved by the Board of Governors. The decisions taken are poised to significantly fortify Pakistan's internal security apparatus and advance its counter-terrorism strategy.

Senior management course participants tour RPO Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): The participants of the Senior Management Course belonging to the 37th Common on Monday visited the Regional Police Office (RPO) Rawalpindi.

Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Region Babar Sarfraz Alpa, who himself belongs to the 37th Common, received his 14 course mates from different groups. The participating officers included Muhammad Tahir, Rafiqat Ali, Zainab Khan, Syed Hasnain Haider, Khawaja Moaz Tariq, Usman Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Fawzia Saleem, Maysam Abbas Khawaja, Muhammad Umar Ashraf, Taslim Ali Azhar, Aftab Ahmed, Sheikh Farid Ahmed and Muhammad Farooq Rashid. The officers on the occasion shared their experiences and discussed various issues. RPO Alpa gave them a detailed presentation about police-related issues. He said, "The Rawalpindi Region consists of five districts in terms of geographical importance, which borders Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the Federal Capital Islamabad."

The region, he added, was of great importance in terms of security and political turmoil. The RPO said despite limited resources, the Rawalpindi Region Police were working diligently in performing their professional duties and utilizing all capabilities to serve the public. The provision of the best public service delivery was being ensured to the citizens, while open courts were also being organized in various police stations of the Rawalpindi region to bring justice to their doorsteps, he added.

Similarly, he said, the registration of first information reports was also being ensured in the police stations as per the timeline set on the police-related applications given by the citizens. RPO Alpa and the participating officers also exchanged commemorative shields.

Police net 23 drug suppliers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Monday continued the crackdown against drug and liquor suppliers arresting 23 accused including a lady drug peddler, with over 3.5 kilograms ice, over 30 kg hashish and 480 litres of alcohol.

Kundi calls for public-security forces unity to address challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday emphasized the need for stronger unity between the public and security forces to effectively tackle the province's challenges.

Addressing a seminar titled "Holistic Appraisal of the Security and Governance Challenges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, hosted by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Kundi highlighted the complex challenges confronting security forces in the province, stressing that enhanced collaboration between law enforcement and local communities is vital for regional stability. Kundi attributed the province's ongoing security challenges to two key factors: insufficient political attention and its strategic geographical position.

Governor Kundi advocated for good governance and the strengthening of local government systems under the 18th Amendment to address these challenges. He also called for immediate attention to the issues of former FATA regions and emphasized that improving living standards is key to long-term stability. "The scourge of terrorism has severely undermined our economic progress," Kundi stated, adding that "effective governance

reforms present the most viable path to stabilizing our security situation," he said.

The governor emphasized that socio-economic development remains fundamental to lasting peace. "Elevating living standards isn't just desirable - it's essential for sustainable conflict resolution," he told attendees, highlighting the interdependence of security and prosperity in the conflict-affected region. Addressing on the occasion, former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Amir Haider Hoti emphasized the urgent need for a unified national strategy to address terrorism and governance challenges in the region. Addressing the seminar he urged political parties to get political ownership to effectively tackle the menace of terrorism.

Hoti argued that terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stemmed from systemic marginalization and rights violations, not local origins, noting figures like Osama bin Laden were not from former FATA. Hoti lamented the lack of political consensus in countering extremism, urging all parties to set aside differences and adopt a unified counter-terrorism policy. Hoti urged political leaders to learn from past mistakes, prioritize KP's stability, and involve local communities in security strategies.

Promotion of interfaith harmony key to regional unity: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Monday emphasized that promoting interfaith harmony is vital for fostering regional unity, solidarity, and peace. He made these remarks during a meeting with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin, at his office.

Reaffirming his ministry's commitment to strengthening relations with brotherly Islamic countries, Minister Yousaf said significant progress had been made in the previous government to promote

interfaith harmony. "We are reviving efforts in line with party policy and the directions of Party Leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif," he stated.

Minister Yousaf warmly welcomed the ambassador's invitation to participate in the upcoming Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan, and expressed interest in enhancing people-to-people ties through the exchange of students and religious scholars between the two countries.

Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin said the President of

Kazakhstan is expected to visit Pakistan in October this year. He noted that Kazakhstan was Pakistan's largest trading partner in Central Asia last year, and efforts are underway to resume direct flights between the two countries.

Ambassador Kistafin further shared that a delegation of Kazakh athletes and businessmen will soon visit Pakistan, with the business delegation scheduled to participate in a business forum in Karachi. He said Kazakhstan and Pakistan are set to sign several bilateral cooperation agreements in the coming days.

Riffat Mukhtar takes charge as new DG FIA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Riffat Mukhtar officially assumed the office of Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Monday.

Belonging to the 24th Common batch of the Police Service of Pakistan, Riffat Mukhtar brings a wealth of experience to his new role. Before this appointment, he served as the Inspector General of the National Highways and Motorway Police, where he led several important initiatives to improve road safety and law enforcement.

During his long career in public service, Mukhtar

has held several significant positions. He has worked as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Interior and also served as the Inspector General of Police Sindh. Moreover, he has previously performed duties as the Regional Police Officer (RPO) in major cities including Gujranwala, Multan, Faisalabad, and Bahawalpur.

Upon his arrival at the FIA Headquarters, Riffat Mukhtar was formally introduced to senior officers. He was also given a detailed briefing about the agency's operations and current challenges.

Addressing the officers, DG FIA Riffat Mukhtar emphasized the importance of honesty, dedication, and strict enforcement of the law. He announced that urgent measures would be taken to improve public service delivery and that an effective strategy would be adopted to curb human trafficking.

Mukhtar made it clear that there would be zero tolerance for corruption and strict action would be taken against any negligence in the performance of duties. "We will ensure that professional responsibilities are fulfilled without any compromise," he said.

APPSMA launches anti-drug campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): All Pakistan Private Schools' Association (APPSMA), Rawalpindi chapter has launched a comprehensive anti-drug abuse campaign across private schools to combat the rising menace of substance addiction among youth.

With drug abuse becoming an alarming issue in educational institutions, APPSMA's initiative focuses on awareness, prevention, and counseling to safeguard students from falling prey to harmful illicit drugs. In an exclusive interaction with APP on Monday, Amjad Zeb Chaudhary, President APPSMA (Rawalpindi Cantt) informed that the rising threat of drugs among youth has to be

combated through students.

"We believe our students are the best campaign ambassadors to cognize the young population about the harmful effects of the drug menace", he said adding that private schools remained active to stand shoulder to shoulder with the government in this regard. Amjad informed that school workshops, seminars and students interactions with expert psychologists would be conducted in various schools during the campaign.

He further informed that APPSMA in liaison with the district government and other relevant departments to solidify our efforts in protecting our youth from the drugs.

WHO for investing to reduce maternal, newborn deaths

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World Health Organization (WHO) has asked the international and national partners to urgently invest in reducing maternal and newborn deaths in Pakistan.

On the occasion of World Health Day, the WHO in a statement said, every day, 675 babies under one month and 27 mothers die from preventable complications in Pakistan, amounting to over 9,800 maternal and 246,300 newborn deaths each year.

Pakistan also registers more than 190,000 stillbirths annually. Under the international theme "Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures", WHO is reiterating its

commitment to partner with Pakistan to provide high-quality health care to all mothers and newborns – leaving no one behind – as a vital step towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Dapeng Luo said, "Every country needs healthy mothers and healthy newborns to have a prosperous future."

"Ending maternal and newborn preventable deaths is possible if we all reinvigorate our efforts. WHO stands with Pakistan to protect the health of babies and their mothers, no matter who they are or where they live."

Dr Dapeng said, "A single maternal or newborn death is one too many, and the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action." Every US\$ 1 invested in maternal and newborn health is estimated to yield a return of US\$ 9 to US\$ 20. Spending on maternal and newborn health is an investment in human capital, not a cost, leading to economic development and happier, healthier societies.

Pakistan has made significant progress over the years. The maternal mortality ratio fell from 276 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2006 to 155 in 2024 according to the latest available estimates.

Neonatal mortality has declined from 52 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 37.6 in 2024, and stillbirths fell from 39.8 per 1,000 births in 2000 to 27.5 in 2024.

Pakistan, with support from WHO and partners, has also made progress in tackling maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) across the country.

Around 80 per cent of Pakistan's population (190 million people) now live in areas where the spread of neonatal tetanus is under controlled limits – less than one case of tetanus per 1,000 live births. Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

achieved elimination in March 2025, Sindh in December 2024 and Punjab in 2016.

Despite progress, investments are needed to achieve the global SDG targets for 2030 – reducing maternal mortality to 70 deaths/100,000 live births and neonatal mortality to 12 deaths/1,000 births. To this end, it is vital to improve women's long-term health and well-being, including enhanced access to reproductive health services, high-quality antenatal care, life-saving care during birth and immediate newborn care – such as breastfeeding support, protection from injury and infection and

vital nutrition services.

It is also essential to address indirect causes such as anaemia – which in Pakistan affects 41.7% of women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years old) – and invest in midwifery care models, mental health and access to family planning, education and economic opportunities that empower women to make informed decisions about their families' health. The World Health Organization stands with Pakistan and its people to deliver health for all, leaving no one behind, and build a brighter future for the children and grandchildren of the country.

Iran’s minister to visit Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Iranian Embassy has announced that Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Iran’s Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade, is scheduled to visit Afghanistan. Iran’s Charge d’Affaires, Alireza Bikdeli, discussed strengthening industrial and trade relations between the two nations during a meeting with Atabak. The Minister emphasized the importance of cooperation with Afghanistan and confirmed that he would be visiting soon, leading a delegation.

One robber killed in Herat

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): One robber was killed and another arrested during a clash with security forces in Herat, official said. Police spokesman Ghulam Nabi Nabizada told Pajhwok Afghan News two armed robbers clashed with security forces in the 7th police district. The clash left one robber dead and a second was detained Nabizada said the two robbers taking advantage of darkness used to enter people’s homes in Herat city and looted their valuables.

UN urges global help for Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations has called on the international donor community to sustain critical support for the Afghan people, as 22.9 million individuals are projected to need humanitarian assistance in 2025. The urgent appeal comes ahead of key meetings in Istanbul this week, where the Afghanistan Coordination Group (ACG) will convene, bringing together donor representatives, International Financial Institutions, and UNAMA. Indrika Ratwatte, the UN’s Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan, stressed the importance of ongoing assistance: “If we want to help the Afghan people escape the vicious cycle of poverty and suffering, we must continue to have the means to address urgent needs while simultaneously laying the groundwork for long-term resilience and stability.” The UN emphasized the need to transition from life-saving assistance to sustainable solutions that tackle the root causes of vulnerability. This, they stated, is vital not only for Afghanistan but also for regional and global stability. In 2024, humanitarian organizations raised a record US\$3.21 billion to support Afghanistan, surpassing the previous year’s funding levels. This generous international support has enabled the UN and its partners to deliver life-saving assistance, maintain essential services, and strengthen

resilience, particularly for vulnerable populations like women and girls.

However, the UN warned that a global funding crisis could undermine these efforts and jeopardize the fragile improvements made in stabilizing the country over the past four years. Key gains, such as enhanced food security and moderate economic growth, are at risk of reversal.

A failure to maintain necessary investments could lead to negative coping strategies among Afghans, including increased irregular migration, which could further strain regional stability and expose vulnerable populations to greater risks.

The meetings in Istanbul will be crucial in determining the future of international aid to Afghanistan.

Seven suspects held for explosives, weapons

LASHKARGAH/MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested seven individuals linked to bomb-making and possession of weapons in northern Balkh and southern Helmand provinces. In Balkh, police said three suspects were arrested in the Marmol district for their involvement in bomb-making activities. According to the police headquarters, an explosion occurred a few days ago when an individual was making a bomb at his home, resulting in one person being injured. During the operation, authorities seized 13 kilograms of explosives, one rifle, and 28 shells from the suspects. Meanwhile, in Helmand, four individuals were arrested in the 2nd police district of Lashkargah city for possessing a variety of weapons and military equipment. Police spokesman Izatul-

lah Haqqani confirmed that the operation led to the seizure of several firearms, including Kalashnikovs, pistols, shotguns, hand grenades, rocket launcher shells, communication devices, computers, military uniforms, and additional ammunition.

The detainees are currently under investigation, and once the initial inquiry is completed, they will be handed over to the judicial authorities for further action.

96% of Herat’s Saffron exported to abroad



HERAT (BNA): The Herat Saffron Growers Union has announced a significant increase in saffron production, with a remarkable 96 percent of the province’s saffron being exported to international markets. Sayed Abdul Wahid Sadat, deputy head of the Union, reported that the current market price for high-quality saffron is approximately 110,000 Afghanis per kilogram. He noted that rising prices have encouraged more farmers to cultivate saffron, contributing to an upward trend in production levels. Officials from local saffron processing companies highlighted the high quality of Herat saffron as a driving factor behind increased global demand. One company representative stated that improvements in the export process have enabled them to successfully ship saffron to markets in Oman, India, and several Arab nations. Additionally, the Herat

Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock reported an increase of 1,000 hectares in saffron cultivation over the past year.

Currently, 9,000 hectares in Herat are dedicated to this lucrative crop.

Herat is renowned as Afghanistan’s primary saffron production center, benefiting from a favorable climate, fertile soil, and the extensive experience of local farmers in saffron cultivation and harvesting.

Aid cuts could leave more women dying in pregnancy

KABUL (Ariana News): Cuts to aid budgets are threatening to undermine years of progress in reducing the number of women dying during pregnancy and childbirth, and could lead to a rise in deaths, the United Nations has warned. Globally, there was a 40% decline in maternal deaths between 2000 and 2023, a report by UN agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) showed on Monday, largely due to better access to essential health services. That could now go into reverse, the WHO said in a statement accompanying the report which did not mention specific cuts but came in the wake of a foreign aid freeze by the US government and the ending of funding through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for many programmes. Other donor countries including Britain have also announced plans to cut aid budgets. “One of the headline messages is that the funding cuts risk not only that progress, but we could have a shift backward,” said Dr Bruce Aylward, Assistant Director-General, Universal Health Coverage at the WHO. The cuts have had “pandemic-like effects” on health systems globally and could have a “more structural, deep-seated effect,” Aylward added. The WHO said the cuts were already rolling back vital services for maternal, newborn and child health in many countries, reducing staff numbers, closing facilities and disrupting supply chains for supplies including treatments for hemorrhage and pre-eclampsia. Cuts to other areas, such as malaria and HIV treatment, would also impact maternal survival, the UN said. Even before the aid cuts led by the United States, things were backsliding in some countries, and progress has slowed globally since 2016, the report said.

In 2023, despite recent progress, a woman still died roughly every two minutes – around 260,000 in total that year – from complications that were mainly preventable and treatable, it added.

The situation was particularly bad in countries affected by conflict or natural disaster, although the US itself is one of only four countries to have seen its maternal mortality rate increase significantly since 2000, alongside Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica.

The COVID-19 pandemic also had an impact, the report said: 40,000 more women died due to pregnancy or childbirth in 2021, bringing the total number of deaths that year to 322,000.

“While this report shows glimmers of hope, the data also highlights how dangerous pregnancy still is in much of the world today – despite the fact that solutions exist,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

IEA rejects reports of US planes landing at Bagram Base

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate’s spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has rejected reports that US military planes have been landing at Bagram Air Base.

Addressing rumors circulating on social media about the return of US troops, and of a C-17 transport plane landing at the base, Mujahid said Sunday no American military planes have landed at the airfield. He said the IEA will not allow this to happen.

He said the reports were “propaganda aimed at destroying public minds”.

Mujahid stressed that such activity was “impossible” and that “there is no need for any country’s military presence in Afghanistan at present and the Islamic Emirate will not allow such an action.”

Bagram Airfield, located about 40 kms north-east of Kabul, was the main base for US and NATO forces in Afghanistan during the 20-year war.

Foreign troops pulled out of the base in July 2021 and handed it over to the former Afghan government.

Over 34,000 foreigners arrive, leave country

KABUL (Pajhwok): About 34,411 foreign nationals arrived and left the country through land and airports last year, the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) said.

In a statement, NSIA wrote it registered 18,846 foreigners, including 598 female, entering and 15,565 others including 382 females leaving the country in 1403 solar year.

During this period, 18,329 people entered the country through land ports and 454 others by airports, about 721 of them visited ancient and historical sites and the rest for work, the report added.

According to the statement, based on recorded data, the largest number of foreigners (10,641), most of whom are drivers, entered for work through Nimroz Port, and 4,345 entered via Torkham Port, including 1,325 tourists.

About 3,058 more people entered through Herat ports and airport, and the remaining foreigners entered via Hairatan Port and Balkh Airport, Aquina Port in Faryab and Ishkashm Port in Badakhshan, and Kabul and Kandahar Airports.

NSIA did not reveal the identities of the foreign nationals.

129,000MT of goods transported via railways

KABUL (Pajhwok): About 128,814 metric tonnes of goods were transported through railways from four Afghan ports during the past two weeks, the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) said.

On its X handle, MoPW wrote these transportations took place during last two weeks of 1404 solar year.

It said 96,403 tonnes of goods were transported through Hairatan Port, 10,910 tonnes via Aquina Port, 17,911 tonnes through Torghundi Port, and 3,590 tons via Khawaf-Herat, totaling 128,814 metric tonnes.

The shipments included 4,570 tonnes of transit and export goods, mostly quinoa, potatoes, dried fruits and pomegranate juice.

According to the ministry, as the level of exports and imports through railways increase, it creates job opportunities, surges national revenues and put the country on the path to economic stability, development, and self-sufficiency.

During the previous month, 358,085 metric tons of goods were transported via railways from Afghanistan’s four ports.

Uzbek investor ready to boost Afghan poultry, livestock sectors

KABUL (BNA): An Uzbek investor and his team have expressed their readiness to invest in the country’s poultry and livestock sectors during a recent meeting with Nouruddin Azizi, the Minister of Industry and Commerce.

The investor outlined plans to establish companies not only in poultry and livestock but also in textiles, tailoring, cement production, and the manufacturing of rebar and glass. This diverse portfolio indicates a strong commitment to enhancing Afghanistan’s industrial landscape.

Azizi underscored the favorable investment climate in Afghanistan, highlighting key opportunities in cold storage, oil refining, and agricultural improve-



ments, particularly in seed and sapling enhancement. The investment initiative

could mark a pivotal moment for Afghanistan’s agricultural and industrial dev-

elopment, promising to create jobs and improve local production capabilities.

Afghanistan-Iran trade reaches \$3.366b in 1403, says Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan Ministry of Industry and Commerce reported that in the solar year 1403, trade between Afghanistan and Iran amounted to \$3.366 billion.

The spokesperson of the ministry, Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, stressed that \$55 million of this total consisted of exports.

The spokesman stated: “Trade between Afghanistan and Iran in 1403 reached a value of \$3.366 billion, of which \$55 million were exports and \$3.311 billion were imports.”

Meanwhile, some Iranian media, quoting the head of Iran’s customs

office, reported that Iran exported non-oil goods worth \$2.2 billion to Afghanistan in the 11-month period from March 20, 2024, to February 18, 2025.

According to this report, Afghanistan was ranked the fifth largest destination for Iran’s exports during this period.

“Iran has an advantage with the Chabahar port, which could serve as a good opportunity for us to access international waters and export our goods globally,” said Abdul Zohoor Mudaber, an economic analyst.

“In addition to the temporary closure of the

Torkham border, which is one of the main reasons for the increase in trade between Afghanistan and neighboring countries like Iran, there are other factors such as exchange rate conditions. The devaluation of Iran’s national currency has made Iranian imports relatively cheap,” said Mir Shakir Yaqubi, another economic analyst.

This comes after the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment previously reported that due to trade challenges with Pakistan, Afghanistan’s transit through Karachi port has decreased by 84%, while it has increased by

95% through Bandar Abbas.

Emerald mining yields millions for Panjshir

PANJSHIR (BNA): The Panjshir Directorate of Mines and Petroleum has announced it collected more than 21.6 million Afghanis in revenue during solar year 1403 (March 2024 to March 2025), according to Mawlawi Mohammad Qasim Amiri, the director of the office.

Amiri told Bakhtar News Agency that a total of 21,629,586 AFN in revenues were deposited into the state treasury. These earnings came from mining operations and licensing activities across the province.

Over the past year, 674,343 carats of emeralds were sold through 19 auction rounds, generating more than \$3.25 million. Additionally, the directorate distributed 4,471 mining worker cards and 1,121 geological identification cards to those active in the sector. 500 license renewal applications were submitted to the Ministry of Mines this year. As a result, 135 new licenses were issued for emerald-rich zones.

The Panjshir Mining Directorate reaffirmed its commitment to supporting legal mining and upholding regulatory standards in accordance with national law.

UAE envoy reaffirms support

KABUL (Amu TV): The foreign ministry of the United Arab Emirates said that the country’s high-level delegation, during its recent visit to Kabul, reaffirmed the UAE’s commitment to humanitarian aid and development cooperation in Afghanistan.

The delegation, led by Saif Mohammed Al Ketbi, the UAE’s special envoy for Afghanistan, visited from April 3 to April 5 and met with Taliban officials, including Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Taliban deputy chief minister for administrative affairs; Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban acting foreign minister; and Nouruddin Azizi, the Taliban acting minister of industry and commerce.

According to the statement, discussions focused on supporting humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, expanding economic cooperation, and advancing development projects that would serve the mutual interests of both countries.

Al Ketbi emphasized the UAE’s continued support for the Afghan people and framed the visit as part of a broader strategy to strengthen historic ties and contribute to regional stability.

He also expressed the UAE’s willingness to work with Afghan authorities on efforts to facilitate the return of Afghan refugees and promote long-term economic collaboration.

Activists call for urgent protection of woman

KABUL (Amu TV): A group of women’s rights activists has called for urgent international intervention to protect Qadriah, a young woman they say is at imminent risk of death after being handed over by Taliban authorities to her family in northern Afghanistan.

In a statement issued by the Purple Saturdays Movement, led by activist Maryam Maroof Arvin, the group urged global human rights organizations to take immediate and effective action to save Qadriah, whom they described as a victim of domestic violence and patriarchal punishment.

“Qadriah is not a criminal, but a victim of unjust violence,” the statement said. “By handing her over to her father, the Taliban have deliberately exposed her to the threat of stoning and a violent death.”

The activists have appealed to organizations including Amnesty International, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to provide emergency protection and facilitate her safe relocation to a country that upholds human rights.

Qadriah, originally from Baghlan Province, fled to Kabul seeking refuge with her sister after what she described as ongoing domestic abuse. According to the activists, her father had previously filed a complaint with the Taliban accusing her of “running away from home.” Taliban

authorities reportedly arrested and detained her, then released her into her father’s custody—actions activists say have placed her life in grave danger.

“We urge all human rights institutions, media outlets, and governments committed to defending human dignity to raise their voices before it’s too late,” the statement said. “Qadriah deserves protection, support, and a life free from violence.”

The activists said they fear that without immediate international action, Qadriah could become the latest victim in a wave of gender-based violence that has intensified under Taliban rule, particularly in the absence of legal protections for women and girls.

Stanikzai’s public absence enters 80th day

KABUL (Amu TV): The prolonged public absence of Abbas Stanikzai, the Taliban’s deputy foreign minister for political affairs, has entered its 80th day, with no official explanation or public appearances since late January.

Stanikzai, once a visible figure in the Taliban’s diplomatic engagements, has not been seen at official meetings or public events since January 21, when he last appeared at a gathering hosted by the Taliban’s Foreign Ministry. Since then, no photographs or footage of him participating in government activities have been released, fueling speculation about internal divisions within the Taliban leadership.

In February, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told the BBC that Stanikzai was on personal leave in the United Arab Emirates. “Part of his family lives in Dubai,” Mujahid said at the time. “He has been there before for rest and this is one of those trips.” That explanation, however, has not been updated, and his continued absence remains unexplained.

The lack of clarity surrounding Stanikzai’s whereabouts comes amid similar questions about



Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban’s powerful interior minister. Although he reappeared briefly on March 14 in the eastern province of Khost after a 52-day absence, he has not been publicly seen at the Interior Ministry or at official meetings in Kabul since.

These developments coincide with remarks made by Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada during Eid al-Fitr, in which he warned of the dangers of disobedience and internal division. Speaking from Kandahar, Akhundzada said: “There is a structure, there is leadership. If people break ranks, it leads to war—as it did in the past.”

Despite these warnings, Taliban leaders held two separate Eid prayers in Kabul—just a few hundred meters apart. Abdul Kabir,

who is seen as close to the Haqqani faction, led prayers at Sepidar Palace, while Abdul Ghani Baradar, another senior Taliban figure, presided over a separate gathering at the Presidential Palace.

While the Taliban’s official spokesperson continues to insist that there are no internal rifts—only “differences of opinion”—sources familiar with the Taliban’s leadership say the pattern of absences, along with recent behavior, points to deeper power struggles within the Taliban, particularly over control and inclusion.

Political analysts say the apparent divisions reflect growing tensions between factions centered in Kandahar and those operating from Kabul, rooted in disputes over influence and policy direction.

Jirga meets KP CM, demand opening of roads

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation of the Bannu Qaumi Jirga called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at Chief Minister's House on Monday. The delegation included Provincial Minister Pakhtoon Yar Khan, MNA Maulana Naseem Shah, MPA Adnan Wazir, as well as political and social figures, elders, and religious scholars from the region. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Additional Chief Secretary Home, the concerned Commissioner, RPO, Deputy Commissioner, and DPO were also present on this occasion.

The meeting deliberated upon the current law and order situation in Bannu and various related matters. The delegation briefed the Chief Minister on the demands presented at the recently held Qaumi Jirga in Bannu. They also informed him about the difficulties faced by the local population due to road closures in the area.

The Chief Minister agreed in principle to the demands of the Bannu Qaumi Jirga and decided to prepare a roadmap for addressing these issues. He assured the delegation that a mechanism would be devised for the phased reopening of closed roads in Bannu to facilitate public movement.

On this occasion, a decision was made to form a committee to resolve issues related to the reinstatement of dismissed police personnel from Bannu, matters concerning the Fourth Schedule, and those under 3 MPO, among others. The delegates assured the government of their full cooperation for the restoration of peace in the region. Speaking to the delegates, the Chief Minister stated that out of the 16 points approved by the Provincial Apex Committee, 12 have already been implemented, while efforts are ongoing to implement the remaining four. Stressing the importance of public trust and support in eliminating terrorism, he said that no war can be



won without the support and confidence of the people, and steps are being taken to restore public trust in the system.

The Chief Minister urged the delegation to play an active role in expelling out terrorists from the region and to fully cooperate with the government in this regard. He made it clear that no military operations are taking place in any part of the province; however, intelligence-based operations against miscreants are continuing. The police, particularly the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), are being given a lead role in the fight against terrorism, and concrete steps are being taken to strengthen the police force.

Meanwhile, a high-level meeting regarding traffic congestion and other related issues in district Peshawar was held here with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. Provincial cabinet members, national and provincial assembly members from Peshawar, Chief Secretary, administrative secretaries of relevant departments, representatives of local government, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

The meeting involved a detailed review of the committee's report on traffic issues in Peshawar. Relevant officials also briefed the participants on the legal framework regarding vehicular traffic, root causes of traffic issues in Peshawar, and the proposed traffic plans. On this occasion, short-term and mid-term traffic plans were approved to resolve traffic issues on a permanent basis, deciding that after implementing these proposed plans, a long-term plan would be devised and implemented.

These plans suggest short-term and long-term actions for a sustainable solution to traffic problems in the provincial capital. Responsibilities of all relevant departments and institutions have been clearly defined for implementing the plans, and timelines have been set for the fulfillment of these responsibilities. A robust monitoring mechanism will also be established to supervise the implementation of these plans, it was decided.

The Chief Minister instructed the concerned authorities to immediately initiate implementation of the proposed plans and emphasized that progress would be regularly reviewed

to ensure compliance with the set timelines. The Chief Minister said that Peshawar is a city for all of us and the face of the entire province, and a plan has been formulated to truly make it a beautiful reflection of the province.

"A special package for Peshawar will be included in the upcoming Annual Development Programme", he remarked and urged the elected public representatives to rise above politics and play their respective role in the improvement and beautification of Peshawar. He said that consultation would also be held with the elected public representatives for development schemes for Peshawar; this city belongs to all of us, and we must work together to make it a great city.

The meeting approved immediate recruitments for vacant positions in various departments and institutions to implement the new traffic plan, further deciding to provide the required machinery and other equipment on a priority basis for this purpose. The Chief Minister, while referring to important initiatives to improve traffic flow in Peshawar, stated that the expansion of BRT and

construction of three underpasses on University Road would bring significant improvements. He emphasized the need to focus particularly on the construction of zebra crossings and overhead bridges in Peshawar and directed that cost estimates for this purpose be presented, assuring that the government would provide the necessary resources. The Chief Minister also instructed the construction of overhead bridges outside educational institutions and at entrances of markets.

While briefing the participants on major ongoing road projects in Peshawar, it was told that the missing link of Ring Road up to Nasir Bagh will be completed by the end of this month, and work on the road from Nasir Bagh to Takhta Baig is progressing rapidly. In addition, a separate road is being constructed to connect the Industrial Estate Hayatabad to Ring Road. Progress is also ongoing on the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor. All these projects will help provide a permanent solution to traffic problems.

The Chief Minister directed action against illegal parking and stressed strict enforcement of parking regulations. He instructed that implementation be ensured for building maps of plazas that include parking, and that all such maps be reviewed afresh. He made it clear that if any map has been approved without parking after the relevant law was passed, those responsible must face action, and in the future, no plazas without parking facilities should be allowed. He also instructed the identification of suitable parking space on University Road and measures to streamline handcars (pushcarts), directing that wherever possible, designated areas should be allocated for them. The Chief Minister stated that handcars are linked to the livelihood of poor citizens — they cannot be banned, but they can be streamlined.

He also directed the removal of encroachments from service and link

roads and emphasized strict enforcement of the relevant law in this regard. He ordered a complete ban on public service vehicles on BRT routes and called for a zero-tolerance policy in this regard. Ali Amin Gandapur directed a review of the current traffic challans and instructed that fines be set according to vehicle value, so that illegal parking can be effectively curbed. The Chief Minister directed the authorities concerned to present a realistic plan for covering manholes in the city and assured that the government would provide the necessary resources for this purpose.

Moreover, he directed action against drug dealers and appealed to elected representatives to fully cooperate with relevant authorities in this regard, stating that drug dealers are enemies of our generations, and we must all unite against them. The meeting also approved the introduction of a specific color scheme to streamline rickshaws and instructed that the matter of rickshaw registration be presented at the provincial cabinet meeting. Approval was also given to regulate taxi services and register electric bikes.

The Chief Minister further directed to prioritize the installation and repair of streetlights, directing that key intersections and important locations on major roads be prioritized in the first phase, and that preference be given to install solar streetlights. The meeting approved the rationalization of U-turns and adopted a zero-tolerance policy against illegal parking and unauthorized stands. The Chief Minister also directed for a realistic plan for installing traffic lights and signals, emphasizing that experts from the relevant field should be hired for this purpose. The meeting approved the relocation of the vegetable market at Bacha Khan Chowk to Phandu Road. The Chief Minister further instructed efforts to establish more markets in the city with the involvement of the private sector.

PHC seeks federal, KP govts response in missing persons' cases

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Atique Shah has issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, seeking their response to petitions filed for the recovery of missing persons, on Monday.

PHC's Chief Justice SM Atique Shah heard a petition regarding a missing person involved in the medicine business. The Deputy Gohar Rahman Khattak and Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah appeared before the court.

The counsel Adil Butt advocate informed the court that the petitioner's husband, who was involved in the medicine business, went missing a year and a half ago. Despite searching everywhere, his whereabouts remain unknown.

The Chief Justice inquired about the date of disappearance, and the lawyer replied that it was in 2023 and the investigation officer present in court stated that the missing person

was involved in the medicine business and had taken money from people with promises of profit.

The court directed the investigation officer to submit a detailed report and scheduled the next hearing. Similarly, Acting Chief Justice S.M. Atique Shah heard another petition regarding Imdad Ullah, who went missing from Hayatabad in 2016. The court sought a report from the relevant authorities, which has not been received yet.

The investigation officer informed the court that Imdad Ullah worked as a driver for the FWO for eight years and that a FIR was registered based on the commission's recommendation for missing persons. The court directed the authorities to submit a report on the next hearing and adjourned the case. The court also sought responses from the federal and provincial governments regarding 10 other missing persons' cases.

PHC asks NADRA to submit reply in block CNIC: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and

Justice Fazal Subhan has directed National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to respond to a petition filed by Dilawar Khan, a resident of Mardan, whose Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) was blocked.

The counsel Malik Shahbaz Advocate, informed the court that the petitioner is a Pakistani citizen, had his CNIC issued but was unable to renew it due to his father's CNIC being blocked. The counsel argued Dilawar Khan's CNIC was blocked due to his father's blocked CNIC, causing difficulties in his daily life. His bank account was also blocked, adding to his problems.

The lawyer added that the petitioner's children's school enrollment faced complications. When the petitioner contacted NADRA, they refused to provide a reason for blocking his CNIC. The lawyer argued that as a Pakistani citizen, the petitioner has the constitutional right to a CNIC, essential for daily life. The court issued a notice to NADRA, seeking their response to the petition.

Afghans asked to leave Landi Kotal

E.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Like in other parts of the country, the administration asked Afghan nationals illegally residing in Landi Kotal to willingly leave the area and return back to their country or they will be forcibly expelled, on Monday.

As per local administration approximately 1017 Illegal Afghan families residing in tehsil Landi Kotal. Assistant Commissioner, Landi Kotal said that Afghan families carrying Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) or living without legal documents had been directed to go back to Afghanistan through Torkham border otherwise legal action would be taken against them.

The local administration official said that so far two families, one each from Landi Kotal and Bara tehsils willingly returned to their country following the expiry of the deadline, 31st March, 2025. Deportation of illegal Afghan immigrants through Torkham crossing is underway and till last day 3053 Afghanis returned to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, as per border security official vehicles loaded with valuables of the repatriated families without Temporary Admission Document (TED) were not permitted to cross the border and it unloaded in Torkham and then shifted it to the other side of the border through handcars. It is to be stated here that repatriation of illegal Afghan immigrants from various parts of the country has started after the expiry of deadline 31st March, 2025.

Pakistan issues visas to Indian pilgrims

NEW DELHI (APP): On the occasion of Baisakhi celebrations, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued over 6,500 visas to pilgrims from India to participate in the annual festival scheduled to be held in Pakistan from 10-19 April 2025. The pilgrims would, inter-alia, visit Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Gurdwara Nankana Sahib and Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib.

Expressing his views on the occasion, the Charge d' Affaires Saad Ahmad Warraich, stated that the large number of visas issued by the Government of Pakistan was a manifestation of our policy to foster harmony and promote understanding between peoples, cultures and religions.

He added that Pakistan would continue to facilitate such visits to sacred and holy sites. Every year, a large number of Yateers from India visit Pakistan to observe various religious festivals/occasions under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974.

Don't want to interfere in jurisdiction of HC: CJ

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Yahya Afridi on Monday upheld the Rs2.2 million fine imposed on the prosecutor general of Punjab by the Lahore High Court (LHC) while disposing of appeals regarding the transfer of cases from the Rawalpindi ATC judge in the case related to May 9 mayhem.

The CJ observed that the high court's decision would not affect the careers of the prosecutor general and the ATC (anti-terrorism court) judge. The counsel for the Punjab government stated that the judge had already been transferred, and the issue is regarding the high court's remarks and the fine.

Chief Justice Afridi mentioned that the chief justice of the high court has to manage the entire province and had to send a message to the government regarding the reference against the judge. The CJ said that the LHC had sent a message to the government, which was also agreed upon by the administrative Judge. The Supreme Court does not wish to interfere in the jurisdiction of the high court, and paying the fine is not a major issue.

A three-member bench headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan is hearing the Punjab government's petitions seeking cancellation of bail granted to the May 9 incidents accused. Other

members of the bench are Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb. On June 14 last, the LHC dismissed several applications filed by the Punjab government, seeking transfer of certain May 9, 2023, cases from ATC-1 Rawalpindi to another court, with a fine.

LHC Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan announced the verdict on the transfer applications filed by the prosecution upon completion of arguments by the parties. The Punjab government has sought more time to present arguments in appeal for the cancellation of bail granted to accused in the May 9 attack on military installations in Rawalpindi.

Courts focus on fair trials: Justice Mandokhail

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Jamal Mandokhail of Supreme Court has remarked that the courts are only responsible for ensuring trials are conducted according to the Constitution, while the responsibility to combat terrorism lies with the Parliament.

He made these comments during the hearing of the case concerning the trial of civilians in military courts. Justice Mandokhail made the remarks during a hearing of petitions challenging the Supreme Court's earlier ruling which had declared the trial of civilians in military courts as unconstitutional. A seven-member larger bench, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard the case. The bench also comprised Justices Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Musarrat Hilali, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Naem Akhtar Afghan, and Shahid Bilal.

During the proceedings, Justice Mandokhail interjected, pointing out that every criminal act begins with an FIR. "The question here is about the forum of the trial," he said. "How is the FIR registered? Who conducts the investigation? What is the procedure? — these are questions we seek clarity on."

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar said that registration of an FIR is a legal prerequisite before an arrest can take place. Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi noted that upon arrest, an individual must be presented before a magistrate. Justice Mandokhail added that under Section 2(d) of the Army Act, an accused becomes subject to court-martial only after the charges are formally framed.

Justice Mandokhail maintained that the Constitution grants exclusive jurisdiction to court-martials under its own scheme, which is distinct from regular courts. To this, Justice Mandokhail asked, "According to you, military courts do not fall under Article 175. Under which provision of the Constitution do these courts then operate?"

In response, Haris referred to several past judgments that had upheld the legitimacy of court-martials. Reiterating his stance, Justice Mandokhail said, "It is the role of the judiciary to ensure that trials adhere to constitutional standards. The responsibility to combat terrorism lies with Parliament. If courts begin to weigh whether a decision would reduce or increase terrorism, then they would be unable to reach a ruling." The apex court adjourned the hearing until today (Tuesday).

Khawaja Haris, counsel for the Ministry of Defence, continued his rebuttal arguments. He contended that under certain circumstances — such as when a civilian damages military installations or commits theft of military equipment — the provisions of the Army Act would be applicable. Justice Mandokhail interjected, pointing out that every criminal act begins with an FIR. "The question here is about the forum of the trial," he said. "How is the FIR registered? Who conducts the investigation? What is the procedure? — these are questions we seek clarity on."

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Canal Project: SHC issues notices

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday issued notices to two federal secretaries over issuing certificate allowing construction of canals from the river.

The high court has summoned the secretaries in person on May 07. The Sindh High Court hearing a petition filed by Senator Zameer Ghumro, challenging construction of new canals on the Indus River system.

According to the petition, the Sindh High Court had directed the IRSA on May 12, 2017, to issue the member from Sindh. "The decision was being implemented until 2011 and after appointments made from other provinces", petition read. "On January 24, the water availability certificate was issued for construction of Thall Canal phase II and Cholistan Canal." "Federal Secretary Water Ali Murtaza and Secretary Establishment Inaamullah Dharejo committed contempt of the court," Barrister Zameer Ghumro said.

Petitioner also called the constitution of the Council of Common Interest in the caretaker government's tenure as unlawful. "An illegal constitution of the IRSA inflicted extreme damage to Sindh," according to petition. "It has directly hit Karachi, Sujawal, Badin and Thatta districts of Sindh. The Indus River Delta has badly affected, and the agriculture has suffered huge loss," petition read.

The high court had issued notices to the federal government and the Attorney General in a previous hearing and summoned reply of the notice by April 07. Senator Zameer Ghumro told the court that constitution of the IRSA has been unconstitutional and unlawful thus its decisions have no consequence.

Gohar distances PTI from bill tabled in US Congress

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar apparently distanced the party from the recent bill introduced in the US Congress, while reiterating his party's renewed commitment to securing the release of the PTI founder.

Barrister Gohar stated that "serious and concrete measures" will now be pursued for the release of the party's jailed founding leader. He lamented that the absence of an independent judiciary remains the most

significant obstacle to justice.

"If the courts fail to deliver a verdict, then our political alliance will be compelled to make a decision," he said, signalling a potential shift towards collective political action. He also clarified that Senator Azam Swati had made no such remarks that would warrant disciplinary measures from the party.

On internal party matters, the PTI chairman called for an end to the practice of public oaths and declarations. "Such customs involving the Qur'an

and swearing must come to an end. Moving forward, no internal matters will be addressed in the public domain," he asserted. Regarding the bill introduced in the US Congress, Barrister Gohar downplayed its significance. "Numerous bills are floated in the US; some are passed, others are not.

I haven't seen the bill in question, and PTI has no affiliation with it whatsoever," he remarked, distancing the party from any direct engagement or involvement with the legislation.

Ex-detainees at UK asylum center bring claim against govt

LONDON: At least 250 asylum-seekers detained at a UK facility are suing the government for unlawful detention after it emerged that the site was dangerously overcrowded and faced infectious disease outbreaks.

Manston asylum center in Kent, used by the Home Office to process people who had crossed the English Channel on small boats, was once described by a union official as a "humanitarian crisis on British soil." The Guardian reported on Monday. David Neal, the former independent chief inspector of borders and immigration, said he was "rendered speechless" after seeing conditions at Manston. Andy Baxter, a senior official at the Prison Officers' Association, also condemned conditions at the site after being warned by union members working there. He described Manston as closely resembling a refugee camp in an unstable country after visiting the site, which he said was "in crisis."

Marquees that were intended to be used for hours upon the arrival of asylum-seekers had been used for more than a month, despite the Home Office planning to relocate arrivals to more permanent accommodation. People slept on the ground using pieces of cardboard, he added.

Manston also faced diphtheria and scabies outbreaks, with one man dying after contracting the former, a rarity in the UK due to vaccination. Kent Police also investigated claims that guards at the facility had assaulted asylum-seekers. One of the claimants against the government, a 19-year-old Sudanese national, was detained at the site for 33 days, and his past experience of being tortured and trafficked was never recorded by officials at Manston.

While at the facility, he was "often hungry" and was allowed one shower during the 33-day period. He was also denied a change of clothes, and was told by officials to "go back to your

country." A 17-year-old Kurd from Iraq, detained for 12 days, had his birth date recorded as five years older than his real age, despite telling officials he was a child.

A Syrian woman who arrived in the UK with her husband and five children outlined the troubling details of her ordeal in the claim. Her husband was removed to a separate immigration center after complaining about conditions at Manston, yet she was not informed about his whereabouts and feared he had been deported. The woman and her children spent 11 days in a freezing, dirty tent, and were only permitted to leave to go to the toilet.

Her children contracted a stomach bug that was circulating at the site, and she had nowhere to wash their vomit-stained clothes. She later discovered that she was pregnant after suffering morning sickness, and was unable to access medical care in Manston. — Arab News