

Martyred ADC laid to rest
F.P. Report

QUETTA: The body of martyred Additional Deputy Commissioner Surab, Hidayatullah Buledi, was laid to rest in his ancestral town Bhag Nari on Saturday. Reports revealed that Buledi, who fell victim to a terrorist attack in Surab the previous day, was transported via helicopter to Bhag Nari. The arrival of his body cast a deep pall of grief over the community



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 123

Regd. No. 241

ZIL HAJJ 04 1446 -- SUNDAY, JUNE 01 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

Preparedness needed on multiple fronts

Prime Minister says Balochistan issues to be resolved amicably

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Saturday stressed that the threats faced by Pakistan were no longer confined to conventional warfare and highlighted the need for preparedness across multiple domains.

He was addressing officers at the Command and Staff College here. Joined by Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Federal Ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Attaullah Tarar, Balochistan Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Rahat Naseem Ahmed Khan, and DG ISPR Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the Prime Minister outlined a comprehensive vision for national resilience.

"Pakistan's threats are no longer limited to traditional warfare," said PM Sharif. "Our military, political, and economic institutions must be equally prepared to face hybrid challenges, from border security to economic sabotage." He paid tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their valor and professionalism, citing the response to the Pulwama incident as an example of national strength. "While India targeted innocent civilians, our Air Force responded with precision, striking seven high-value targets," he said, adding that the incident proved Pakistan's operational readiness on land and in the air.

The Prime Minister strongly criticized India's propaganda and its attempt to weaponize events like the Pulwama attack. He emphasized that Pakistan responded firmly, diplomatically and militarily. "India tried to make water a weapon, but we have drawn

a red line. Pakistan will never allow its water rights to be violated," he added. He praised the leadership of Field Marshal Asim Munir and Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar for their strategic foresight, asserting that Pakistan's armed forces and people stand united against any aggression. "The recent tensions have only boosted the morale of our nation and forces," he remarked.

He noted that when he assumed office for a 16-month tenure, the country was facing severe challenges, but none were insurmountable. "Our focus remains on the economy, reforms, and counterterrorism," he said. He pointed to significant achievements since the beginning of economic reforms in March 2024. "Tax revenue has increased by 28% compared to last year. The introduction of a faceless assessment system at Karachi Port has improved transparency. Inflation has dropped from 38% to single digits. The Pakistani rupee is now stable," he added.

Shehbaz Sharif also emphasized the government's zero-tolerance policy on corruption, crediting tough decisions and anti-smuggling measures for economic stabilization. "We are introducing modern technologies, including crypto regulation and blockchain, to align Pakistan with the global financial landscape," he announced.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's strong ties with countries like China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Qatar, and the Gulf states. "Our strategic friendships have endured every test. These nations stood by us in our most difficult times," he said. The Prime Minister called for collective national effort and hard work to join the ranks of great nations. "Success comes from perseverance. Together, we will

transform Pakistan into a model for the world," he declared.

Meanwhile, addressing a grand jirga of Balochistan, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday said the issues faced by the people of Balochistan would be resolved amicably and funds would be made available for the development and progress of the largest province.

Ge said all provinces were like brothers and would equally share resources of the country. The federal government was spending Rs 70 billion on the solarization project in Balochistan, he said adding Rs 150 billion would be diverted for the building of highway N25 in Balochistan.

These funds would be acquired from the amount which the government was collecting after the lowering down of prices of petroleum products in the international market. The prime minister said the government would allocate Rs 1000 billion for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) this year and 25 percent of Rs 250 billion from the fund would be for projects in Balochistan.

He said federal funds were the right of people of Balochistan and every penny would be spent transparently on the progress and prosperity of the province. As chief minister of Punjab, he said he allocated ten percent quota for the students of Balochistan in different schemes of Punjab including laptop schemes and scholarships in the foreign and provincial educational institutions.

In the past, Rs two billion were allocated for a heart hospital in Balochistan, he continued. He recalled that Punjab had agreed to give part of its funds from the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award to

Balochistan in view of its development needs as the province had a larger area. In today's value, the funds diverted to Balochistan amounted to Rs 160 billion, he explained.

The NFC award was signed in Lahore in 2010 after three days of discussions among the national leadership including President Asif Ali Zardari, then prime minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and Nawaz Sharif, he added. He said in the tenure of Nawaz Sharif lot of development projects were undertaken in Balochistan and President Zardari initiated Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan.

He said the elders of Balochistan decided to become part of Pakistan under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Talking about incidents of terrorism in Balochistan, he said terrorists were blood thirsty and were against the progress of Pakistan and were undertaking heinous acts at the behest of foreign elements.

He said terrorists in Balochistan were foreign agents who had resorted to barbarity but they would not be tolerated by the government and armed forces of Pakistan. He assured that social and economic justice would be delivered to the people of Balochistan.

Referring to the latest incidents in Sorab, he said the country could not make progress without peace. Talking about conflict with India, he said on the midnight of May 6 and 7 and May 10 India attacked Pakistan but with the grace of Allah, the armed forces of Pakistan bravely defeated the enemy, who will remember its failure forever. He thanked people of Pakistan for showing unity and standing with the Pakistan army shoulder to shoulder during the conflict.



As prime minister he was witness to all the events of the short duration war, he said adding as a brave and sagacious leader Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir led Pakistan armed forces to a victory against India and made the nation proud and the success was akin to avenging the events of 1971. He said now the enemy was scared and the friendly countries were more confident after success of Pakistan.

He recalled that Pakistan conducted six nuclear explosions in response to five detonations of India in 1998, adding Nawaz Sharif was leader of the nation on that momentous occasion, which fortified the defence of Pakistan. Field Marshal Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir, Acting Governor Balochistan Governor Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti and high ranking military and civil officials attended the event.

Indian defence chief admits loss of aircraft in skirmishes with Pakistan

MUMBAI: Indian Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan admits that the Indian Air Force lost fighter jets during skirmish with the Pakistan Air Force.

Speaking to Bloomberg on the sidelines of the ongoing Shangrila Dialogue in Singapore, Gen Chauhan confirmed that Indian fighter aircraft were lost, though he refrained from disclosing the exact number. Instead, he emphasized that the focus should be on why the jets were lost, not how many.

Gen Chauhan stated that the important thing was to understand where the mistakes occurred, what shortcomings were present, and what led to the loss of the aircraft. The number, he claimed, was not significant. This marks the first official confirmation by the Indian military acknowledging the loss of fighter jets during recent skirmishes with Pakistan.

Previously, Pakistan's military and political leadership had announced that the Pakistan Air Force had shot down six Indian fighter jets, including three

French-made Rafales. A senior leader of India's ruling BJP had also admitted just a day earlier that five aircraft had been destroyed.

Interestingly, Gen Chauhan also dismissed US President Donald Trump's claim that America prevented a potential nuclear war between the two countries, calling it "unrealistic." According to him, both nations were never close to deploying nuclear weapons. The Indian general also attempted to downplay the effectiveness of Chinese-made weapons used by Pakistan. However, the results on the battlefield contradict his claims.

India's admission has sparked new international debate and strengthened Pakistan's stance that India carried out unprovoked aggression, and Pakistan responded with a strong defence by downing enemy aircraft, delivering a fitting response. In a rare and candid statement, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Subramanian Swamy admitted that Pakistan shot down five

Indian Air Force (IAF) jets during a recent military confrontation between the two nations.

Speaking during a media interview, Swamy attributed the losses to the superior performance of Chinese-made aircraft used by Pakistan, which he said outmatched the French-made Rafale jets deployed by India. "Pakistan downed five of our planes. They used Chinese planes to down our planes, which were French," Swamy said. He went on to criticize the capabilities of the Rafale jets, stating, "The Chinese planes were good, but the French were not. Rafale is not up to the mark as per India's needs."

Swamy also made serious allegations regarding the Rafale procurement process, suggesting corruption in the deal. "Corruption happened in Rafale which won't be investigated till Modi is the PM," he said, indicating that the current political leadership would not allow any inquest into the matter. — Bloomberg

Ex-CJ challenges SC ruling

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former chief justice Jawad S. Khawaja has filed a review petition in the Supreme Court challenging its recent verdict that allowed the trial of civilians in military courts.

The petition challenged the 7-member constitutional bench's decision from May 7, 2025, which overturned an earlier ruling by a five-member bench that had declared Sections 2(1)(d) and 59(4) of the Army Act unconstitutional and ruled that suspects from the May 9 and 10 riots could not be tried in military courts.

Khawaja, in his petition, argued that the five-member bench's decision, authored by Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ayesha Malik, was constitutionally sound and should be reinstated. He named the federal and all four provincial governments as respondents.

He claimed that the constitutional bench's reliance on earlier cases such as FB Ali, District Bar Association, and Shaheeda Zahid Abbasi was misplaced. He further asserted that the bench's contradictory reasoning, acknowledging military courts lack independence while directing parliament to legislate for appeal rights, undermined the right to a fair trial. Khawaja emphasised that courts have a fundamental duty to strike down laws that violate constitutional rights and cannot delegate this responsibility to Parliament. He noted that two of the seven judges on the constitutional bench had dissented, aligning with the original view that civilians cannot be subjected to military trials.

The petition warned that allowing such trials create the perception that the Supreme Court has accepted a subservient role to the executive, stating: "If military trials are truly independent and constitutional, then the entire civilian judicial system might as well be handed over to the executive." Khawaja requested that the May 7 ruling be set aside and the five-member bench's decision reinstated.

It is noteworthy that the Supreme Court's 7-member bench had accepted the government's intra-court appeals by a 5-2 majority, thereby restoring the original provisions of the Army Act and allowing military trials of civilians involved in the May 9, 2023 unrest.

Gen Asim: Attempts to derail Pak's anti-terrorism efforts will be thwarted

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has emphatically stated that Pakistan will never be coerced, and inimical designs to distract its efforts against terrorism will be comprehensively defeated. He was addressing Student Officers and faculty of Command and Staff College Quetta, during his visit to the College.

Paying tribute to the Shuhada of Operation 'Bunyanum Marsoos', the Chief of Army Staff expressed solidarity with their family members. He said under the national leadership, the people of Pakistan became a wall of steel for the defence of the motherland against Indian aggression. The Army Chief reiterated that success of

"Ma'arka-e-Haq" is a testimony to our national resolve, and complete synergy among all elements of national power.

Commenting on global and regional environment, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir shed light on the character of emerging conflict, with particular emphasis on India's increasingly dangerous propensity to use unprovoked military aggression against Pakistan. He reiterated the resolve to defeat any aggression and deal with threats across the entire conflict spectrum.

He emphasized peaceful resolution of longstanding internationally recognized Kashmir dispute, and warned against the legally untenable 'hydro terrorism' by India. Commenting on Indian state's role in sponsoring ter-

rorism inside Pakistan, the Army Chief highlighted the reinvigorated counter terrorism drive. He expressed confidence that Pakistan's fight against terrorism will be taken to a logical conclusion, with success in eliminating the menace in all its forms and manifestations.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir lauded the Command and Staff College Quetta for grooming future military leaders who uphold the highest standards of the profession. He advised the student officers to fulfill their obligations with utmost dedication, passion and resolve. Earlier on arrival in Quetta, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir was received by Commander Quetta Corps and Commandant Command and Staff College Quetta.



QUETTA: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and other officers standing for national anthem during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Command and Staff College.

Iran increases stockpile of enriched Uranium by 50%

VIENNA: The United Nations nuclear watchdog says Iran has increased its stockpile of highly enriched, near weapons-grade uranium by 50 percent in the last three months. The report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Saturday comes as nuclear deal negotiations are under way between the United States and Iran, with Tehran insisting its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only.

The IAEA said as of May 17, Iran had amassed 408.6kg (900.8 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 60 percent – the only non-nuclear weapon state to do so, according to the UN agency – and had increased its stockpile by almost 50 percent to 133.8kg since its last report in February. The wide-ranging, confidential report seen by several news agencies said Iran carried out secret nuclear activities with material not declared to the IAEA at three locations that

have long been under investigation, calling it a "serious concern" and warning Tehran to change its course.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, however, reaffirmed the country's longstanding position, saying Tehran deems nuclear weapons "unacceptable". "If the issue is nuclear weapons, yes, we too consider this type of weapon unacceptable," Araghchi, Iran's lead negotiator in the nuclear talks with the US, said in a televised speech. "We agree with them on this issue."

But the report, which was requested by the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors in November, will allow for a push by the US, Britain, France and Germany to declare Iran in violation of its non-proliferation obligations. On Friday, US President Donald Trump said Iran "cannot have a nuclear weapon". "They don't want to be blown up. They would rather make a deal," Trump said, adding: "That would be

a great thing that we could have a deal without bombs being dropped all over the Middle East."

In 2015, Iran reached a deal with the United Kingdom, US, Germany, France, Russia, China and the EU, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It involved the lifting of some sanctions on Tehran in return for limits on its nuclear development programme. But in 2018, then US President Trump unilaterally quit the agreement and reimposed harsh sanctions. Tehran then rebuilt its stockpiles of enriched uranium.

In December last year, the IAEA said Iran was rapidly enriching uranium to 60 percent purity, moving closer to the 90 percent threshold needed for weapons-grade material. Western nations say such intensive enrichment should not be part of a civilian nuclear programme, but Iran insists it is not developing weapons. — Aljazeera

Concern over rising Islamophobia in India

F.P. Repor

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has expressed serious alarm over the increasing number of Islamophobic incidents in India, calling on New Delhi to ensure the protection of all its citizens irrespective of religious affiliation.

Responding to media queries on the issue, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement on Saturday stated that the recent wave of hate speech, discriminatory practices, and the apparent complicity of state machinery in targeting Muslims was a disturbing trend that required urgent international attention.

"Pakistan expresses grave concern over the alarming rise in Islamophobic incidents across India," the Spokesperson said. "The targeting of Muslims through hate speech, discriminatory actions, and state complicity is a matter of serious concern for the international community."

The Foreign Office urged the Indian government to uphold the principles of justice, equality, and human rights. It warned that the incitement of religious hatred for political or ideological gains not only contravenes international human rights obligations but also undermines communal harmony and regional peace. "At a time when restraint and reconciliation are most needed," the statement read, "deliberate incitement of religious hatred violates international norms and vitiates the prospects for regional stability." The statement concluded with a call for the global community to take note of the situation and promote measures aimed at fostering tolerance, coexistence, and respect for religious diversity.



LAHORE: A view of traffic jam on Sheewala Oil Market due to wrongly parked vehicles. —INP Photo

Section 144 imposed ahead of Eid to ensure public safety

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Home Department has imposed Section 144 across the province in view of Eid ul Azha, introducing a series of temporary restrictions aimed at protecting public health, maintaining law and order, and ensuring environmental cleanliness.

The restrictions will remain in effect from Thursday, June 5 to Wednesday, June 11, under Section 144(6) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

According to the official notification, the burning of sacrificial animal remains, specifically heads and trotters (siri-payee), in public areas has been strictly pro-

hibited. In addition, the disposal of animal waste and offal into drains, manholes, canals, or other water bodies has been banned to prevent environmental pollution and health hazards.

The government has also prohibited the setting up of temporary cattle markets or sale points for sacrificial animals at unauthorized locations. Only officially designated sites may be used for this purpose to ensure proper sanitation and crowd management. Further restrictions include a ban on swimming, bathing, and boating in rivers, canals, lakes, and dams across the province

during the specified period. This step has been taken to avoid incidents of drowning and to enhance public safety during the holidays.

A complete ban on the public display of firearms and ammunition has also been enforced under Section 144 to prevent any threats to peace and security during the festive period. A spokesperson for the Punjab Home Department said that these measures have been introduced to safeguard human life, uphold public order, and improve environmental hygiene. He noted that such activities not only pose serious health risks

but also cause public discomfort and unrest.

The department also announced that proscribed organizations will not be allowed to collect sacrificial animal hides.

Only welfare organizations and charities registered with the Punjab Charity Commission will be permitted to collect hides, ensuring transparency and compliance with legal requirements.

The Home Department has instructed all district administrations and law enforcement agencies to strictly enforce the restrictions and take legal action against any violations.

CM Maryam orders safe, transparent property transactions in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, chairing a comprehensive meeting here on Saturday, reviewed the proposals for regularizing illegal housing societies in the province.

During the meeting, the CM emphasized the need for swift, lawful regularization to provide relief to the public and ensure transparency in property dealings. "The housing schemes that have already been developed should be regularized at the earliest in accordance with the law, so that the public may be protected from further hardship," the CM said.

She candidly acknowledged the role of government departments in the unchecked spread of illegal housing societies, stating, "These schemes were established in collusion with officials of relevant departments, but ultimately, it is only the common citizens who suffer. Why were regulatory bodies silent while these

illegal societies were being built? Money was taken from poor people, yet they were denied possession of plots."

CM Maryam Nawaz directed the abolition of unnecessary No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for the registration of housing societies. She also approved the formation of a high-level committee to oversee the regularization process and ordered the digitization of the housing sector for the first time in Punjab. "A comprehensive housing society management system must be introduced," she said, adding, "Approval, administration, and property transfers will be made fully online. NOC fees will also be paid digitally upon uploading the required documents."

The CM also discussed plans to ensure foolproof development and management of housing societies through this digital system. She stressed that under defined rules and regula-

tions, a one-time amnesty could be considered for qualifying housing schemes.

During the briefing, officials informed the Chief Minister that Punjab has a total of 7,905 housing societies spread over approximately 2 million kanals. Of these, 2,687 are approved, while 5,118 are either illegal or currently under review. Regarding LDA-regulated schemes, out of 707, 427 are approved, 206 are illegal, and 74 are under the approval process.

Tobacco use poses grave threat to future generations: CM: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has urged citizens to protect themselves and their families from the harmful effects of tobacco.

In her message on World No-Tobacco Day, she said, "Smoking is an epidemic, a poison that threatens our lives, homes, and loved ones. Every puff of tobacco is a

step closer to disease, and every cigarette clouds the future of our generations in smoke."

The CM emphasized that smoking is more than a harmful habit, it is a direct threat to public health, the economy, and society at large. She added that the Punjab government is actively taking legal measures to make schools, hospitals, and public spaces tobacco-free. "We have expanded the scope of awareness campaigns, especially to safeguard our youth from the dangers of smoking," she added.

Highlighting the collective nature of the fight against tobacco, she said, "Raising awareness about the harms of smoking is not just the government's responsibility, it is a shared duty." The CM appealed to parents, teachers, scholars, and civil society to join hands with the government in its efforts to curb tobacco use and build a healthier future for all.

NAB DG pledges swift action on public complaints

LAHORE (APP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore, under the leadership of Director General Muhammad Ahtram Dar, held its monthly open hearing at its Lahore office. According to NAB's spokesperson, a large number of affectees from various illegal housing schemes and fraudulent investment operations attended the session. The session served as a platform for aggrieved citizens to present their complaints regarding various scams, including the Future Vision investment scandal and fraudulent dealings in Al-Rehman Garden Phase-4, the Omega Housing Society, New Lahore City, Khayaban-e-Amin, Formanites Housing Society, Elite Town, and Grand Avenue Housing Society.

During the hearing, the DG NAB listened to the public's grievances with great attention and issued immediate directives for their resolution. In response to complaints regarding the Future Vision scam, he ordered the initiation of a direct inquiry and directed that proceedings be launched to place the primary accused on the Exit Control List (ECL). He further

instructed that a public notice be published in national newspapers to inform and caution the public.

Addressing the concerns related to Al-Rehman Garden Phase-4, the DG NAB gave the investigation team a one-month deadline to finalize the inquiry and submit a comprehensive report. For Omega Housing Society, he ordered the immediate resolution of issues raised by the complainants and demanded a progress report by the end of the day.

In the case of the Formanites Housing Society scandal, the DG NAB informed the attendees that NAB Lahore has facilitated recoveries amounting to over 47 percent of the actual investments for more than 2,200 victims. He assured that all newly submitted claims will also be addressed upon judicial approval to ensure timely compensation.

Speaking about Elite Town Housing Society, he stated that the prime accused has already been apprehended and that a corruption reference is currently under trial in the honorable court. He added that sincere efforts are underway to recov-

er funds through a negotiated settlement with the society's administration.

Regarding Khayaban-e-Amin Housing Society, the DG NAB disclosed that all losses suffered by the victims at the hands of accused Allah Ditta Heera have been reimbursed, and that efforts are actively ongoing to provide relief to the remaining victims associated with Sahr Associates.

NAB DG Muhammad Ahtram Dar reiterated that the NAB Chairman has issued explicit instructions to exhaust all resources for the speedy redress of public complaints. He emphasized NAB's firm commitment to citizen-centric reforms and announced the upcoming launch of a large-scale crackdown against illegal housing societies operating across the region.

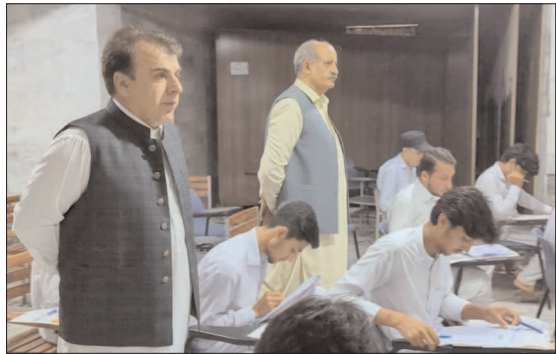
He said that the Open Hearing initiative represents the practical vision of the NAB Chairman and reaffirmed NAB Lahore's unwavering dedication to protecting public rights and eliminating corruption in all its manifestations.

Cleansing BISE Examination System: Mehsud's mission knock-mafia bears fruit

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In an era where education systems around the world are striving for excellence, it is alarming to imagine a scenario where the entire process of teaching and learning collapses at the critical juncture of examinations. Yet in Pakistan, much like other struggling sectors, the examination system has long been entangled in the grip of powerful mafias. The leaking of papers and wholesale selling of examination halls have become public scandals, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the rot runs deep. For years, cheating was not just the act of a desperate student, it had evolved into a sprawling, organized business worth millions. Amid such decay, the decision by the provincial government to take bold corrective action was both timely and courageous.

When Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Ahmad Mehsud, was entrusted with the additional responsibility of Chairman of the Board of Intermediate and



Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar on March 25, 2025, he wasted no time in introducing far-reaching reforms. True to his resolute nature, he not only proposed a radical overhaul of the examination system but immediately began implementing it, even as the Matric and Intermediate exams loomed. Many advised him to delay reforms until the next session, allowing the current exams to proceed under the status quo. But Riaz Mehsud stood firm. For him, compromising even marginally on the future of the country's youth was out of the question.

The effect of this resolve was soon felt across the

province. As the Matric and Intermediate examinations concluded without incident, parents, students, and members of civil society alike lauded the process as transparent, fair and free of interference. What little resistance had existed to these reforms gradually faded away. Central to the overhaul was the introduction of a "cluster system", which effectively broke the back of the cheating mafia. Instead of allowing schools and colleges to host their own students, examination halls, were reorganized to accommodate students from multiple institutions, none of whom were familiar with one another, or

even with the invigilators. With this anonymity came integrity, and with integrity, the possibility of genuine academic merit.

Despite the exams being imminent, Riaz Mehsud moved swiftly to convene emergency meetings with all stakeholders connected to the education sector. His approach was comprehensive. In addition to rooting out the mafia's influence, he ensured that facilities at examination centers were upgraded to meet modern standards. This included better lighting, drinking water, medical support and strict cleanliness protocols. Responsibilities were clearly delegated across federal and provincial departments, while the Commissioner himself remained in the field, day and night, to monitor compliance and ensure effective implementation.

As KP govt also adopted candid steps to safeguard the examination process from malpractice, CCTV cameras were installed in exam halls, linked directly to board control rooms. Section 144 was enforced around exam centers to restrict unauthorized access. The sale of pocket guides was banned and nearby photocopying shops were closed for the duration of the exams. Remarkably, at the BISE Peshawar level not a single unfair means (UFM) case was filed against students during either the Matric or Intermediate exams, a major departure from past practices, where such cases were often weaponized to protect teachers and board officials from scrutiny. This time, accountability traveled upward. In one striking example, officials including a superintendent and deputy superintendent were caught facilitating cheating at a center in Peshawar's Zaryab Colony. They were summarily dismissed and permanently barred from any future examination duty. Such disciplinary action sent a clear message: the era of impunity was over.

Students were provided with a peaceful and dignified environment, with uninterrupted electricity, clean toilets, quality furniture, and access to healthcare. Transparency was ensured without harassing candidates. Invigilators were assigned through a transparent lottery system and received proper training in advance. Additionally, a crackdown was launched on private schools that had been charging students illegal fees for exams. Orders were issued for refunds, holding such institutions accountable for their exploitative practices.



Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre

A JCI Enterprise Accredited Organisation

Career Opportunities in SKMCH&RC Peshawar

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (SKMCH&RC) is a specialist tertiary care cancer Centre built and funded by charitable donations with a mission to provide the best possible cancer care to all patients. SKMCH&RC has a team of UK and US-trained physicians who provide state-of-the-art diagnostic, treatment and support services to patients. SKMCH&RC is pleased to invite applications for the following positions:

Medical Consultants:

- Consultant Anaesthetist
- Consultant Breast Surgeon
- Consultant Clinical & Radiation Oncologist
- Consultant Clinical Haematologist
- Consultant Physician in Emergency Medicine
- Consultant Head and Neck Surgeon
- Consultant Medical Oncologist
- Consultant Nuclear Medicine
- Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
- Consultant Paediatric Oncologist
- Consultant Pathologist
- Consultant Physician, Critical Care & Pulmonary Medicine
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Pulmonology
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Gastroenterology

- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Infectious Diseases
- Consultant Physician, Internal Medicine & Nephrology
- Consultant Radiologist
- Consultant Upper GI Surgeon
- Consultant Urologist

Locum Consultants:

- Locum Consultant Anaesthetist
- Locum Consultant Breast Surgeon
- Locum Consultant Pathologist
- Locum Consultant Radiologist
- Locum Consultant Urologist

Fellowships:

- Fellow in Anaesthesia
- Fellow in Clinical & Radiation Oncology

CPSP Fellowship:

- Fellow in Medical Oncology

Note: All Senior Instructor positions for Peshawar involve working at Lahore for two years, followed by two years of training overseas. For further details regarding the position and eligibility criteria, please visit our website on www.shaukatkhanum.org.pk

Apply now at: bit.ly/SKMCHJobs

Only online applications will be entertained. Please share your CV at the email address given below and do mention the position applied for in the subject line. We regret that only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

We are an equal opportunity employer, and we strongly encourage female candidates to apply

Human Resources Department

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre

5-B, Sector A-2, Office Enclave, Phase V,

Hayatabad, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Tel: +92 91 5885000 Ext. 3538, 3541

Email: careers.peshawar@shaukatkhanum.org.pk



Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Competition 2026

Opportunity for Professional Development in the United States

The U.S. Mission to Pakistan and the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP), a binational commission, invite applications for the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program. This non-degree program is designed for mid-career (8-18 years of relevant experience) professionals and consists of 10-12 months of graduate-level, non-degree academic coursework and an opportunity for professional development in the United States in the relevant field. This exchange program is fully funded by the U.S. Department of State.

For information about eligibility, program description, relevant fields, application process, and to apply, visit www.usefp.org All application materials, including degrees, transcripts, CV, Duolingo English Test score report, and references, must be submitted online to USEFP by **Tuesday, July 15, 2025**.

Duolingo English Test score report is mandatory with the application. Valid scores of TOEFL iBT and IELTS are also acceptable.

Plagiarism, fraudulent publications, or other misrepresentation in an application will lead to disqualification at any stage of the program. The use of generative artificial intelligence software to write application essay is prohibited.

For queries, email humphrey@usefp.org

FCAA delegation meets Collector Customs

— to discuss business related problems

PESHAWAR (APP): The Frontier Customs Agents Association (FCAA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi led a delegation of the association to meet the newly appointed Collector Customs Appraisement Peshawar, Azood Ul Mehdi at Customs House Peshawar.

The delegation included association's office bearers including Senior Vice President Khalid Shahzad, Vice President Imtiaz Ahmed Ali, General Secretary Mian Waheed Bacha and Executive Members Farooq Ahmed, Mansoor Ahmed, Tariq Khan Afridi, Nizam Shah, Aamir Raza, Tanveer Ahmed and Javed Khan.

FCAA President, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi congratulated Azood Ul Mehdi on his appointment as Collector Customs Appraisement Peshawar and said that his

appointment to this important post is highly appreciated by the business community.

Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, who is also Senior Vice President of Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry and member Executive Committee of Sarhadi Chamber, said that Azood Ul Mehdi was well informed about the obstacles faced by Pak-Afghan bilateral trade, especially the problems of the exporters, importers and customs agents community.

During discussion, FCAA demanded abolition of the faceless assessment system because this system is causing a lot of difficulties to business people as well as customs clearing agents.

On this occasion, the senior officials of the Customs were also

informed in detail about the steps taken and the role of the Frontier Customs Agents Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to solve the problems of the business community.

Zia said that Collector Customs, Peshawar Azood Ul Mehdi has held several important positions in the past and paid attention to the problems of the business community besides playing key role in resolving them.

He expressed hope that Azood Ul Mehdi will take practical steps to immediately resolve the problems of the business community, especially the obstacles to Pak-Afghan bilateral trade, including the difficulties in the export process at the Ghulam Khan, Kharlachi, Angor Adda, Torkham borders, and the fully functionalization of the Azakhel Dry Port.

CM approves solarization of UoP to save Rs55m

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has approved solarization of University of Peshawar (UoP), a move expected to save institution approximately Rs550 million each year.

According to an official statement issued on Saturday, the approval has

been made during a recent cabinet meeting. The decision addresses a long-standing request from both students and faculty, who have advocated for a reliable and sustainable energy solution for the campus.

The solarization project is set to provide uninterrupted power across the university premises, significantly improving academic environment.

Students welcomed the announcement, describing it as a step towards progress and self-sufficiency. They expressed optimism that the new system would allow them to focus on their studies with greater ease and patience once project is complete.

Transgender held over sharing explicit video

PESHAWAR (APP): A transgender has been arrested by city police over allegedly recording and circulating an explicit video on internet involving a minor boy.

According to Police, the transgender identified as Sijal recorded a video along with a minor boy and aired it on internet while using obscene language.

As the video got viral on net, it attracted strong flak from the people demanding immediate action against the transgender and protection of the minor from indulging in any immoral activity.

Taking notice of the indecent action by transgender, SP City Police, Attiq Shah forthwith directed SHO Kotwali, Fazal Jan for taking action who raided the area and arrested Sijal within hours.

The minor boy who was accompanying Sijal was handed over to his parents who were instructed by Police to keep an eye on their offspring.

Meanwhile, President TransAction Alliance, a representative body of transgender community, Farzana Riaz strongly condemned immoral activity by Sijal.

Farzana said she and all of her community members are fully against such indecent activities which is not only in violation of our religious principles but also against the societal norms.

President TransAction believed that the move is aimed at tarnishing trans community image and demanded for holding of a medical test to check the gender identity of Sijal.

Later, while in police custody, Sijal recorded a message for public release, expressing deep remorse and regret over her objectionable video.



PESHAWAR: Workers busy in making traditional Peshawari Chappal at Jehangirpura Bazaar.

Governor congratulates Arshad Nadeem

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday extended his heartfelt congratulations to Pakistan's star javelin thrower, Arshad Nadeem, for clinching the gold medal at the Asian Athletics Championship with a remarkable throw of 86.40 meters.

In his congratulatory message, Governor Kundi praised Arshad Nadeem for making the nation proud once again, saying that the victory has brought immense pride to every Pakistani.

"Arshad Nadeem is not only a national hero but also a global ambassador of Pakistan's sporting talent," he said.

Highlighting the historical significance of the achievement, Governor Kundi said that Arshad has ended a 52-year wait by bringing the Asian Athletics title back to Pakistan. "This is a historic moment and a tremendous gift to the nation," he added.

He went on to commend Arshad Nadeem's dedication, passion, and patriotism, calling him a role model for the youth.

"His success proves that with hard work and determination, anything is possible. Arshad has shown the world that Pakistani athletes are second to none," the Governor concluded.

Rs534m under Ehsaas Naujawan distributed

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the leadership of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, a total of Rs 534 million has been distributed under Ehsaas Naujawan Program among motivated young individuals striving to achieve their goals.

According to an official statement released on Saturday, the Bank of Khyber has disbursed Rs 220 million in loans to youth applicants. Out of 11,981 applications received, 145 loans have been approved so far.

Meanwhile, the Akhuwat Foundation received 4,635 applications and has provided loans to 2,050 applicants, distributing a total of Rs314 million to date.

This initiative aims to empower younger generation, offering them business opportunities and paving way for self-sufficiency and prosperity.



PESHAWAR: A vendor selling tomatoes at Sabzi Mandi.

The unending tragedy of Afghan refugees: A collective moral failure

Abdul Waheed

The roots of the Afghan refugees crisis lie within Afghanistan itself. Despite changes in leadership, every government regardless of being, democratic, transitional, or authoritarian, has failed to establish a system where people feel secure, included, and respected. Afghanistan has yet to become a nation of return. Instead, it continues to reject its own citizens, hindering reintegration and driving them away. This failure is not only political but a profound betrayal of the idea of nationhood.

Despite hosting millions of Afghan refugees for over four decades, Pakistan has failed to provide them with viable pathways to integration. Today, Afghan refugees in Pakistan face growing legal uncertainty, police harassment, arbitrary detentions, and an atmosphere of fear. Even those born and raised in the country are treated as unwanted outsiders and a sense of belonging, with little hope for the future.

The international community, too, bears responsibility. While donor nations have funded refugee programs, they have largely turned a blind eye to the long-term consequences of statelessness and the lack of durable solutions. Afghanistan's refugee crisis is not just a regional burden, it is a global moral failure.

Exile has inflicted wounds on many that run deeper than the conflict they once fled. The tragedy is not just that they had to leave. The deeper tragedy is that the world has refused to let them live with dignity—either abroad or at home.

No one should be forced to choose between humiliation in exile and fear in their own homeland, but this is the harsh and hard reality facing millions of Afghan refugees. Returning to Afghanistan, without shelter, without opportunities and without a path to reintegration is not an easy task, but a desperate calculation between two forms of suffering. No doubt that for many even a fractured homeland offers more meaning and dignity than a life lived in the shadows. Their return is not a homecoming, but a quiet indictment of a world that has turned its back on them.

And yet, Afghan refugees have shown remarkable resilience. Despite decades of marginalization, they have built businesses, educated their children, and contributed meaningfully to the societies that often deny them status. Their struggle is not just for survival, it is for recognition, identity, and justice.

To conclude, despite all the hurdles at home, even repression and hardship, there is dignity in living and struggling on one's own land. For many Afghan refugees in

Pakistan, life is no longer defined by opportunity, but by fear. Legal uncertainty, social exclusion, and daily indignities have replaced any sense of welcome.

This is not just a humanitarian concern. It is a collective moral and political failure. Afghan governments, Pakistan's authorities, regional actors, the broader international community and refugees themselves have all played a role in creating and perpetuating this crisis. Their failure to provide protection, dignity, or lasting solutions reflects a deeper breakdown in responsibility and solidarity.

At some point, we must stop avoiding hard truths simply because they are easier or less risky to ignore. The real issue is not about comfort or fear, it is about justice. Who truly deserves to belong, to be seen, and to be included? That is the question we must finally have the courage to confront.

One man's drone footage turn Jab Valley into newest tourism treasure

PESHAWAR (APP): Once a forgotten corner in the forested hills of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tucked within District Haripur, the Jab Valley is fast becoming one of the country's most breath taking natural destinations due to its stunning waterfalls.

The emergence of Jab Valley in the landscape of tourism industry of the country became possible through the lens of a drone and the vision of a determined youngster of the area.

The valley is home to a chain of eight stunning waterfalls, now collectively known as the Hazara Waterfalls Jab Valley, a name given by Hassan Nisar, a YouTuber and the founder Metrix Pakistan.

Nisar first discovered and filmed the falls in 2021 during an exploratory hike, using a drone to capture sweeping aerial footage that revealed the majesty of water crashing through green cliffs and disappearing into the dense forest below.

"When I saw the waterfalls from above, I knew they were something the world needed to see," Nisar said. "I named them Hazara Waterfalls to reflect both their geography and their cultural belonging."

Located just 80 kilometers from Islamabad and 170 kilometers from Peshawar, Jab Valley is easily accessible for domestic travelers and international visitors alike.

The site lies just 15 kilometers from Khanpur Dam, making it a convenient detour from well-known tourist circuits. The waterfalls feed into the Haro River, which ultimately flows into Khanpur Dam a key water source for Islamabad and its adjoining regions.

And yet, in the absence of commercialization, Jab Valley has retained its elemental charm. Towering pine trees, medicinal plants, and ancient wild olive trees known locally as Zaitoon shape the terrain. Migratory birds, porcupines, and native foxes thrive among the cliffs and forests. The only sounds are those of rushing waterfalls, bird-song, and the wind moving through untouched woods a sensory immersion in the natural soul of northern Pakistan.

Despite its ecological and geographical importance, and the growing influx of visitors, no formal investment or infrastructure has yet been provided by KP government. There are no marked trails, rest areas, or safety measures.

Access remains rugged and unpaved, with most travelers relying on local knowledge and guides to reach the site, Nisar complained.

"This valley is sacred in its silence," Nisar said. "It's not just a tourist spot it's a sanctuary. And it deserves to be treated as such."

Through Metrix Pakistan, a youth-led organization focused on rural empowerment and sustainable innovation,

Nisar is working to help local communities directly benefit from tourism. His team trains young people from nearby villages in eco-tourism, digital storytelling, and environmental protection.

Already, many families are earning new income by offering guided hikes, food stalls, and services to travelers all while maintaining the valley's delicate ecological balance.

"Our aim is not to alter Jab Valley," Nisar said. "It's to uplift those who've protected it for generations, and to ensure that what's natural remains natural."

Though provincial authorities have expressed interest in Jab Valley's potential, no tangible steps have yet been taken to invest in its protection or promotion.

Environmentalists warn that unmanaged tourism could strain the local ecosystem and pollute the very rivers that supply drinking water downstream.

World No Tobacco Day observed with urgent call to curb smoking

PESHAWAR (APP): In observance of World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), Blue Veins, in collaboration with Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) and the Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, organized a multi-stakeholder awareness event in Peshawar under the global theme: "Unmasking the Appeal: Exposing Industry Tactics on Tobacco and Nicotine Products."

World No Tobacco Day is commemorated annually on May 31 by the World Health Organization (WHO) to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes.

This year's theme focuses on exposing how the tobacco and nicotine industries manipulate consumers, especially youth, through glamorized packaging, flavored products, and misleading claims that mask the real dangers of nicotine addiction.

The event in Peshawar was a reflection of growing concern across sectors, bringing together health professionals, academia, civil society organizations, government departments, religious leaders, lawyers, and other representatives of civil society.

The participants emphasized the urgent need to counter industry interference and build a stronger regulatory and awareness framework in the province.

Dr. Tariq Khan Barki, Associate Director at Lady Reading Hospital, noted that hospitals continue to carry the heavy burden of tobacco-related diseases and that the industry's deceptive marketing has intensified the crisis.

"At Lady Reading Hospital, we see the human cost of tobacco use every day—from lung diseases to cancers. The industry's deceptive strategies are a threat to public health and a burden on our healthcare system. We must stand united in exposing these tactics and ensuring strict regulations to save lives," he said.

A joint statement issued by Dr. Ihtesham, a senior physician at LRH, and Dr. Qazi, a well-known psychologist, emphasized the psychological and social manipulation used by the tobacco and nicotine industries.

"These products are marketed not just as lifestyle choices, but as symbols of modernity and relief—while hiding their deadly consequences. It is our collective responsibility to unmask this illusion and protect especially the mental and physical health of our youth," they remarked.

Qamar Naseem, Program Manager at Blue Veins and the Provincial Coordinator of the Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control, emphasized the importance of this year's theme in the local context.

"This year's theme aligns with our ongoing advocacy efforts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We've seen how the industry attempts to co-opt policy, target young people, and undermine health reforms. The resistance must be systemic—through strong legislation, public awareness, and collective vigilance," he stated.

During the event, Ms. Haseena Khan, Assistant Commissioner and District Focal Person for Tobacco Control in Peshawar and Ajmal Shah, Coordinator of the Tobacco Control Cell, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, briefed participants about the ongoing efforts and administrative reforms underway to strengthen tobacco control across the district and province.

They shared insights into recent enforcement actions and highlighted the government's commitment to aligning with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and other national strategies to curb tobacco consumption and prevent industry interference in public policy.

Pakistan Chest Society organize event at the International School of Cordoba to mark World No Tobacco Day: The Pakistan Chest Society on Saturday organized an event at the International School of Cordoba, Hayatabad, to mark World No Tobacco Day.

The event aimed to raise awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use and promote a tobacco-free lifestyle.

The program was arranged by the school's administrator, Colonel Maqsood Neki. Professor Dr. Saadia Ashraf, Provincial President of the Pakistan Chest Society, served as the chief guest. Faculty members and students attended the session, where they were educated about the severe health risks associated with tobacco consumption.

In her address, Dr. Saadia Ashraf emphasized that public awareness is key to limiting tobacco use.

"Tobacco use causes the death of 1 in every 10 users," she warned. She explained that smoking is linked to several fatal diseases, including lung diseases, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cancers of the mouth and tongue, stomach ulcers, cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, strokes, asthma, and various types of cancer affecting the bladder, kidney, pancreas, throat, lips, and more.

She highlighted that 80pc of the world's smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.

She stated that through education and awareness, the spread of smoking can be controlled, and its use can be reduced.

Dr Saadia further stressed that preventing tobacco use is entirely possible with the right strategies.

Quoting global statistics, she said that tobacco use results in around 5 million deaths each year, and this number is expected to rise to over 8 million by 2030 if preventive measures are not taken.

This year's World No Tobacco Day theme, as designated by the World Health Organization (WHO), was "Grow Food, Not Tobacco", urging a shift from harmful tobacco cultivation to sustainable food production. She also pointed out that tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, many of which are carcinogenic.

During the event, health screenings of students and staff were conducted. Dr. Saadia Ashraf also addressed parents, urging them to play an active role in promoting a tobacco-free lifestyle for the well-being of their children and communities.

Also in attendance were Dr. Rukhsana Javed, Associate Professor at Khyber Teaching Hospital, Dr. Yasir, and trainee medical officers from the Chest Department.



In brief

WSSCM, CECOS ink MoU F.P. Report

MARDAN: A Memorandum of Understanding signed between Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) and CECOS University. Chief Executive Officer Shahid Khan and Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Naseer Ahmad signed the MOU. On this occasion, Vice President of University Engineer Sohaib Tanveer, Chairman Board of Directors (BoD) Engineer Adil Nawaz, University Registrar Khursheed Marwat, Director ORIC Abdul Hanan, Engineer Irfanullah, General Manager Muhammad Khalil Akbar, Manager Planning & Project Imran Zaman, Manager HR and Admin Rahatullah were also present. Under this MoU, both institutions will collaborate in various fields for research and innovation, framing waste management policy, training & development and internship opportunities for the students. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Dr. Naseer Ahmad, stated that both institutions will jointly work on the company's waste policy. WSSCM Complaint Management system will soon be digitized.

SUP hold protest F.P. Report

SEHWAN: The residents of Ward No. 1 Sehwan city, including Vaka Mohalla, Sakhi Shah Sultan Mohalla, Rahocha Mohalla and Bhatti Mohalla, protested in front of the Press Club against the negligence of the elected representatives of Sehwan since the 2023 municipal elections and ignoring the people every time. On this occasion, protesting before the media, Sindh United Party (SUP) Taluka President Muhammad Nawaz Rind, Abdul Hakeem Bardi, Waseem Rahocha Munir and others said that two years have passed since the municipal elections 2023, but after the votes, the elected representatives are treating the residents of the above-mentioned localities like a mother. There is no drainage or drinking water supply facility. The streets and drains are not cleaned. In Ward No. 1, there is no drinking water supply in different localities. The water pipes are broken, the water is coming from the well, due to which the local residents are suffering from various diseases. They further said that this is the constituency of Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Shah and at the world level, the city of Mangri Sehwan, the birthplace of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, which despite having a budget of crores of rupees, instead of carrying out development works, the elected representatives are filling their pockets.

Plan for cattle market sought F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) has issued strict directives to concerned departments to ensure comprehensive arrangements at the temporary cattle market established for the sale and purchase of sacrificial animals ahead of Eid-ul-Azha. During his visit to the sacrificial animal market set up at Madhrianwala Road near the Grain Market, the Deputy Commissioner instructed officers from the Livestock Department, veterinary doctors, Municipal Committee, Rescue 1122, and the Health Department to ensure that all animals are properly vaccinated, sprayed for hygiene, and undergo necessary health checks before being allowed entry into the market.

Population planning key for national development: Experts claimed

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: In a strong collective appeal, media professionals and development experts have urged the government to make family planning a top national priority, framing it as essential for Pakistan's prosperity, child welfare, and sustainable development.

The call came during a Media Coalition Meeting organized by the Population Council in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), where participants stressed that child-focused interventions—such as improved survival rates, better nutrition, equitable education, and gender-responsive budgeting—must be backed by access to comprehensive family planning services.

"Population planning is not just about numbers. It's about ensuring that every child survives and thrives," said Dr. Ali Mir, Senior Director at the Population

Council. He highlighted the media's role as "front-line defenders" in the push for sustainable development and evidence-based policymaking.

The meeting underscored alarming indicators that paint a bleak picture of Pakistan's human capital crisis. According to data presented by Ikram ul Ahad, Deputy Manager at the Population Council, around 675 newborns die every day in Pakistan, while 26 million children remain out of school. Malnutrition continues to plague the country, with 40% of children under five stunted. In Sindh, this figure rises to 50%, and in Baluchistan, only 22% of children attend primary school. Punjab's under-five mortality rate stands at 80 per 1,000 live births.

Experts pointed to chronic underinvestment in health and education—currently far below the global recommended spending of 6% and 7% of GDP, respectively—as a root cause of

these problems. However, solutions were also on the table. The Pakistan @2050 report by the Population Council reveals that if Pakistan can reduce its population growth rate to 1.2% by 2030, the country could see GDP growth rise by 1.7 percentage points, per capita income more than double, unschooled children drop from 38% to 8%, and female post-secondary education triple by 2050.

Ali Mazhar Choudhary, Director of Communication at the Population Council, reaffirmed the media's role as a change agent. "You are not just reporting on the issues—you are shaping the solutions," he told journalists at the meeting.

The event concluded with a joint commitment from media representatives to hold authorities accountable for investing in family planning and human capital development, recognizing it as the foundation for a prosperous and equitable Pakistan.

Karak safe city project proposed in next ADP F.P. Report

KARAK: Provincial Minister for Agriculture Sajjad Barakwal has said that Karak Safe City Project recommended in the upcoming fiscal year. The Karak project will cost more than one billion rupees, including the entire Karak City, Tangori Chowk KDA and the newly built Bypass College, and all important pockets will be included in it.

The completion of the Karak Safe City Project will have a positive impact on the environment of Karak City, including law and order, peace and security and other important issues.

Meanwhile, a swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected cabinet of Tehsil Press Club Takht Nusrati, Provincial Advisor for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Saif Ali Khan took oath. A solemn ceremony of swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected cabinet of Tehsil Press Club Takht Nusrati Karak was held at the Peshawar Secretariat, in which Provincial Advisor for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif administered the oath of allegiance to the cabinet members.

Unknown thieves stole power cable Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: A daring theft occurred at the Bajaur Cemetery in Nowshera Kalan, where unknown thieves stole the 11,000-volt power cable, disrupting the electricity supply to several areas. The theft has caused widespread inconvenience, affecting households, businesses, and mosques.

The electricity outage has caused water scarcity in homes and mosques as well as business activities in the nearby areas have come to a standstill. The residents are facing significant difficulties due to the power outage.

The Nowshera Kalan police registered a case against the unknown thieves and launched an investigation. The police are working to identify and apprehend the culprits, recover the stolen cable, and restore power to the affected areas. The residents are outraged over the theft, expressing frustration over the already-existing issues with load shedding and power outages. They demand that the authorities take immediate action to address the situation and prevent such incidents in the future.

Online medical camp held F.P. Report

JAMSHORO: In a significant initiative, Cadet College Pataro, in collaboration with E-Shafi Lahore, organized an online medical camp within the college's on-site hospital. Various cadets, staff members, and their families underwent comprehensive medical check-ups, including blood pressure and sugar level tests.

The test reports were shared online with specialist doctors for further consultation. During a media interaction, Commodore Faisal Iqbal Qazi, Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Military Commandant and Principal of Cadet College Pataro, explained that the primary objective of the medical camp was to save time for cadets who would otherwise have to travel to distant cities for specialist consultations, disrupting their training and education.

PML-N gains momentum as JUI-F leader joins party

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) central leader and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Saturday said there would be no compromise on national defense, adding that the Pakistan Army's success in Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad had earned international respect for the country.

He was addressing a large public gathering in Chakdara, tehsil Adenzai, where former district general secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Haji Javed Iqbal, announced his decision to join the PML-N along with his family and supporters.

Muqam welcomed the new entrants into the party, assuring them that the PML-N would not disappoint its workers. He said the party's focus was on equipping the youth with education and skills to better serve the country. The event was attended by senior PML-N leaders including former senator Zahid Khan, former deputy speaker of the National Assembly Murtaza Javed



Iqbal, Barrister Attaulah Khan, Barrister Zaidullah Khan, and district president Malik Farooq Iqbal. Former provincial ministers Malik Jehanzaib Khan and Wajid Ali Khan, MPA Ms. Sobia Khan, and local office-bearers were also present.

Highlighting the party's development agenda, Mr Muqam promised the reconstruction and expansion of the Chakdara-Chitral highway and pledged to extend gas supply to areas of Lower Dir that remain unserved. He paid tribute to Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and the military leadership for what he termed a "crushing response" to recent Indian hostilities. "The entire nation stands firmly behind

its armed forces," he said.

Criticizing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Mr Muqam accused the party of misleading the youth and said certain elements within it had run a malicious campaign against the military on social media to please India. "The nation has rejected this toxic narrative," he added. He further said that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had broken the country's dependency on foreign loans in 2016, and now Shehbaz Sharif's government would take the country towards financial independence. Muqam also thanked the local leadership in Adenzai for organizing the gathering and lauded the people of Dir for their steadfastness and patriotism.

Recovery of sisters' share in father property sought

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Residents of Mukhtar Khel, Shinwari, Landi Kotal demanded the Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court to assist them to recover their mothers' shares in their maternal grandfather inherited property seized by their maternal uncle.

Addressing to a press conference in District Press Club, Landi Kotal on Saturday Hayat Ullah, Abdul Salam and Sayal Pur said that their late maternal grandfather, Gul Hasan Shinwari had seven sons and four daughters to inherit his property.

In the inheritance list, all names of ten children of Gul Hasan Shinwari were written but names of his daughters had been dropped from Inteqal (Mutation) that was equivalent to denying sisters



shares in the inheritance, guaranteed by law.

They maintained that their maternal uncle, advocate Qubais Shinwari through forgery, sold 45 jerab property of land, located in Char Pariza in the suburb of Peshawar without their consent. Their other maternal relatives validated their due share but advocate Qubais Shinwari refused to furnish them their allocated share in the inheritance and use his influence to pressurize them to give up their claim.

We have lodged applications with Provincial Ombudsman and police station Landi Kotal but to in avail, they added. They threatened that if justice was not done to them, they would initiate a protest sit-in in front of the Peshawar High Court against advocate Qubais Shainwari. They demanded the Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court to provide them justice and help them to get their legal share in their maternal grandfather inheritance.

AWKUM 31st Finance & planning meeting held

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The 31st meeting of the Finance & Planning Committee of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) held on Saturday, under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmad.

During the meeting, the committee reviewed and discussed the Revised Estimates for the current financial year 2024-25 and the Budget Estimates for the upcoming financial year 2025-26.

Key agenda items included the procurement of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solutions in line with Higher Education Commission (HEC) guidelines and the implementation of an e-filing system at the university.

Additionally, the committee deliberated on allocating funds for solarization initiatives and examining revenue streams,

including HEC grants, provincial government grants, and the university's own source revenue. The meeting also addressed the financial challenges faced by the university, particularly pension liabilities, and explored potential revenue models to mitigate these issues.

Furthermore, the committee reviewed and approved the revised Endowment Fund Rules of the university, which involved merging the Student Welfare Endowment Fund and Research Innovation Fund into the Endowment Fund of the University. The revised rules outline the distribution of proceeds towards various activities, including student welfare and promoting research excellence, while also specifying a proportion for reinvestment in the fund.

Moreover, the forum recommended restructuring the faculty composition by

abolishing 100 posts of lecturers to create 35 posts of professors and 15 posts of associate professors for both BPS and TTS faculty, aiming to enhance academic excellence.

Dy Director shot killed F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: Unknown armed motorcyclists shot killed Deputy Director at Agriculture Department Asiq Chaudhio on Masjid road near Shahdadkot police station, on Saturday.

According to details, the accused managed to escape after the commencement of crime. After the firing incident, citizens reached and took the body of the deceased to Shahdadkot Hospital where after examination, doctors confirmed his death while a large crowd of people reached the hospital in panic.

Let us seek help and support for Gaza in light of Holy Quran

Nusrat Bibi

QURAN UI Karem, the Holy Book of the Most Merciful Allah reveals the statements of Allah, the Greatest that, Is not He (better than your gods) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generations after generations? Is there any ilah (god) with Allah? Little is that you remember! (Sura e Namal)

186. And when My slaves ask you (Oh Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him) concerning Me, then (answer them), I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them

obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright (1) (Sura e AlBaqra) 163. And your ilah (God) is One Ilah (God — Allah), La ilaha illa Huwa (there is none who has the right to be worshipped but He), the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. (Sura e AlBaqra)

We are Muslims and have strong faith in Allah and know the miracle of our prayers, then why not we call Him directly to help the distressed Gaza people? Allah is the Creator of the world and all its matter and He listens and responds quickly to the directly asked prayers from Him, then why to worry and ask the world powers to help the Palestine people? Almost all non-believers are the supporters of each other's against the Muslims as the Holy Quran says and therefore we should not expect any jus-

tice from them, instead we must ask our Allah, the Most Gracious to shower His blessings on Palestinians to make their life easy.

No doubt our race of Muslims are in the worst sufferings of life and death in their own country by Kuffar, the Israel and its alliance, and we are helpless to help them directly, then we should immediately seek our Lord's help, the Most Merciful Allah and surely He will immediately responds us if we have strong faith in Him. So, let us start our prayers in terms of Salath e Hajat, Khtumal Quran, Sadqa, Prayers in Khana Kaba as well as must do all the required kind of worship to please our Allah to remove the sufferings of Gaza people and to make them the true inheritors of their own country, the Great Palestine.

Dangers of political flags: Why national unity must supersede partisan identity

Abdullah Khan

In any functioning democracy, political diversity and ideological plurality are fundamental. However, there is a fine line between healthy competition and destructive division. One of the increasingly visible and dangerous trends in modern political landscapes is the use of separate political flags by individual parties. This symbolic fragmentation, though seemingly harmless on the surface, carries with it profound implications for national unity, civic identity, and long-term political stability.

A flag is not just a piece of cloth; it is a symbol of unity, sacrifice, and shared destiny. It represents the collective will, history, and aspirations of an entire nation. When multiple political

parties introduce their own flags and raise them alongside — or worse, instead of — the national flag, they are not merely distinguishing themselves. They are consciously or unconsciously signaling a shift in loyalty from the nation to the party.

This practice erodes the sacred symbolism of the national flag and replaces it with narrow partisan allegiances. Citizens, especially the youth, grow up identifying more with party colors and symbols than with the emblem that is meant to unite them all. Over time, this can lead to a fragmented society where partisan identity supersedes national identity, creating fertile ground for conflict, polarization, and even civil unrest.

Parties are meant to represent ideological differences within a unified national framework.

However, when each party promotes its own flag, slogans, and cultural identity, politics risks devolving from healthy pluralism into tribalism. People no longer debate policies — they defend their party's honor, often irrationally, as one would defend a tribe or clan.

The consequences are visible in many developing democracies: neighborhoods and even families become divided, civil discourse breaks down, and elections turn into zero-sum battles between "us" and "them" instead of constructive debates about national priorities.

When party flags fly over public institutions, rally grounds, or are worn as badges of identity, they send a dangerous message: that loyalty to the party may be more important than loyalty to the nation. In times of national

crisis, such divided loyalties can prove disastrous. Instead of rallying around the national flag, citizens are often manipulated into defending party interests, even at the expense of the country's stability.

Moreover, politicians who swear allegiance to their party flag above all else are more likely to engage in corrupt, sectarian, or exclusionary policies, viewing governance as a tool for empowering their supporters rather than serving the whole nation.

To preserve unity, political parties should renounce the use of separate flags and instead embrace a shared national identity. This does not mean erasing ideological diversity — far from it. Parties can and should maintain unique electoral symbols, which serve a practical and legitimate function in campaigning

and on the ballot.

These electoral symbols — whether they are animals, objects, or simple logos — are sufficient for distinguishing parties in the democratic process. They provide clarity for voters, especially in regions with high illiteracy rates, and ensure fair competition during elections.

But these symbols must not evolve into alternative national emblems. The only flag that should dominate the political landscape — in schools, public events, rallies, and government buildings — is the national flag.

Ultimately, the success of any democratic society lies in its ability to foster a shared sense of belonging among its citizens. When the symbols of national unity are diluted or replaced by partisan emblems, that collective

identity is put at risk.

Political parties must remember that their role is to serve the nation, not to become nations within the nation. Their legitimacy comes not from waving their own flags but from working under one flag — the flag of the country, to which all citizens, regardless of party affiliation, can pledge their loyalty.

The proliferation of party flags is not merely a symbolic issue — it is a political and social threat. It fosters division, weakens national identity, and encourages partisan loyalty at the expense of patriotism. The solution lies not in suppressing political diversity but in reaffirming national unity. Let every party have its symbol, its slogan, and its vision — but let all parties agree on one flag, one homeland, and one destiny.



NATO to ask Berlin for seven more brigades

BERLIN (Reuters): NATO will ask Germany to provide seven more brigades, or some 40,000 troops, for the alliance's defence, three sources told Reuters, under new targets for weapons and troop numbers that its members' defence ministers are set to agree on next week.

The alliance is dramatically increasing its military capability targets as it views Russia as a much greater threat since its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Exact figures for NATO's targets - either overall or country by country - are hard to verify as the information is highly classified.

One senior military official who, like the other sources spoke on condition of anonymity, said the target for the total number of brigades that NATO allies would have to provide in future will be raised to between 120 and 130. This would mean a hike of some 50% from the current target of around 80 brigades, the source said. A government source put the target at 130 brigades for all of NATO. A spokesperson for the defence ministry in Berlin said he could not pre-empt decisions to be taken by NATO defence ministers next week and by NATO leaders at a summit at the end of June.

"On top of this, NATO's force planning and capability targets are classified due to security reasons," he added. NATO described the

new capability targets as "ambitious" but did not quantify them. "They are based on the forces and resources we need for deterrence and defence, based on our new defence plans," a NATO official said, responding to a request for comment. In 2021, Germany agreed to provide 10 brigades - units usually comprising around 5,000 troops - for NATO by 2030. It currently has eight brigades and is building up a ninth in Lithuania to be ready from 2027.

Providing a further 40,000 active troops will be a big challenge for Berlin, however. The Bundeswehr has not yet met a target of 203,000 troops set in 2018, and is currently short-staffed by some 20,000 regular troops, according to defence ministry data. Last year, Reuters reported that NATO would need 35 to 50 extra brigades to fully realise its new plans to defend against an attack from Russia and that Germany alone would have to quadruple its air defence capabilities. Furthermore, the new NATO targets do not yet reflect any provisions for a drawdown of US troops in Europe, sources said, the prospect of which has rattled Europeans due to NATO's defence plans that rely heavily on US assets.

Washington has said it will start discussing its reduction plans with allies later this year. US President Donald Trump's adminis-

tration has told Europeans that the United States can no longer be primarily focused on European security. During the Cold War, Germany maintained 500,000 troops and 800,000 reserve forces. Today, alongside Poland, it is tasked by NATO with providing the bulk of ground forces that would be first responders to any Russian attack on the alliance's eastern flank. NATO members have massively increased defence spending since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and have been urged to go further by Trump, who has threatened not to defend countries lagging behind on defence spending. At a summit in The Hague next month, the alliance's head Mark Rutte will seek an agreement from national leaders to more than double their current spending target from 2% of GDP to 5% - with 3.5% for defence and 1.5% for more broadly defined security-related spending.

In a historic shift, Germany recently loosened its constitutional debt brake so that it can raise defence spending, and it has backed Rutte's 5% target. German Chief of Defence Carsten Breuer has ordered his country's forces to be fully equipped by 2029, by which time the alliance expects Moscow to have reconstituted its military forces sufficiently to attack NATO territory.

Australia's Opp coalition reunites week after split

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australia's conservative opposition coalition said it would reunite, a week after splitting over policy differences following a resounding election defeat. The Liberal and National parties have shared power for decades in state and federal politics, with the Nationals broadly representing the interests of rural communities and the Liberals contesting city seats.

"Our parties are at their best when they work together, to fight, right now as a strong opposition for this government," new Liberal Party leader Sussan Ley told a news conference. "I know that we will be a great partnership going forward." In a May federal election dominated by voter backlash against US President Donald Trump's policies, the Liberal Party - historically the more dominant of the two parties in the coalition - was reduced to 28 out of 150 seats in the country's lower house of parliament, with the Nationals holding 15 seats. The incumbent Labor Party led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese increased its seats to 94 from 77.

The two conservative parties briefly split last week due to differences over policies, including nuclear energy, powers to break up leading supermarket chains and policies relating to regional Australia. Ley, a moderate who took over after the former Liberal leader lost his seat in the election, also announced her shadow cabinet, naming deputy leader Ted O'Brien as shadow Treasurer. Angus Taylor, the former shadow Treasurer from the right of the party who ran against Ley for the leadership, was moved to a shadow defence role. Precursors of both parties have been in alliance for over a century, though they have briefly split several times over that period.

US weighing future of mly command in Africa

NAIROBI (Reuters): The United States is assessing the future of its military command for Africa, its top general for the continent said, and called on African governments to make their views on its possible elimination known in Washington.

President Donald Trump's administration is considering merging AFRICOM, which became a distinct geographical command in 2008, with the US command in Europe to cut bureaucracy, American media outlets reported in March. Speaking to reporters before a conference of African defence chiefs in Kenya, AFRICOM's commander, General Michael Langley, said he had discussed the issue with officials on the continent. "I've talked to a number of ministers of defence and a few presidents and told them we were assessing," Langley said.

He said governments should make their views about AFRICOM's future known through their ambassadors in the US. "That's what I tell them. I said: 'okay, if we're that important to (you), you need to communicate that and we'll see'."

Before 2008, US military activities in Africa were handled by commands from other regions. AFRICOM's creation reflected rising US national security interests on the continent, including Islamist insurgencies and competition with China and Russia. In West Africa, where groups with ties to al Qaeda and Islamic State have grown in recent years, US security influence has waned following a series of military coups.

The putsches forced Washington to pull back on security support and brought to power juntas that have turned to Russia for assistance. Last year, the ruling junta in Niger ordered the US to withdraw its nearly 1,000 military personnel from the country and vacate a \$100 million drone base. Langley said the US had nevertheless maintained some intelligence sharing with the military regimes in the Sahel region and was looking for "other ways to continue to stay engaged".



GAZA: Palestinians carryING bags of flour after storming a UN World Food Programme warehouse in Zawaida.

Displaced Syrians leave camps to pitch tents near destroyed homes

DAMASCUS (AFP): Aref Shamtan, 73, preferred to pitch a tent near his destroyed home in northwest Syria rather than stay in a camp for the displaced following longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad's ouster. "I feel good here, even among the rubble," Shamtan said, sipping tea at the tent near his field.

When he and his son returned after Assad's December 8 overthrow, Shamtan found his village of Al-Hawash, nestled among farmland in central Hama province, badly damaged. The roof of their house was gone and its walls were cracked. But "living in the rubble is better than living in the camps" near the border with Turkey, where he had been since 2011 after fleeing the fighting, Shamtan said.

Since Islamist forces ousted Assad after nearly 14 years of war, 1.87 million Syrians who were refugees abroad or internally displaced have returned to their areas of origin, the United Nations' International Organization for Migration says. The IOM says the "lack of economic opportunities and essential services pose the greatest challenge" for those returning home. Shamtan, who cannot afford to rebuild, decided around two months ago to leave the camp with his family and young grandchildren, and has started planting his farmland with wheat. Al-Hawash had been controlled by Assad's forces and was along the front lines with neighbouring Idlib province, which became a bastion for opposition factions, particularly Hayat Tahrir al-

Sham, the group that led the offensive that toppled Assad. "We can't stay in the camps," Shamtan insisted, even if "the village is all destroyed... and life is non-existent", lacking basic services and infrastructure. "We decided... to live here until things improve. We are waiting for organisations and the state to help us," he said.

Local official Abdel Ghafour al-Khatib, 72, has also returned after fleeing in 2019 with his wife and children for a camp near the border. "I just wanted to get home. I was overjoyed... I returned and pitched a worn-out tent. Living in my village is the important thing," he said. "Everyone wants to return," he said. But many cannot even afford the transport to do so in a country where 90 percent of people live in poverty. "There is nothing here -- no schools, no health clinics, no water and no electricity," Khatib said, sitting on the ground in the tent near the remains of his home. The war, which erupted in 2011 after Assad's brutal repression of anti-government protests, killed more than 500,000 people and displaced half of the pre-war population internally or abroad, with many fleeing to Idlib province.

More than six million people remain internally displaced, according to the IOM. With the recent lifting of Western sanctions, Syria's new authorities hope for international support to launch reconstruction, which the UN estimates could cost more than \$400 billion. IOM chief Amy Pope said that "the lifting of sanctions sends a powerful message of hope to

millions of displaced Syrians", cautioning, however, that "hope must be matched with concrete support". After being repeatedly displaced, Souad Othman, 47, returned with her three daughters and son to Al-Hawash around a week ago. "Everything has changed -- the homes are damaged and there is nothing left in their place," said Othman, whose husband died during the war.

The roof of her home has collapsed and its walls are cracked, but she still chose to return, eking out a living through manual labour. A small bed sits out in the open, protected only by blankets on a clothesline, with a makeshift cooking area set up on the rubble. She said she borrowed \$80 to pay for a battery for two solar panels. "There are snakes and insects here. We can't live without light during the night," she said. AFP aerial footage of camps in northwest Syria showed some former structures empty of residents. Jalal al-Omar, 37, who is responsible for part of a camp near the village of Qah in Idlib province, said around 100 families had left for his home village of Treimsa in the Hama region.

But around 700 other families cannot afford to return, he said, also noting the lack of infrastructure in Treimsa, where people have to travel miles just to buy bread. "People don't want to stay in the camps, they want to return to their villages. But the lack of essential services... prevents their return," he said. "I myself have no home. I'm waiting... for a place to shelter in the village," he added.

Poland's high-stakes presidential vote pits pro-EU centrist

WARSAW (Reuters): Poles vote in a closely fought presidential election run-off that pits the centrist, pro-European ruling party's candidate against a nationalist challenger who draws inspiration from US President Donald Trump.

Opinion polls show Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski of the ruling Civic Coalition (KO) narrowly leading Karol Nawrocki, the candidate backed by the main opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party, ahead of the June 1 second round, which will have consequences for EU ties and relations with Ukraine. The two candidates embody contrasting visions of Poland's international relations, security strategy and social policies.

Trzaskowski, 53, the Oxford-educated son of a jazz musician, champions a liberal agenda that stresses the importance of women's rights and strong ties with the European Union and NATO. Nawrocki, 42, a historian who has been endorsed by the Trump administration, has positioned himself as a newcomer with no political

baggage. He wants Poland to follow a path inspired by Trump and regards Washington as Warsaw's key ally, not Brussels.

Julia Szwoch, a 25-year-old student of pedagogy from the northern port city of Gdansk, said she would back Trzaskowski in run-off vote. "I want to live in a Poland that is inclusive and takes into account the needs of all people," she said. In contrast, Michal Diug, 21, an electrotechnology student, said he would probably back Nawrocki "so there isn't a monopoly of power" at the top of the Polish state. Trzaskowski has promised "peaceful cooperation" with the government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk and to help undo changes to Poland's judiciary under PiS that critics in the EU and at home said had eroded democratic checks and balances.

In the October 2023 election, PiS lost its parliamentary majority to Tusk's coalition after eight years in power, amid widespread public dissatisfaction over PiS's record on women's and minority rights.

However, Poland's outgoing president, Andrzej Duda, a PiS ally, has used his veto power to block many of Tusk's reforms and Nawrocki vows to do the same, describing the election as a referendum on the government. "If my opponent, Karol Nawrocki, wins there will be only chaos," Trzaskowski told a mass rally in Warsaw.

Trzaskowski faces a tricky balancing act ahead of the second round. He wants to appeal both to supporters of the far-right Confederation, whose candidate placed third in the first round, and to progressives disappointed with Tusk's government. He has said he is against accepting more refugees after Poland took in almost a million Ukrainians fleeing the war next door, but remains committed to liberalising abortion laws. "We have to go wide," said Dorota Loboda, a Trzaskowski campaign team member. Nawrocki said that after years of what he calls "mistakes", including energy dependence on Russia and the EU climate pact, Europe needs "a strong, conservative voice, also from Poland".

"I will make sure that Poland becomes the leader of the European Union in transatlantic relations. We have the best cards for this," he told the Conservative Political Action Conference in Poland. His campaign has been characterized by nationalist rhetoric and a focus on traditional values. Nawrocki opposes abortion and aims to keep coal mines operating until Poland develops its own nuclear energy. He opposes EU migration policies. Although Nawrocki says he favours continued Polish support for Ukraine's war effort, he says he would not ratify any application by Kyiv to join NATO.

Trzaskowski argues that Poland's own safety depends on Ukraine joining NATO. Nawrocki has faced allegations about his past in liberal media outlets, including a report that he lied about owning a second property and that he acquired it from an elderly man in return for a promise of care which he did not provide.

How Mexico's cartels recruit children and groom them into killers

MEXICO CITY (Reuters): Sol remembers her first kill for a Mexican cartel: a kidnapping she committed with a handful of other young recruits that twisted into torture and bled into murder. She was 12 years old.

Sol had joined the drug cartel a few months earlier, recruited by someone she knew as she sold roses on the sidewalk outside a local bar. She started as a lookout, but rose fast. The cartel liked her childish enthusiasm for learning new skills, her unquestioning loyalty, and perhaps most importantly, her status as a minor protected her from severe punishment if the cops ever caught her.

"I obeyed the boss blind-

ly," Sol, now 20 years old, told Reuters, speaking from the rehabilitation center in central Mexico where she is trying to patch her life back together. "I thought they loved me." Sol declined to say how many people she killed during her time in the cartel. She said she'd been addicted to methamphetamine from the age of nine. When she was 16 she was arrested for kidnapping - her only criminal conviction - and spent three years in juvenile detention, according to her lawyer. Reuters is withholding Sol's full name, and the names of the city where she worked and the cartel she joined, to protect her. The news agency was unable to independently verify the

details of Sol's account, although psychologists at the center and her lawyer said they believed it was accurate. Security experts say children like Sol are a casualty of a deliberate strategy by Mexican organized crime groups to recruit minors into their ranks by preying on their hunger for status and camaraderie. In cartel slang they are known as 'pollitos de colores' or 'colorful chicks', after the fluffy baby chicks sprayed with lurid toxic colors and sold at Mexican fairgrounds. They're cheap, burn bright, and don't live long. Reuters spoke to 10 current and six former child assassins, as well as four senior cartel operatives, who said cartels

are increasingly recruiting and grooming young killers. Their experiences reveal the growing brutalization of Mexican society and the failure of President Claudia Sheinbaum and past governments to address not only the expanding territorial influence of the cartels but their extensive cultural hold too. Mexico's presidency and interior ministry did not reply to requests for comment. The news agency contacted active cartel members through Facebook and TikTok. Many shared pictures of themselves holding rifles, one had a cap emblazoned with a cartoon chicken firing off automatic rounds - a reference to the 'colorful chicks.'

Portugal far-right party becomes 2nd biggest party

LISBON (AFP): Portugal's far-right Chega party won second place in snap elections last week, according to final results published, making it the official opposition party in the country just six years after its creation. Chega, which means "Enough", and the left-wing Socialist Party (PS) had been level on 58 seats after the provisional results from the May 18 poll.

But the far-right party won two of the previously unannounced four overseas constituencies, taking its tally to 60. The centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD) claimed the other two overseas seats taking its total to 91, still far from the 116 seats needed to form a majority government. The Social Democratic Party of outgoing prime minister Luis Montenegro is the main party of the alliance.

"It is a big victory," said Chega founder and leader Andre Ventura, claiming that it "marks a profound change in the Portuguese political system". Montenegro is expected to try to form a minority government after the latest election and he has said he will not deal with Chega. But Ventura called on Montenegro to "break" with the Socialists. "Portugal is moving in line with the European trend" for a "protest vote" and "anti-establishment sentiment", said Paula Espirito Santo at Lisbon

University's Higher Institute of Social and Political Sciences. Support for Chega has grown in every general election since the party was founded in 2019 by Ventura, a former trainee priest who later became a television football commentator.

It won 1.3 percent of the vote in a general election the year it was founded, giving it a seat in parliament -- the first time a far-right party had won representation in Portugal's legislature since a coup in 1974 toppled a decades-long rightist dictatorship. Chega became the third-largest force in parliament in the next general election in 2022 and quadrupled its parliamentary seats last year to 50, cementing its place in Portugal's political landscape and mirroring gains by similar parties across Europe. Chega's policies include chemical castration for paedophiles, limiting newcomers' access to welfare benefits, and stricter controls on migration which it links to crime and higher pensions.

Ventura attended US President Donald Trump's inauguration in January, and has embraced the support of Brazil's former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro. He speaks of restoring respect for the police, and has protested on the streets with Movement Zero, a group of disgruntled police officers with

suspected extremist ties who are demanding better pay and conditions. "In politics, you have to be different. And I wanted to be different," Ventura once said of himself, before adding that his path had been guided by a "divine mission".

When preliminary election results came in last week, Ventura said he was confident his party would eventually finish ahead of the PS. "Nothing will ever be the same again," Ventura told his supporters, who chanted "Portugal is ours and it always will be". "This is indeed a fundamental shift," said analyst Espirito Santo. "We cannot say that Chega will lose ground in the coming years... It looks as though Chega is here to stay for a while." Many voters "certainly support the radical and anti-establishment solutions that Chega proposes" but others may have chosen the party "because of the erosion of the traditional parties' ability to meet expectations", she said.

The future of the Socialist Party meanwhile remains "unpredictable", Espirito Santo said. Party leader Pedro Nuno Santos, a 48-year-old economist, said he would stand down after the initial election results were announced. Under a previous PS government, Portugal became one of Europe's most open countries for immigrants.

Congo ex-president Kabila visits rebel-held Goma for talks

CONGO (Reuters): Congolese former president Joseph Kabila has arrived in the rebel-held eastern city of Goma for talks with locals, three people close to him told Reuters, a month after declaring he wanted to help end the crisis in the war-ravaged region. If confirmed, the visit could complicate a US-backed bid to end a rebellion by the Rwandan-backed M23 armed group in eastern Congo, which contains valuable minerals that US President Donald Trump's administration is keen to help mine. Kabila, who has denied accusations by Kinshasa that he supports the M23 insurgency, agreed to step down following protests and external pressure in 2018 after almost two decades in power. He has been out of the country since late 2023, mostly in South Africa.

The three people said the former president will begin holding consultations with citizens in Goma, which fell

under the control of M23 in January during an advance that has seen the group seize more ground than ever before. The people close to Kabila said he had arrived in Goma. Corneille Nangaa, leader of the rebel alliance that includes M23, has also said on social media that Kabila is in Goma, though Kabila himself has not spoken and no images of him in Goma have been published.

The reported visit follows a vote in the Senate in Kinshasa last week overwhelmingly in favour of lifting his immunity from prosecution over his alleged links to M23. Government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said in a briefing aired on state television that Kabila was "positioning himself as the rebel leader" along with Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

Kabila is wanted in Congo for alleged crimes against humanity for supporting the insurgency in the east, including a role in the

massacre of civilians. Congo has also moved to suspend his political party and seize the assets of its leaders. In a speech, Kabila said Congo's justice system was being "openly exploited for political ends" and was "nothing more than an instrument of oppression" for President Felix Tshisekedi's government.

Kabila, who came to power in 2001 after his father's assassination, clung to office following Congo's disputed 2018 election for almost two years through an awkward power-sharing deal with Tshisekedi. Tshisekedi cut him out at the end of 2020 by chipping away at his influence and accusing him of blocking reforms. The two men's relationship has since soured to the point that, as M23 marched on east Congo's second-largest city of Bukavu in February, Tshisekedi told the Munich Security Conference that Kabila had sponsored the insurgency.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Fusion's Cold War moment

WHEN Neil Armstrong stepped onto the lunar surface in 1969, he declared it a "giant leap for mankind." This iconic moment, captured on grainy television screens worldwide, was not merely a triumph of human ingenuity but the result of intense geopolitical competition between the US and the Soviet Union. The rivalry, fueled by the existential anxieties of the Cold War, paradoxically propelled humanity forward. Today, we stand on the threshold of another transformative milestone - achieving practical nuclear fusion. And once again, competition, particularly among the US, China and Europe, may prove critical. Idealists often advocate global cooperation, envisioning pooled resources and collective progress. However, historical realities suggest that competitive pressure often yields faster, more substantial results. The sluggish progress of ITER, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, a collaboration of 35 nations including the US, China, Russia and several European countries, illustrates the inherent inefficiencies in sprawling multinational cooperation.

Initially proposed in 1985, ITER's schedule has repeatedly slipped, with first plasma now anticipated no sooner than 2034. Development setbacks, bureaucratic inertia, conflicting national interests, inconsistent funding, and prolonged negotiations have significantly hindered progress. Contrast ITER's delays with the rapid advances of private and national fusion efforts. In the US, ventures such as Commonwealth Fusion Systems, driven by academic ingenuity and substantial private investments, have reached critical milestones. Commonwealth recently demonstrated a groundbreaking high-temperature superconducting magnet, a crucial advancement toward viable fusion energy. Today, more than 50 private startups globally have attracted more than \$8 billion in investment, all racing to be the first to commercialize fusion.

China, too, has aggressively advanced its fusion ambitions. Chinese researchers working on the Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak, popularly known as the "artificial sun," recently maintained plasma at over 120 million degrees Celsius for more than 400 seconds, a remarkable achievement that brings fusion significantly closer to practical application. These achievements make clear that when the stakes are high, competitive dynamics accelerate progress in ways international collaborations often cannot. Europe, often perceived as a collaborative partner in ITER, is now asserting itself as a formidable competitor in the fusion arena. The European Union has long supported fusion research through such initiatives as EUROfusion, which coordinates research across numerous European laboratories. Facilities such as the Joint European Torus in the UK and the Wendelstein 7-X stellarator in Germany have achieved significant milestones, demonstrating Europe's commitment to advancing fusion technology.

Moreover, European startups such as Marvel Fusion in Germany have attracted substantial investments to develop innovative fusion approaches, signaling a shift towards a more competitive stance in the global fusion race. The historical parallels are instructive. The Cold War-era space race between the US and the Soviet Union resulted in unprecedented technological achievements. Beyond landing astronauts on the moon, this competition spurred developments in microelectronics, telecommunications, materials science and computing. The intense desire to outperform a geopolitical rival drove nations to push technological limits, delivering widespread benefits continuously.

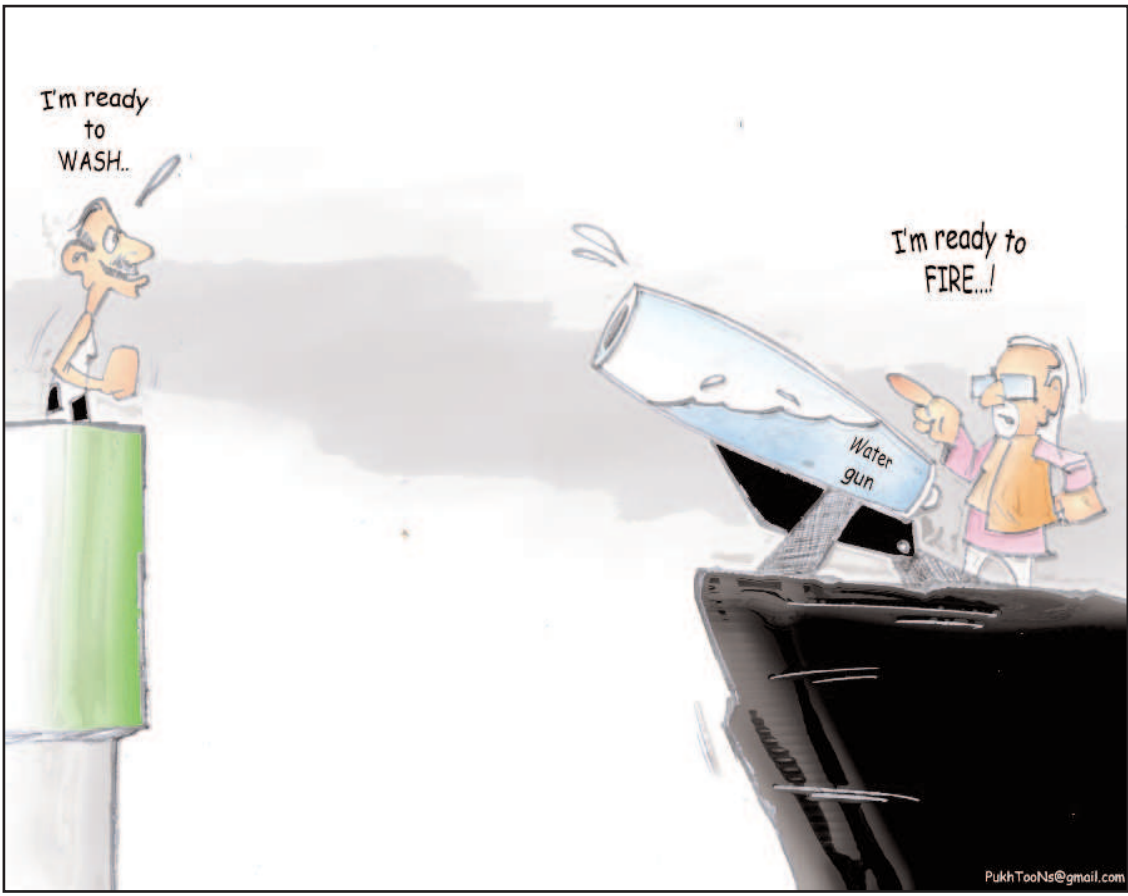
Could NASA have achieved the moon landing sooner had it been obligated to negotiate every decision with multiple international partners? The answer is unequivocally no. Multilateral consensus-building, however well-intentioned, tends to slow decision-making and dilute ambition. This lesson applies directly to the fusion race. With the accelerating impacts of climate change and global energy demands expected to rise by nearly 50 percent by 2050, fusion energy's promise - clean, abundant, and nearly limitless energy - is urgently needed. Fusion has the potential to decarbonize global energy grids, diminish geopolitical tensions over fossil fuels, and provide stable energy to developing nations.

Of course, competition is not without critics. Some argue it leads to duplication, secrecy, or geopolitical tension. Yet history and current fusion progress show competition can sharpen focus, streamline resources, and accelerate timelines where cooperation might stall. Indeed, competition among the US, China and Europe is about more than mere technological superiority; it shapes geopolitical alliances, influences global economic dynamics, and may redefine leadership in the 21st century. Just as the US emerged from the space race as a global technological and economic powerhouse, the victor in fusion development will likely dictate future standards for global energy and technology governance.

Fusion technology inherently offers widespread humanitarian benefits. Even if initial successes are regionally concentrated, these breakthroughs will inevitably diffuse globally due to their immense economic and environmental advantages. Like space-derived innovations such as satellite technology and computing, fusion's benefits will become universally accessible. Climate negotiations at COP28 underscore the difficulties inherent in international cooperation. Achieving even minimal consensus on reducing fossil fuel production (The 'transition away from fossil fuels' agreement) was politically contentious and largely ineffective, delivering superficial agreements that catered more to geopolitical power dynamics than to any meaningful climate solutions. Such bureaucratic delays and diluted outcomes illustrate why humanity cannot afford to rely solely on multilateral cooperation. Ultimately, the fusion race is not merely a geopolitical contest; it is a vital competition for human survival and global prosperity. While competition may not always be harmonious or efficient, neither was the space race. Yet, the space race advanced humanity dramatically. Allowing the fusion race to unfold unhindered may again deliver swift, transformative solutions at a time when humanity urgently needs them. Our planet and our future depend on embracing this competitive drive.

Important Notice

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



Embracing diversity

Endalkachew Sime

THE multilateral trading system, championed by institutions such as the World Trade Organization, has long served as a cornerstone of global economic stability and development. Yet today, rising protectionism, geopolitical tensions and uneven growth threaten to fracture the very framework designed to keep nations together.

In this challenging context, multiculturalism offers both a normative compass and a practical road map for strengthening trust among diverse partners. Multiculturalism, first incorporated in international law after World War II to safeguard plurality, has proven essential for sustainable international cooperation.

From the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice to the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, postwar deliberations highlight the importance of respecting diversity. Just as Hellenistic kingdoms and Silk Road cities once wove together Greek, Persian, Indian and Chinese influences into vibrant tapestries of commerce and ideas, today's China-Africa partnership demonstrates how plural identities can fuel shared prosperity rather than division.

A truly resilient trading system does more than enforce tariffs and quotas - it embeds principles of cultural respect, equity and inclusion into every agreement. To achieve this, three pillars must be upheld. First, rule-based trade governance with cultural safeguards is essential. This means reaffirming WTO principles not only to prevent discriminatory trade measures but to ensure that dispute resolution respects legal traditions and norms across regions.

Second, inclusive development policies rooted in pluralism are crucial. Tariff schedules and technical assistance programs must recognize the unique economic trajectories of developing economies. Supporting vocational training and digital literacy in local vernaculars reinforces the idea that technological advancement need not demand cultural homogenization. Third, digital and green trade cooperation can serve as powerful vectors of cultural exchange. Leveraging "green corridors" and e-

commerce platforms can circulate clean technology solutions alongside local artisanal products, blending global best practices with traditional knowledge. Promoting cross-border data flows under privacy standards calibrated to diverse cultural norms safeguards individual freedoms while enabling innovation.

China's engagement with Africa exemplifies how respecting and integrating cultural and economic diversity can underpin large-scale development, resonating with Horace Kallen's early 20th-century vision of "cultural pluralism", where distinct communities contribute their strengths to a larger whole. Over the past decade, China has been Africa's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade surpassing \$282 billion in 2023. Yet these figures capture only part of the story.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation has institutionalized these exchanges, negotiating agreements that reflect not only economic targets but also cultural memoranda - language training, artistic exchanges and heritage site conservation. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, infrastructure projects such as the Addis Ababa-Djibouti and Mombasa-Nairobi railways do more than move goods; they traverse regions inhabited by dozens of ethnic groups, requiring participatory planning that acknowledges land use customs and traditional authorities.

Special economic zones and industrial parks have been co-designed with local stakeholders, whose artisans, engineers and regulators infuse Chinese methodologies with African ingenuity. Digital partnerships - 5G pilot projects, mobile money platforms and e-Health networks - are rolled out in multiple languages, ensuring that no demographic is digitally disenfranchised.

China's hybrid rice technology and drip irrigation systems are adapted in collaboration with African agronomists, blending millennia of local farming wisdom with modern agri-tech. The result is not a one-size-fits-all solution but a mosaic of regionally tailored practices. COVID-19 vaccine deliveries were accompanied by joint train-

ing for healthcare workers across linguistic groups, underscoring that medical solidarity must transcend cultural and linguistic divides.

Scholarships for African students in Chinese universities, such as those offered by Peking University's Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development, foster cross-cultural networks, preparing a generation of leaders fluent in both the languages and values of their partner nations. Effective global governance demands policy coordination aligned with cultural agendas. Linking China's BRI with Africa's Agenda 2063 and cultural diversity benchmarks of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ensures that each megaproject is evaluated not only for economic returns but for its impact on heritage and social cohesion.

The collaboration on BRI and Agenda 2063 needs two-way efforts both from China and Africa. There are exemplary commitments for multilateralism in Africa, such as the founding role of Ethiopia in the UN and the African Union, together with its active involvement in AfCFTA and BRICS. And yet, more creative and broader commitment of Africa for the common cause of enhancing BRI-Agenda 2063 collaboration is needed. Institutional mechanisms for ongoing dialogue are equally important. Expanding FOCAC-style forums to include rotating cultural commissioners, civil society representatives, and youth delegates guarantees that implementation reflects the voices of all stakeholders. Fair and balanced partnerships require rejecting zero-sum assumptions and framing cooperation as a "win-win" that values both Chinese and African knowledge systems, mirroring the postwar principle that cultural differences are an asset, not a threat.

Concrete steps must be taken by each actor in the global ecosystem. Strengthening regional cultural networks, such as the AU's Division of Culture, helps standardize best practices in heritage preservation and multilingual education. Leveraging SDG 17 (Partnerships for

the Goals) to negotiate development finance that explicitly ties climate, trade and cultural objectives is also crucial. China should embed multicultural metrics in the BRI and FOCAC evaluation frameworks, tracking not only physical achievements but also the number of local languages used in stakeholder consultations.

Expanding South-South cultural exchange programs beyond scholarships to include joint museum curatorship, film festivals and pilgrimages to heritage sites would further deepen connections. The rest of the world and global multilateral institutions should reform WTO negotiations to include a dedicated "Cultural Diversity" chapter, recognizing that trade liberalization must coexist with protections for small-scale, traditional producers. Mobilizing multilateral development banks to underwrite pilot projects that blend green infrastructure with community-led cultural initiatives can drive inclusive growth. Elevating UNESCO's role within the UN system ensures that every SDG review process evaluates progress on cultural inclusion as rigorously as on poverty, health and education. Finally, fostering a global multicultural forum - parallel to the G20 - that brings together ministers of culture, trade and digital affairs from all regions can set norms for inclusive, pluralistic cooperation.

Safeguarding the multilateral trading system is not just an economic imperative but a profound moral undertaking: it affirms our shared commitment to a world where no culture or economy is marginalized and no community is left behind.

From the ancient Silk Road's bustling bazaars to the modern rail lines of Mombasa-Nairobi, history demonstrates that diversity is the engine of innovation, resilience and global peace. By weaving multicultural principles into the fabric of global trade - through well-governed partnerships such as China-Africa cooperation, robust rule-based systems and targeted and tailored-made SDG-driven policies - we can build an inclusive, sustainable future that honors the promise of pluralism enshrined 50 years ago and lived by countless generations before us.

Asia-Pacific must boost trade resilience

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana

THE global trade environment is changing at a rapid pace, with Asia and the Pacific being on the front line. The US tariffs announced in April have sent shockwaves through the global value chains, threatening exports, jobs and investment across the region. For economies already struggling to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals, this adds additional hurdles to overcome.

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific are deeply integrated into global value chains. Cambodia and Vietnam, whose more than 25 percent exports are US-bound, could see a significant decline in trade revenue if retaliatory tariffs or disruptions escalate. Countries such as Laos, Mongolia and Brunei which are part of upstream supply chains could face indirect but potentially larger knock-on effects.

The tariff burden can be particularly damaging for economies with narrow export bases and high reliance on imported inputs, in contrast to larger economies with sizeable domestic markets or more diversified export structures which can largely absorb the trade shocks. Export-oriented sectors, such as textiles and machinery, particularly in smaller and less-diversified economies, can be especially vulnerable to the shocks. These sectors are often labor-intensive, employing many lower-skilled and women workers who face disproportionate risks of job loss. And business investment and strategic decision-making could be affected by unpredictability, potentially constraining their future economic growth.

Although the intensity of these impacts would vary, the broader outcome is clear: heightened uncertainty dampening regional trade flows, deterring investment and complicating long-term development. To effectively respond to the changing global trade landscape, policymakers should take a longer-term view on reforms and put in place forward-looking strategies, even as they seek stability in the near term. An important step would be to deepen evidence-based analysis to identify where the risks and gaps lie, including by assessing both direct and indirect exposure to the tariffs through value chain linkages. Tailored support for hard-hit export sectors, especially for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, would be vital.

Governments, on their part, need to accelerate the digitalization of trade-streamlining customs procedures, adopting cross-border paperless trade systems, and enabling seamless data flows across supply chains - to reduce trade costs and improve efficiency. They also should make efforts to strengthen their broader structural resilience and diversify their trade partners and products in the long run, in order to reduce their over-reliance on a single market. These steps can cushion the impact of future trade shifts and help smaller exporters stay competitive.

Expanding trade in digitally delivered services, such as in financial, business and different professional services, offers a promising pathway. These sectors have been less

affected by recent trade tensions and could help offset some of the disruptions in goods trade.

Besides, countries should prioritize policies that promote domestic consumption, foster innovation and address supply-side constraints, thus expanding their development base and reducing vulnerability to external shocks. Strategic potential may lie in the possible realignment of global supply chains toward the Asia-Pacific. On the other hand, countries graduating from least-developed status and facing the loss of trade preferences, as well as middle-income countries striving to move up the value chain, could leverage new avenues and invest in economic diversification and industrial upgrading. More fundamentally, policy coherence, stability and predictability must remain key to trade, investment and business engagements. In an environment where uncertainty undermines economic confidence, especially for smaller or more exposed economies, upholding a transparent, multilateral rules-based system has become more important than ever.

Regional cooperation and integration will be increasingly critical. Reinforcing intra-regional trade and investment can reduce exposure to global disruptions and help build more resilient economic ecosystems, deeper engagement in sub-regional mechanisms such as ASEAN and mega-trade agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, along with initiatives such as ESCAP's Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade, which offer a way forward.

Moreover, economies should prioritize regulatory convergence and harmonization, enhanced supply chain linkages and cross-border trade digitalization to strengthen connectivity and competitiveness. To further aid smaller and less-developed economies with limited trade negotiation and policy capacities, governments could consider reducing or exempting tariffs on their goods. As economies navigate an increasingly volatile global environment, such collaboration will be crucial for supporting policy adaptation to the shifting dynamics.

The Asia-Pacific region has bounced back from crises in the past, but the challenges it faces today require coordinated, forward-looking responses. With the right policies and strengthened regional partnerships, the region's economies can turn the current trade headwinds into an opportunity to build more inclusive, diversified and resilient economies.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific stands ready to support economies in this effort through targeted technical assistance, regional dialogue platforms and data-driven tools that help governments diagnose vulnerabilities, prioritize interventions and coordinate policy responses. The decisions made now will determine whether the Asia-Pacific will emerge stronger or more vulnerable in a reshaped global trade landscape.

The China Daily

How Circassian genocide remains an inconvenient truth for Kremlin

Leyla Latypova

ON May 21, more than 1,000 people walked through central Nalchik, the capital of the North Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, to mark 161 years since the end of the Russo-Circassian War and pay respect to its victims.

Carrying Circassian flags and wearing traditional clothes, the crowd walked along the central Lenin Avenue toward the Tree of Life, a memorial to victims of the 19th-century Russian invasion of the North Caucasus, where they were joined by 1,000 other people for commemorative events, according to regional news outlet Caucasian Knot.

Straddling the 18th and 19th centuries, the Russo-Circassian War was a defining moment in the history of the Circassian community. By the end of the 101-year-long conflict, more than 90% of the entire Circassian population was systematically killed, the Russian Empire annexed Circassian lands and

more than 500,000 Circassians were forcibly deported to the Ottoman Empire. Only 50,000 Circassians - or about 5% of the pre-war population - remained on their Indigenous lands following these tragic events, which Circassians call Tsitssekun.

"For us, this is not just the past. These events are still alive in our memory," Circassian activist Martin Kochesoko wrote in an opinion column for news outlet From the Republics on May 21. "The genocide became a watershed moment between the 'before' and the 'after.' A people who...lived in unity on their land for thousands of years, creating a unique culture and language, found themselves torn apart and scattered across the world," Kochesoko explained. Though historians agree that the Russian imperial army waged a deliberate campaign aimed at erasing the ethnic group, the Russian government has never recognized the Circassian genocide, even

during the relative democratic thaw of the Yeltsin era.

Nevertheless, regional parliaments in the republics of Adygea and Kabardino-Balkaria moved to recognize the genocide on the local level in 1992, followed by Georgia in 2011 and Ukraine earlier this year. Despite the Kremlin's dismissive attitude, every year since 1995, a column of thousands of people led by mounted horsemen in traditional Circassian costume has marched through central Nalchik to commemorate victims of the Russian invasion of their land. That is, until 2020, when local authorities first banned the procession, citing Covid-19 restrictions. As with public demonstrations elsewhere in the country, the ban on the procession continued far beyond the pandemic, though at least 500 people marched in defiance of official orders in 2022.

This year's rally, too, was held in the absence of an offi-

cial greenlight, even though subsequent commemorations at the Tree of Life memorial were inaugurated with a speech by Kabardino-Balkaria's Culture Minister Mukhadin Kumakhov. Though police did not proactively block the rally on the day, Circassian rights activists sounded the alarm on Friday over the arrests of eight prominent members of the community on charges of "participation in an unsanctioned gathering."

Kabardino-Balkaria's flagship Regional Human Rights Center slammed the arrests as "an attempt to suppress public opinion" and erase "historical self-awareness of citizens." "It is time for the authorities to realize that the main initiator and driving force behind the mourning procession on May 21 is the people, who are expressing their desire to preserve historical memory," the group said in an open letter to Kabardino-Balkaria's head

Kazbek Kokov. As Valeriy Khatazhukov, the chair of Kabardino-Balkaria's Regional Human Rights Center, rightly noted, events surrounding May 21 in the Caucasus "undermine local and federal authorities."

Indeed, 161 years on, memories of Russia's violent invasion of Circassian lands contradict the Kremlin-propagated myth that Moscow's imperial expansion was welcomed by Indigenous peoples and gave way to a peaceful, multi-ethnic state. This latest attempt to silence the Circassian community joins a long list of events commemorating the victims of Russian colonialism that have been deliberately underpublicized, restricted or outright banned by the Kremlin and its regional cronies in recent years, including Memorial Day in Tatarstan and Deportation Day in Ingushetia. But despite the Kremlin's best efforts to cement its version of history in the collective conscious-

ness, the Circassians' struggle for historical justice is likely to outlive this dictatorship.

Just look at Syria, where the country's sizeable Circassian community joined in commemorative events for the first time in history last week, carrying both Circassian and Palestinian flags in a show of solidarity. "Today, we recognize that the tragedies our ancestors endured over a century ago have found a haunting echo in our new home, Syria. For the past 14 years, as Russia became the backbone of the brutal Assad regime, Syrians have suffered the same patterns of massacre, displacement and repression," Syrian Circassian activist Celine Kasem told The New Arab at a rally in Damascus. "With Syria freed from one of the most brutal dictatorships in modern history, we can finally gather, mourn, remember and reconnect - openly and without fear," she added.

The Moscow Times

Fleeing US deportations

Andrea Díaz Cardona

THE Rainbow Bridge, which crosses the Niagara River between the United States and Canada, has for decades been a symbol of peace connecting two countries. But for Araceli, a Salvadorian migrant, and her family, the bridge represented a seemingly insurmountable hurdle.

Along with her partner and two daughters, aged four and 14, the family first attempted to cross the bridge on 17 March. They had arrived with a suitcase and documents that they believed assured them they would soon be reunited with Araceli's siblings on Canadian soil and escape the threat of US President Donald Trump's mass deportations. But the plan failed. Not just once, but twice.

While a third attempt proved successful, immigration experts and official statistics point to a rise of asylum seekers at the border fleeing not just their homelands, but President Trump's immigration policies. Araceli and her family had been living illegally in the US for more than a decade - only her youngest daughter, who was born in New Jersey, has a US passport. In the US, Araceli built a life for herself and tried to initiate an asylum application process, but was unsuccessful.

"They charged me money and told me I would get a work permit. I paid that to a lawyer, but they never gave me an answer as to whether it was approved or not," she told BBC Mundo from a migrant shelter near the US-Canada border. Araceli has 12 siblings, and like her, several left El Salvador due to safety concerns in the rural community where they grew up. Two of them managed to start from scratch in Canada. After President Trump's inauguration, amid reports of mass raids and deportations, Araceli began to fear for her and her family's safety - especially after the administration began sending illegal migrants to a notorious Salvadorian prison. But because both Canada and the US have signed onto the "safe third country agreement," migrants, like Araceli, who have been denied refuge in one country are not supposed to be granted asylum in the other. The agreement states that asylum seekers must apply for asylum in the first country where they land.

There are exceptions. One of them is if the asylum seeker arriving from the US can prove they have a close relative in Canada who meets certain requirements, they can enter the country and begin their refugee claim again. So Araceli and her family said goodbye to the life they had built in the US to join her two brothers in Canada.

After crossing the Rainbow Bridge, they arrived at the border check point to make their asylum claim. She said she had all the original documents proving her relationship to her brother. "They took everything, even our backpack, and we were left with nothing."

They spent the entire night in a waiting room, occasionally answering questions, until an agent found a problem with the application. "They found a small detail: on my [birth] certificate, my father only had one last name, and on my brother's, he had two." And although the document had a clarification explaining that such inaccuracies are common in El Salvador, the agent denied them entry to Canada.

The family returned, resigned and anguished, having to face their greatest fear: being separated and deported. At the US checkpoint, they were put in a room with no windows. "The four of us spent 14 days in that cell," Araceli said, clarifying that they could go out to use the bathroom, but were barely allowed outside. Her brother reached out to an organisation that works with migrants, who helped them hire an attorney, Heather Neufeld.

While she was preparing their documentation, and without any explanation, the family was given an apparent second chance. "Two agents arrived at the cell and said: 'Congratulations, you're going to Canada'," Araceli recalled. But their hopes were short-lived. "We've been too generous in welcoming you back here," she recalled the agent saying after the family applied for asylum in Canada a second time. "The United States will see what it does with you," A spokesperson declined to comment on Araceli's case in particular, citing the country's privacy laws.

One thing is for sure - more

families like Araceli's are seeking exceptions to come to Canada. While the number of people attempting to cross into the United States from Canada has decreased significantly, the number of asylum seekers being denied entry into Canada from the US has increased. According to official figures from the United States government, 13,547 apprehensions were reported along the entire northern border as of March 2025 - a 70% decrease compared to the number recorded in the first quarter of 2024. Conversely, the number of migrants seeking asylum in Canada and being returned to the US has increased this year, according to data from Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

In April of this year, 359 people, including adults and children, were found ineligible for asylum in Canada, compared to 180 people in April 2024. Ms Neufeld believes the increase in the number of people turned away is due to "stricter" border policy at the Canadian side. In December 2024, Canada announced an investment of C\$1.3bn (\$950m; £705m) to "strengthen border security and strengthen the immigration system". The move was largely seen as an attempt to placate Trump, who has justified widespread tariffs against Canada by blaming the country for illegal immigration into the US. In February, amid a brewing trade war, the Canadian government announced it would further expand this programme.

The CBSA has also committed to increasing the number of removals from 16,000 to 20,000 (a 25% increase) for fiscal years 2025-2027. Still, a spokesperson for CBSA told BBC Mundo that they have not changed how they do things: "We have made no changes to policies or processes". Denied entry to Canada for the second time, Araceli and her family had to cross the border back into the US, which scared them. "In this day and age, it's not just about being sent to the United States. There's an immediate risk of detention and deportation," Ms Neufeld said.

The problem now was that this second trip to Canada was counted as a reconsideration of the case, the only one the family is entitled to under that country's regulations.

Ms Neufeld said that Canadian border agents made a mistake. "They didn't act like they had in the past with other clients, nor did they agree to an interview with the brother when they normally do," she stated. According to Ms Neufeld, the family didn't return to Canada of their own free will, but because the US authorities told them to, and so their second attempt should not have been considered an official reconsideration. To get a third opportunity to cross the border and make an asylum claim, Araceli would need a Canadian court to intervene.

When they returned to America, her partner was sent to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centre, while Araceli was made to wear an ankle monitor and she and her children went to a migrant shelter. "They came to tell us they were giving us three minutes to say goodbye because my husband was going to be taken to a detention center," Araceli recalls, her voice breaking. A week later, following complex negotiations between the lawyers, a Canadian federal court agreed to allow the family to return to the border to be re-evaluated. On 5 May, seven weeks after the first attempt, Araceli crossed the bridge once again. This time, she had her lawyer with her.

After 12 hours, a border agent opened the doors and said "welcome to Canada and good luck with your new life", she recalled. "I felt immense joy, it's indescribable," Araceli told Canadian public broadcaster CBC earlier in May, adding: "My daughters gave me so much strength." But it was a bitter-sweet celebration, as her partner remained in the US for two more weeks, caught up in ongoing legal proceedings. The family hired a lawyer to take on his case. "They managed to get him out on bail, and that's something not all detention centres allow. The whole family had to make a huge effort; they had to sell things to be able to pay for it," Ms Neufeld said. According to her, this family's case reflects the changes that have recently occurred on the northern border. "There are many more Aracelis, but we can't know where they are or what situation they are facing. Most people lack the capacity to fight to have their rights respected."

BBC

What will US Golden Dome missile defense mean for Russia?

James D. J. Brown

one layer, are effective, but Israel is much easier to protect than the United States. Israel is smaller than Hawaii and contends primarily with unsophisticated short-range rockets rather than advanced ballistic or hypersonic missiles. This begs the question of whether Golden Dome is feasible.

The first obstacle is technical. Even though technology has advanced enormously since the 1980s, the challenge of developing a space-based missile defense shield remains formidable. The timeline is also optimistic. Supporters point to the success of the Manhattan Project, but that was a time of war when the United States was much more united around a common purpose than it is today. Another obstacle is cost. At the end of April,

accepted by Moscow, has now been cast aside. In what represents an epochal change in US policy, Golden Dome is explicitly directed not only against "rogue adversaries," but also against "peer" and "near-peer" states, i.e., Russia and China. Moscow's experts will remain confident that even with its current capabilities, Russia's strategic arsenal could overcome Golden Dome thanks to counter-measures such as decoys and jamming devices. There is also the option of saturation, overcoming defenses by launching more missiles than can be intercepted.

However, high confidence is not sufficient in the world of deterrence. Since the survival of the nation is at stake, strategists must proceed from the worst-case scenario and assume that the Golden

That is to say that, aside from their missile tracking role, the satellites could have a commercial function, thus enabling cost sharing in the United States' own version of military-civil fusion. Reuters reported in April that SpaceX had proposed offering Golden Dome as a subscription service, meaning that the satellites would not actually belong to the US government. What does all this mean for Russia? Trump presents the Golden Dome as a mechanism for promoting stability and peace.

House Republicans put forward a reconciliation bill that assigns \$24.7 billion to the Golden Dome. That is just for starters. A National Research Council study from 2012 estimated that the total cost of a space-based, boost-phase missile defense system could be as much as \$831 billion (in 2025 dollars).

Proponents argue that several factors now mean that the project can be accomplished more cheaply. Launch costs have fallen dramatically during the last decade. SpaceX, with its 7,000 Starlink satellites, has also demonstrated its capacity to create a vast constellation of satellites quickly and at limited cost. Other cost-saving proposals include the suggestion that the detector satellites could have a day job. That is to say that, aside from their missile tracking role, the satellites could have a commercial function, thus enabling cost sharing in the United States' own version of military-civil fusion. Reuters reported in April that SpaceX had proposed offering Golden Dome as a subscription service, meaning that the satellites would not actually belong to the US government.

What does all this mean for Russia? Trump presents the Golden Dome as a mechanism for promoting stability and peace. He has long been skeptical of nuclear weapons, describing them as "big monsters" and saying: "It would be great if we could all denuclearize." His hope is that the Golden Dome will allow the United States to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. This is because if the United States has a reliable means of ensuring the failure of an attack on its homeland (deterrence by denial), it will need less capability to strike at adversaries (deterrence by punishment). Needless to say, this is not how strategists in Moscow view matters. In 2002, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Since then, Russian officials have consistently warned of the destabilizing effects of missile defense. In 2019, Russia's Foreign Ministry condemned the United States' then more modest missile defense plans as proof of "Washington's desire to ensure uncontested military domination in the world."

Their concern is that, secure behind its defenses, the United States could not be deterred from aggression. Washington's response was always that its missile defenses were only to counter the limited threats from North Korea and Iran, and in no way undermined Russia's large, sophisticated arsenal. This argument, which was never fully

Dome would be effective at least against a Russian second strike. Russia will therefore need to respond. That will entail accelerating existing efforts to modernize each leg of the nuclear triad by replacing Soviet-era delivery systems with newer Russian designs.

We can also expect renewed emphasis on exotic weapons that promise to evade all conceivable missile defense systems. In 2018, Putin famously unveiled what were subsequently dubbed his nuclear "super weapons." These include the Burevestnik, a ground-launched, nuclear-powered cruise missile with supposedly unlimited range, and Poseidon, a nuclear-powered torpedo that is intended for strikes on aircraft carrier groups or coastal infrastructure. Since Golden Dome focuses exclusively on aerial attacks, it is likely that Poseidon will become an even greater priority. Another probable response is a redoubling of Russian interest in nuclear anti-satellite weapons. The advantage of such weapons is that they could quickly eliminate a whole constellation of US military satellites. The downside is that they would cause tremendous collateral damage, eliminating numerous civilian satellites and causing untold disruption to life on Earth. However, if the choice were between losing a nuclear war and destroying much of the world's space infrastructure, the Kremlin would undoubtedly select the latter option.

Golden Dome will therefore press Russia into a new arms race, forcing it to devote yet more resources to its strategic forces at a time when the country can least afford it. The Russian defense budget is already overstretched by the war in Ukraine, and rebuilding Russia's conventional forces will take years. These vast outlays will require further diversion of funds from civilian sectors, with predictable consequences for the long-term health of the Russian economy. Russia's hurry to develop super weapons and nuclear weapons for space brings further dangers. Poseidon and Burevestnik have been much hyped by the Kremlin, yet they remain in the development stage and the risk of accidents is high. The nuclear-powered Burevestnik attracts particular concern and has been labeled "a flying Chernobyl." A failed test in 2019 is reported to have caused the death of five engineers. Ultimately, the Golden Dome may never achieve Trump's grandiose ambitions. However, even if it does not, it will have serious consequences for strategic stability and for Russia in particular.

Brigitte Macron's push has reverberated around world. Why was it met with a shrug in France?

Pauline Bock

THE French president's plane has just landed in Hanoi. Its door is open and Emmanuel Macron is standing looking at his wife, Brigitte, who is still inside. Two hands - hers - push his face. Macron seems to bring his arms up in defence, and steps back. Dumbstruck, the president turns and sees the cameras on the asphalt. He's being filmed. In a split second, his shock morphs into a smile. He waves, charmingly, at the journalists: he's back in control. As Macron and his wife walk down the plane's stairs, he offers her his arm. She doesn't take it.

The strange moment was caught by Associated Press cameras, and immediately went viral, being shared around the world. Questioned by the French press, which woke up to the images on Monday morning, the Elysée Palace originally claimed that the video was a deepfake, then admitted the scene was real but was simply a "moment of closeness" shared by the presidential couple. They were "decompressing one last time before the start of the visit, larking around", a source close to the president briefed the French press. "But that was enough to feed the conspiracy theorists."

Macron doubled down later during the day, explaining that he and Brigitte were "bickering, or rather joking", and that he had been "taken by surprise" by the cameras: "The video becomes a sort of geo-

planetary catastrophe. In the world we live in, we don't have a lot of time to lose. This is all a bit of nonsense." French TV commentators were left wondering why the Elysée would deny that the whole scene happened: "It becomes newsworthy because the Elysée lied about it," a BFMTV journalist noted. Yet the French media immediately accepted Macron's "squabble" explanation and moved on, the story no longer leading news websites and broadcasts.

French political journalists have long applied the "bedroom rule" to their coverage: what happens in the bedroom, or in romantic relationships more generally, is private and therefore not newsworthy. This has begun to change since the #MeToo movement, thanks to a younger generation of journalists keen to highlight that the private can be political, too, but the attitude remains prevalent in France - even more so if the person in question is the president.

There were political reasons, too, to deflect attention from the video - the president is being frequently targeted by online conspiracy theories, and pro-Russia news sources have been leading on the video. Macron said: "For three weeks, people have looked at videos of me and think that I have shared a bag of cocaine with Keir Starmer, that I have fought with the Turkish president, and, now, that I

am having a domestic dispute with my wife. None of that is true, yet these videos are real. Everyone should calm down." The Elysée Palace's denial in response to the "cocaine bag" story was funny and straight to the point: the palace's X account simply tweeted a photo of the "cocaine bag", which was really just a tissue, and commented: "That's a tissue. To blow your nose."

The incident also reignited speculation around the circumstances of Brigitte and Emmanuel's relationship. Some people on social media were quick to point out that he was 15 and Brigitte was his 39-year-old theatre teacher when they met. Macron has brushed it off several times over the years, speaking about the inevitability of their love, and a certain amount of PR was fed to the press back in 2017, when he was first elected. The media then spoke of their "20-year age difference" and of him being a "year 12 student" when they met. It is, in fact, a 25-year age gap, and he was in year 10, not 12. Watching the video, it was hard not to wonder what the response would have been if the roles were reversed: what if an older man were to be filmed pushing his younger wife in the face? Would that be met with a shrug that it's no big deal? The power and gender dynamics are different in each case - he is the president, after all - but all forms of

partner-on-partner violence deserve attention.

There is no way to know what transpired between them at that moment, but optics do matter, especially in the leader of a country. To imply that it is normal for a "squabble" to become physical, even if in this case there was an innocent explanation, is unhelpful at best.

That Macron doesn't see the potential problem in the video points to a narrow, obsolete understanding of couple dynamics and domestic violence. He has twice proclaimed gender equality to be the "great cause" of his presidential mandates before refusing to properly fund it; he has spoken in support of the French actor Gérard Depardieu, who has recently been found guilty of sexual assault and is soon to be on trial again for rape; and to this day, the former interior minister and current justice minister, Gérard Darmanin, who was accused of sexual assault (the case has now been dismissed), has remained in Macron's cabinet. It would have been easy enough to turn this moment into a public health message. He could have simply said that he's all right, thanks for your consideration, but that men who do experience violence should feel no shame in seeking help, using it as an opportunity to discuss domestic violence prevention. Instead, he mocked the "fools" who thought anything could be amiss.

The Guardian

How to master cybersecurity in digital age

Anoop Paudval

DIGITAL transformation, globally interconnected systems, contactless payments, mobile apps, and cloud-based services have enhanced customer experience and operational efficiency. However, these innovations have also widened the attack surface for cybercriminals.

Sophisticated cyberattacks are increasing in frequency. According to recent statistics, most industry verticals are being targeted by ransomware and phishing campaigns. As the cyber landscape across industries becomes increasingly digitised, cybersecurity has emerged as a pressing concern. Organisations are not only competing for consumer attention but also fighting a constant battle against cybercriminals. With high-value customer data, widespread digital infrastructure, and a fast-paced e-commerce environment, many become prime targets for attacks.

Most organisations receive, process, transmit, and store vast amounts of personally identifiable information (PII), from names and addresses to payment details and purchase history. Cybercriminals exploit this data for identity theft, fraud, or resale on the dark web. High-profile breaches have made headlines in recent years. In 2024, many organisations across the globe reported data breaches that exposed the personal information of millions of customers. Incidents

like these not only erode consumer trust but also carry legal and financial consequences under regulations such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) and newly emerging regulations.

Ransomware remains a significant threat. In such attacks, bad actors encrypt critical business systems and demand payment for restoring access, often during peak operational hours to maximise disruption and pressure. For instance, ransomware has evolved from a financial nuisance into a full-blown public health threat, especially for healthcare organisations. Hospitals, clinics, and medical research facilities are increasingly targeted by cybercriminals aiming to disrupt operations and extort payment. The stakes are uniquely high in healthcare, where lives may hang in the balance. Refusing to pay can also result in sensitive data being leaked publicly, further undermining patient confidence. Similar incidents have also been reported across the retail industry. 88% of consumers say their trust in a company's cybersecurity practices influences their buying decisions. As consumers increasingly adopt online services, cybercriminals are exploiting vulnerabilities in digital payment systems. Card-

not-present fraud, fake checkout pages, and account takeovers using stolen credentials are becoming commonplace. Merchants and payment processors with outdated fraud detection tools or weak authentication systems are particularly vulnerable. The consequences include financial loss, chargebacks, and eroded customer loyalty.

Most organisations rely heavily on third-party vendors for logistics, payment processing, and IT services. This interconnected ecosystem introduces new risks, as attackers may exploit the supply chain to access the organisation's systems. A compromised vendor or supplier can become a gateway for widespread data breaches or malware attacks. When UK retail giants fell victim to cyberattacks within weeks of each other, it was more than just another set of headlines. It was a coordinated demonstration of how easily traditional defences can be bypassed when humans become the primary target.

Not all threats originate externally. Employees with limited cybersecurity training may fall for phishing emails, use weak passwords, or mishandle sensitive data. The frequent employment of temporary or seasonal staff makes it difficult to maintain consistent cyber awareness. Example: Scattered Spider, a cybercrime

group, excels not through technical exploits but through social engineering. Their primary tactic involves targeting service desk personnel, whose natural helpfulness becomes their vulnerability. By crafting convincing pretexts, attackers persuade IT support to reset credentials and bypass authentication controls, giving them access to privileged systems. This proves that security perimeters collapse when humans are the entry point. As the saying goes, culture eats strategy for breakfast, and security is no exception. Resilience must start at the top and be enabled from the bottom. Cybersecurity must be a board-level conversation, not just a technical report. By fostering a blame-free culture where incidents are viewed as learning opportunities, organisations can align incident response with business continuity.

Key steps include: Build, test, and refine disaster recovery and response plans. Conduct business impact assessments. Simulate real-world scenarios (e.g., tabletop exercises, red-team drills). Invest in redundancy, segmentation, and cloud-based failover strategies. Set clear expectations and measure performance. Educate your workforce and let every breach become a blueprint for your resilience strategy. If resilience and trust are built properly, your reputation will work 24/7/365 - even in your absence.



‘Restoring investor confidence top priority’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan has reaffirmed that restoring the confidence of foreign investors is the government’s top priority.

Chairing a Prime Minister’s Committees on Repatriation of Investment and Protection of Investment to advance Pakistan’s pro-investment agenda, he emphasized the need for a secure and supportive business environment, said a news release

here on Saturday.

“Restoring the confidence of foreign investors is the government’s foremost priority,” Haroon said. “To attract sustainable investment, we must ensure that investors feel secure and supported in Pakistan.”

The meetings brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Ministry of Finance, Board of Investment (BOI), Lahore

Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Remit, and other senior officials.

During the meetings, detailed discussions were held on policy proposals for facilitating the repatriation of foreign investment in the manufacturing sector.

Members engaged in a comprehensive consultation regarding the safe return of investments and presented various legal and policy amendments to strengthen investor protection and boost investor confidence.

Haroon Akhtar Khan reiterated that increasing

investment is a top priority under the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He emphasized the importance of creating a business-friendly environment in alignment with the Prime Minister’s vision.

The outcomes of these committee meetings will be finalized and presented to the Prime Minister for further policy action.

The Ministry of Industries and Production remains committed to fostering a stable and attractive investment climate in the country.



LAHORE: Chairman Prime Minister Youth Program Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan visiting stalls during Food and Beverage Processing Packaging Technologies Exhibition at Expo Center.

Business-friendly environment core vision of PM: Rana

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister’s Youth Programme Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan has said that creating a business-friendly environment is the core vision of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

He made these remarks at the inaugural ceremony of the College of Tourism and Hotel Management (COTHM) exhibition at the Expo Centre on Saturday.

Speaking to a diverse audience, Rana Mashhood emphasized that Pakistan is making remarkable strides in development and offering a positive platform for industries across all sectors. “This is more than an exhibition—it is a glimpse into the future we envision for Pakistan’s industrial growth,” he said.

He lauded COTHM for successfully presenting an international-standard platform, introducing global food processing systems to Pakistan. “This step is vital for our agriculture-based economy to align its food production and processing capabilities with global benchmarks,” he added.

Highlighting the scale of the event, Rana Mashhood noted that representatives from over 200 countries are participating, with more than 30 countries directly engaged. “The exhibition introduces a new concept in food processing, one that is crucial for showcasing Pakistan’s agri-products to the world,” he stated.

He congratulated the organizers and warmly welcomed the participating

companies and international delegates. “COTHM has shown how partnerships can elevate our industry and promote Pakistan’s true talent, innovation, and technological potential,” he said.

Rana Mashhood also referenced the successful achievement of the national objective Bunyan-um-Marsoos, calling it a milestone reached with dignity. “Now we set our sights on global economic leadership—in IT, technology, arts and culture, agriculture, and especially food processing,” he declared.

He concluded by expressing confidence in Pakistan’s direction. “Today, we are moving firmly on the right path. With Allah’s grace, it is a path destined for success.”

Court Notice

IN the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 347/1.Institution. 2021. Date of hearing .30/6/2025 . Case Title: Dawar VS Mian Hassan Shah.Notice to heirs no.1/3. Mian Shahinsha son.1/5. Tazahira .1/6.Roshan daughters of Mian Hassan Shah resident of Pacha Kalay tehsel Gadezai district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 30/6/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

IN the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II, Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 10/12-2.Institution. 5/4/2023. Date of hearing .30/6/2025 . Case Title: Akhtar Muner VS Mian Asar.Notice to no.12.Zahir Husain.13 Javed Iqbal sons of Faqir resident of Kalabat Pacha Kalay tehsel Gadezai district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 30/6/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

IN the Court of Civil Judge V/Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar.Suit No 156/1. Institution 11/9/ 2024. Date of hearing. 24/6/2025. Case Title: Gul Muhammad etc VS Afsarullah etc .Notice to no.1. Afsarullah.2. Halemullah.3.Ajaz. 8.Riaz s/o Ghulam Salem .13. Muhammad Sahab .14. Muhammad Siraj sons of Abdul Hamad.18.Tusif s/o Muhammad Sahir.26.Taj Alam .27.Muhammad Alam.28.Said Alam sons of Abdul Ghani.39.Said Ghani s/o Gul Sharif (missing since long).45.Rozi Muhammad alias Razi Muhammad sons of Wali Muhammad resident of Bagra tehsel Daggar district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 24/6/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

IN the Court of Civil Judge I/ Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar. S u i t No21/12.Institution 2024. Date of hearing. 30/6/2025.Title: Said Muhammad VS Amer Muhammad Shah. Notice to No.2/1/2. Hanifur Rehman. 2/1/3. Anwar Rehman 2/2/3. Sajidur Rehman resident of Kulyari tehsel Gagra district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 30/6/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Fahd Haroon congratulates Arshad Nadeem on winning Gold



F.P. report

KARACHI: With a powerful 86.40m throw, Arshad Nadeem has once again written his name in history - winning GOLD at the Asian Athletics Championships and reaffirming his place as not only Asia’s best, but truly one of the world’s greatest athletes.

Fahd Haroon, Minister of State and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Digital Media, shared his heartfelt congratulations, “This is more than a medal.

Arshad’s strength, resilience and quiet determination carry the hopes of a nation. His journey reflects the spirit of Pakistan - full of heart, full of fight. Today, he made 240 million people proud once again.”

From Olympic glory to Asian dominance, Arshad’s rise continues to inspire generations; proving what is possible when talent meets relentless effort. His achievements elevate Pakistan’s presence in global athletics and remind us all of the stories that unite and uplift us.

SNGPL severs five meters

MULTAN (APP): The SNGPL UFG Control Task Force intensified its operation and disconnected five more gas meters in various areas of the city.

According to the details, two meters, which were installed upside down, were removed. One meter, which was taken off by the consumer, was recovered. One meter which was installed away from the service area was cut off. One meter which had a hole was disconnected. The door-to-door checking of 55 consumers was carried out.

The measures were part of the company’s commitment to combating gas theft and ensuring high-quality, uninterrupted service for all consumers.

PFG hold meeting with Adeel Shuja Butt

ISLAMABAD (PPI): In a bid to deepen economic cooperation, the Pakistan-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Friendship Group (PFG) engaged in a significant meeting Saturday, with Adeel Shuja Butt, President of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Trade House. The session, led by MNA Syed Raza Ali Gillani, focused on exploring enhanced trade, investment, and institutional collaboration between the two nations.

During the meeting, discussions zeroed in on expanding cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and infor-

mation technology. Both parties emphasized the necessity of diversifying economic exchanges beyond traditional sectors and enhancing market access. The dialogue also addressed the need for formal banking channels to facilitate bilateral transactions and investments.

Participants highlighted the strategic importance of the North-South Corridor as a key trade and connectivity route.

In the education sector, there was a consensus on initiating collaboration with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to explore scholarship pro-

grams and academic exchanges. The upcoming Trade Expo, scheduled for June 10-12, was acknowledged as a crucial forum for showcasing business potential and fostering partnerships.

The meeting concluded with a shared vision for an annual review mechanism between the PFG and the Trade House to monitor progress and strategize future initiatives.

Both sides expressed their commitment to advancing bilateral cooperation in alignment with the shared vision of the leaderships of Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

Stocks mixed after Trump accuses China of violating tariff deal

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Global stocks finished mixed on Friday after President Donald Trump put US-China trade tensions back on the boil by claiming Beijing had “totally violated” an agreement with Washington.

His social media post came hours after US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said trade talks with China aimed at putting to bed sky-high mutual tariffs – currently suspended – were “a bit stalled.”

The development risks renewed trade tensions between the world’s two biggest economies.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed higher, while the S&P 500 index was flat, and the tech-focused Nasdaq Composite fell 0.3%.

“If it weren’t for the trade war, the market would be feeling pretty good,” said Tom Cahill of Ventura Wealth Management.

“Inflation is definitely moving in the right direction,” he added, referencing the Federal Reserve’s

favored inflation gauge, which cooled more than expected last month, according to fresh data published Friday.

In Europe, London and Germany’s major indices ended higher, while France’s CAC40 closed lower, following declines in Asian markets earlier in the day.

“If Trump does slap tariffs back on Chinese imports to the US... we may see demand for US assets, and the dollar, severely impaired by a chaotic and undiplomatic approach to trade policy,” said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB. Despite rumbling concerns about the US-China economic relationship, the markets were little changed by Trump’s criticism on social media, with investors appearing to be largely inured to the US president’s now-familiar cycle of making dramatic trade threats and then retreating.

Investors, traders and analysts instead focused on the Commerce Department’s personal consumption expenditures (PCE)

price index data, which rose 2.1% in the 12 months to April – cooling slightly more than expected.

Despite the good news for the Fed, which is looking to bring inflation down to its long-term target of 2%, analysts warned that the fuller inflationary effects of Trump’s tariffs were yet to come, and could cause the Fed to maintain its watch-and-wait stance.

“The true weight of these policies is likely to emerge more fully in the months ahead,” said FOREX.com market analyst Fawad Razaqzada.

Investors were also assessing the impact of a US court ruling that invalidated most of Trump’s sweeping tariffs – though an appeals court suspended that order and the White House vowed that its tariffs goals would be pursued one way or another.

The result leaves Trump’s tariff plans in something of “a legal limbo” said Stephen Innes, of SPI Asset Management, adding that this sort of legal

impasse was “the kind that keeps traders awake at night.” In the eurozone, interest rates were in focus after official data showed inflation hovering around the European Central Bank’s two-percent target.

Consumer prices in top EU economy Germany showed a 2.1 percent rise in May – the same as the previous month – while they fell to 1.9 percent in Spain, and to 1.7 percent in Italy.

The ECB looks set to lower interest rates again on Thursday. The dollar gained against major currencies, while oil prices were down ahead of a Saturday meeting of eight key OPEC+ members to decide production quotas for July, with some analysts predicting that the cartel could make a larger-than-expected supply hike.

Army lauded for remarkable success

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Ikram-ul-Haq and Vice President Omer Khalid warmly welcomed General Officer Commanding (GOC), 15 Division Sialkot, Major General Imran Khan Babar at the SCCI.

During the visit, the office-bearers and Executive Committee Members of the SCCI commended Major General Imran Khan Babar and the Pakistan Army on the remarkable success of operation Bunyan-Al-Marsoos which was executed with strategic precision and professionalism.

Major Gen. Imran Khan Babar delivered a compelling presentation highlighting the objectives, execution, and successful outcomes of the operation against Indian aggression.

PBF for increased support

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Chairperson (Women Wing) Ayesha Farooqui said on Saturday that handicrafts of South Punjab and Balochistan have immense potential to create employment opportunities, especially for rural women, therefore the government should enhance support to handicraft sector enabling the artisans access local and international markets.

Talking to media men here, Farooqui mentioned that traditional crafts are widely produced across both the provinces and are already popular nationwide. With increased gov-

ernment support, these crafts could become a significant source of income for local women.

She urged the government to actively promote handicrafts from underserved rural and semi-urban areas by organizing exhibitions, trade fairs, and craft bazaars both domestically and abroad. These efforts, she said, would help open up markets and showcase the country’s cultural diversity.

Farooqui also stressed the need for skill development and capacity building of the artisans, besides implementing a value addition strategy to improve handicrafts quality.

She suggested that provincial governments establish permanent handicraft stalls to boost revenue and generate employment. This would also help connect people from different regions with Pakistan’s rich cultural heritage.

“The government should provide domestic skills assessment opportunities and support local communities involved in the handicraft and trade sectors,” she added.

Ayesha Farooqui noted that while Pakistan boasts a rich history, culture, and exceptional craftsmanship, it struggles to access international markets.

Digital shift keeps Saudi credit card borrowing above \$8 billion

RIYADH (Arab News): Credit card loans from Saudi banks posted their second-highest figure on record in the first quarter of 2025, after an annual rise of 12.53 percent.

According to the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, this borrowing of SR30.66 billion (\$8.18 billion) is just 2 percent below the all-time peak recorded at the end of 2024.

SAMA figures also revealed that consumer loans reached SR479.78 billion in what was a 6.41 percent rise during the same period.

The vast majority – over 90 percent – of consumer lending falls into a broad “other” category, which includes debt consolidation, personal family expenses, or any borrowing not classified under the specific purposes. This indicates that many Saudis take personal loans for a range of needs, from home renovations to weddings, but each of those specific uses is a relatively small slice of the overall figures.

Multiple factors are supporting the rapid growth of the credit card segment. A central driver is the national push toward a cashless society under Vision 2030, which has seen SAMA

implementing policies to promote electronic payments and reduce dependence on cash.

This includes expanding point-of-sale infrastructure, mandating that businesses accept electronic payments, and fostering fintech innovation. As a result, 79 percent of all retail transactions in 2024 were electronic, card or digital payments, up from 70 percent the year before, according to an April release by SAMA.

In parallel, banking penetration has expanded, with nearly all bank cards in the Kingdom now enabled for contactless payments. By 2023, 98 percent of in-person card transactions were contactless – up from just 4 percent in 2017—according to Visa executive Andrew Torre, speaking to Arab News in October.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift to tapping cards and phones, ingraining cashless habits. With nearly 50 million payment cards in circulation and a decline in ATM usage, the ecosystem is primed for card spending over cash. Another factor is consumer behavior and economic policy. Strong consumer spending in Saudi Arabia — supported by economic growth and initiatives

to boost household income — has encouraged more use of credit for purchases.

Rather than delaying purchases, many consumers are comfortable using credit cards to buy now and pay later, especially with the availability of installment plans.

Additionally, banks and payment networks are actively marketing credit cards with attractive promotions. Cashback deals, reward points, airline miles, and no-fee installment offers are abundant, which incentivizes consumers to use credit cards for both large and small purchases.

The entry of Shariah-compliant credit cards has also played a role. By addressing religious sensitivities, Islamic banks have made credit cards acceptable to a wider customer base that previously avoided interest-based products.

Furthermore, the growth of e-commerce and digital services in Saudi Arabia has naturally increased credit card adoption. Online retailers, food delivery apps, ride-hailing, and travel platforms often work best with card payments, so as these services proliferate, so does card usage.



In brief

Babar harassed for refusing to record video

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan captain Babar Azam was "harassed" for refusing to record a video. According to details, the citizens had attempted to record a video of Pakistan's premier batter. The incident transpired on Friday in Punjab's provincial capital, Lahore. Earlier, two weeks back, Babar Azam said that he could only make efforts to regain his form, after his impressive knock of 94 went in vain during their last match against Karachi Kings. Speaking at a press conference in Rawalpindi, Azam stated: "When you bowl first, you assess the pitch better. It is an art to understand the behaviour of the pitch as well." He also praised the return of foreign players to PSL X, following a brief pause caused by heightened tensions between Pakistan and India.

Zverev advances to fourth round

PARIS (AFP): German third seed Alexander Zverev booked his ticket to the fourth round of the French Open on Saturday with a three-set win over Italian Flavio Cobolli. The three-time Grand Slam runner-up won through 6-2, 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 in two hours 30 minutes, and next plays 35th-ranked Dutch player Tallon Griekspoor. "It's a tournament I look forward to the most during the year," said Zverev after his match on Court Philippe Chatrier. "Especially this court is so special to me. I've had some of the best and worst memories of my life on this court. 'The crowd always supports me. The love story continues.' Zverev has reached at least the semi-finals on each of his last four appearances at Roland Garros. "He (Cobolli) probably should have won the second set, but I kept fighting and then I had a bit of a mental advantage and it went my way." Griekspoor battled past American Ethan Quinn 4-6, 6-1, 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 6-4 in three hours 16 minutes.

Heitinga leaves Liverpool

LONDON (Agencies): John Heitinga has left his role as Liverpool's assistant boss to return to Dutch club Ajax as their head coach. The former Netherlands defender made more than 200 appearances for Ajax before having spells as their reserve team boss and interim head coach. The 41-year-old has rejoined the club on a two-year contract and will be assisted by another Ajax academy product, Marcel Keizer. Heitinga succeeds Francesco Farioli, who left Ajax last week after his sole year in charge ended with an end-of-season collapse. With seven games left Farioli's team were nine points clear at the top of the Eredivisie, but ended up finishing a point behind champions PSV Eindhoven. That meant a third straight season without a trophy for Ajax, who have won the Dutch title a record 36 times. "John is a good coach with enormous drive," said their technical director Alex Kroes. "He is ambitious and has further developed himself over the past few years in the Premier League and Champions League. "John knows the club well and we are convinced that he, together with Marcel, will help improve our players and build on the progress made since last summer." Ajax won 14 of Heitinga's 22 games in charge at the end of the 2022-23 season to finish third in the Eredivisie. Heitinga then spent 2023-24 as West Ham's first-team coach under David Moyes before joining Arne Slot at Liverpool last summer.

Arshad Nadeem clinches javelin gold at Asian Athletics Championship



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's star athlete Arshad Nadeem clinched the gold medal at men's javelin final at the Asian Athletics Championship in Gumi, South Korea, establishing himself as the new Asian champion.

India's Sachin Yadav secured the silver medal with a personal best of 85.16m, while Japan's Yuta Sakiyama took home the bronze with an 83.75m effort. Sri Lanka's Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage, who had led the early stages of the competition, nar-

rowly missed out on the podium, finishing fourth with 83.27m.

The 27-year-old from Mian Channu had a slow start in the final, registering 75.64m and 76.80m in his first two attempts. However, he climbed the leaderboard with an 85.57m throw in his third attempt, followed by two more solid efforts of 83.99m and 83.44m.

It was in the final round that Nadeem showcased his trademark composure and strength, launching the javelin to 86.40m—just 32 centimetres

shy of the championship record of 86.72m.

"I was under pressure early on, but I focused on staying calm and trusted my training," Arshad told reporters after the event. "Winning gold for Pakistan at this level means everything to me."

Steady start, spectacular finish The final began with a rather underwhelming first throw of 75.64m for Arshad, which placed him sixth among the 12 finalists after the opening round. Japan's representative threw 76.45m, Sri Lanka's Ramesh Pathirega recorded 81.91m, while India's Yashvir Singh fouled his attempt.

Arshad improved in his second throw, registering 76.80m. The turning point came in the third round, where he launched the javelin to a distance of 85.57m — the best of the event at that point — instantly placing him in the lead.

Pakistan's second athlete, Yasir Sultan, also competed in the final but could not break into the top five. His series included 70.53m, 75.39m, 74.50m, and 72.92m in successive rounds.

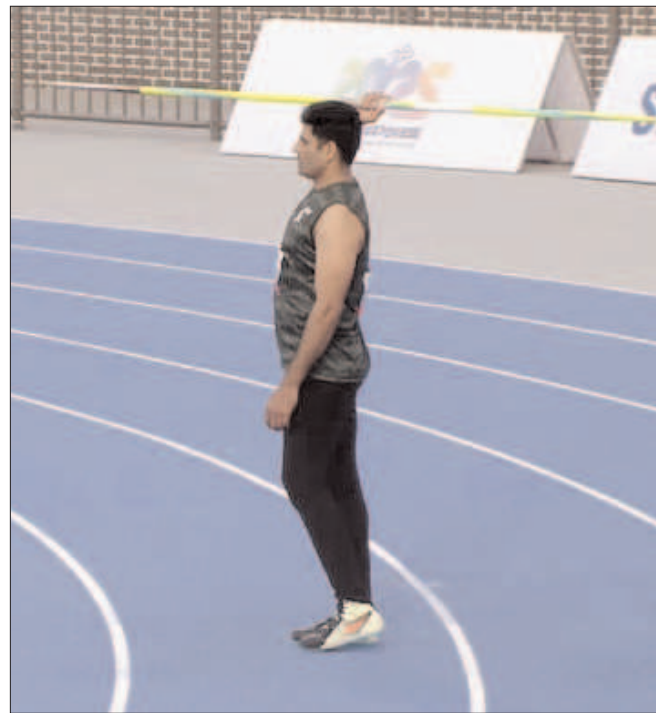
Political figures hail Arshad Nadeem's success

President Asif Ali Zardari praised Arshad's consistent brilliance, saying: "Arshad Nadeem once again brought glory to Pakistan in the sport of javelin throw. His performance in the final and throughout the championship was exemplary." He added that the entire nation was proud of the athlete's achievement and offered prayers for his future success.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif also extended heartfelt congratulations, saying: "Alhamdulillah! A breeze of happiness and good news has blown from every field for Pakistan. With the gold medal, Arshad Nadeem has not only won hearts but also made history."

"The prayers and hopes of the nation have risen with Arshad Nadeem's spear," she added, expressing best wishes for his continued success. She also called Arshad and fellow athlete Yasir Sultan "beacons of light for our youth."

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi joined in the praise, saying: "Well done Arshad Nadeem, well done. We are proud of you." He applauded not only the athlete but also his family and coach, saying the



win was a result of dedication and relentless hard work. "It is a great honour to raise the national flag by defeating athletes from other countries, including India."

Arshad's series of throws during the final — 75.64m, 76.80m, 85.57m, 83.99m, 83.44m, and the final 86.40m — showcased both grit and peak form, reminiscent of his record-setting 92.97m throw at the Paris Olympics last year.

Pak volleyball team qualifies for CAVA Nation's League semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan volleyball team has qualified for the semi-finals of the CAVA Nation's League 2025 based on their overall performance in the group stage at Fergana, Uzbekistan.

On Saturday, Pakistan faced Kazakhstan in a closely contested match during the league stage of the tournament. Despite a strong performance, Pakistan lost the match by 3-1, with highly competitive set scores of 31-29, 27-25, 19-25, 25-20, said a

press release.

The match remained intense throughout, with Pakistan battling valiantly and showing great skill and resilience. Although they fell short in securing a win today, Pakistan has officially qualified for the semi-finals of the League.

Pakistan fought hard in extended first and second sets, narrowly losing both by a few points. The team showed excellent recovery in the third set, winning 25-19.

Players demonstrated strong coordination and skill, keeping the match competi-

tive till the final point.

Despite the result, Pakistan has officially secured the top position in their pool and advanced to the crossover matches (semi-final stage) of the tournament. This is a testament to the team's outstanding overall performance throughout the league stage.

Pakistan fought hard in extended first and second sets, narrowly losing both by a few points. The team showed excellent recovery in the third set, winning 25-19.

Players demonstrated strong coordination and skill, keeping the match competitive till

the final point.

After a rest day on June 1, Pakistan will compete in the crossover matches against the top teams from the other pool including India on June 2 and Iran on June 3.

The Pakistan Volleyball Federation has congratulated the national team for topping their group and qualifying for the crossover stage. The Federation appreciated the players' hard work, the coaching staff's efforts, and the continuous support from Pakistani volleyball fans.

Pakistan bags 8 gold medals at Asian Masters Weightlifting Championship

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan delivered a standout performance at the Asian Masters Weightlifting Championship 2025, securing a total of 11 medals, including 8 gold, one silver, and two bronze.

The final day of the championship, held in Doha, Qatar, added further glory to Pakistan's medal tally, as two more golds were claimed.

Furqan Anwar emerged victorious in the 89kg category (age group 30+), lifting a combined total of 315kg — 143kg in snatch and 172kg in clean and jerk — to clinch the gold medal.

Earlier in the day, Umar Rasool Lone triumphed in the 89kg category (age group 35+), lifting a total of 276kg, with 121kg in snatch and 155kg in clean and jerk, also earning a gold medal for Pakistan.

The event saw a proud moment for the Rathore family as well. Usman Amjad Rathore won a bronze medal in the 109kg (age group 35+) category, lifting 282kg in total.

Interestingly, his father, Maqsood Amjad Rathore, had already secured a gold medal for Pakistan earlier in the championship, making it a memorable tournament for the family.

The full medal breakdown highlights Pakistan's broad success across categories:

Medal tally for Pakistan

Gold Medals (8):

Furqan Anwar
Umar Rasool Lone
Rashid Khan
Kashif Rehman
Muhammad Iqbal
Nadia Maqsood
Sibel Sohail
Maqsood Amjad Rathore

Silver Medal (1):

Neelam Riaz

Bronze Medals (2):

Usman Amjad Rathore
Abdul Malik

Officials from the Pakistan Weightlifting Federation praised the athletes' exceptional dedication and discipline, calling the performance a "historic milestone" for the sport in Pakistan.

Qamar terms Hanif, Zaheer, Miandad as Pakistan's greatest Batsmen

KARACHI (APP): Renowned senior sports journalist, commentator, and former first-class cricketer Qamar Ahmed has termed Hanif Muhammad, Zaheer Abbas, and Javed Miandad as Pakistan's all-time greatest batsmen.

Speaking at a literary session organized by the Library and Literary Committee of the Karachi Gymkhana, Qamar Ahmed reflected on his remarkable seven-decade-long journey in cricket journalism. The event featured a candid interview by Dr Saad Shafqat, author of Javed Miandad's autobiography, in front of a packed hall of cricket enthusiasts and literary figures.

Qamar Ahmed, who has contributed to international media organizations including the BBC and New Zealand TV, expressed his disinterest in the modern Twenty-20 format of the game, stating that he has never watched a T-20 match due to his lack of appreciation for the format.

Recalling his illustrious career, Ahmed shared anecdotes from his interactions with cricket legends such as Sir Don Bradman, Sir Gary Sobers, and Hanif Muhammad — with whom he had the honor of both watching and playing cricket. He also highlighted his close friendship with Indian cricket icon Sunil Gavaskar, and told the audience that he had played a pivotal role in helping him to become part of media team at the Daily Telegraph.

Ahmed, who spent over 50 years in London, also spoke about his international reporting experiences, including a historic interview with South African leader Nelson Mandela during the Apartheid era.

"It was a great honor to meet Mandela after his release from 27 years of imprisonment and interview him as a BBC correspondent," he said.

The veteran journalist also discussed his autobiography, "For More Than a Game", which details his life journey from his birth in Bihar, India, to his migration to Pakistan, education in Hyderabad, and eventual relocation to London. The book also recounts his rich experi-

ences with cricketing legends and historical events he covered, including the 1000th and 2000th Test matches. During the interactive session, Qamar Ahmed named Abdul Hafeez Kardar and Mushtaq Mohammad as the best captains in Pakistan's cricketing history. In response to a question about the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), he criticized the selection policies, alleging favoritism based on regional affiliations.

"I was a good first-class cricketer but was never considered for the national team because I was from Hyderabad. PCB always preferred players from Karachi and Lahore," he lamented. The event concluded with enthusiastic applause as Dr Saad Shafqat moderated a thought-provoking discussion that paid tribute to one of Pakistan's most distinguished cricketing voices.

The event was hosted by Jawaid Bandukda head of Karachi Gymkhana Literary & Library Committee & President Jan Mohammad Dadabhoi.

Piastri outpaces Norris to grab Spanish GP pole



BARCELONA (AFP): Oscar Piastri outpaced title rival and McLaren teammate Lando Norris in the final minute of a gripping qualifying session on Saturday to clinch pole position for the Spanish Grand Prix.

The championship leader clocked a near flawless final lap of one minute and 11.546 seconds to beat Norris by 0.209 seconds as McLaren claimed a dominant one-two having also topped all three practice sessions.

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen was third for Red Bull ahead of Mercedes' George Russell, seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari and Kimi Antonelli in the second Mercedes.

Charles Leclerc was seventh in the second Ferrari ahead of Alpine's Pierre Gasly, Racing Bulls' impressive rookie Isack Hadjar and local hero two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin.

It was Piastri's fourth pole of the season and career as he seeks to extend

his three-point lead ahead of Norris in the drivers' championship.

"Nice work, very nicely done, everyone," said the cool 24-year-old Australian on team radio. "That's quite some turnaround from last year. Well done everyone. Let's have some fun tomorrow!"

He added: "I'm very glad to be on pole here and now I just need a good start. It's a long run to the first corner!"

Norris said: "Oscar has driven really well and he deserved it. But it is a great result for the team."

Piastri's two-second advantage is the biggest this season between pole and second place.

After an early fast lap from Aston Martin's Lance Stroll in Q1, the big guns arrived in torrid heat with a track temperature of 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), and the air at 29, punishing conditions for tyres on a high-degradation track.

The session was briefly stalled when Alpine's Franco Colapinto stopped

in the pitlane and, after a delay, forced others to undertake him leading to a frantic final two minutes.

Yuki Tsunoda in the second Red Bull was eliminated in 20th and last place along with Colapinto, Williams' Carlos Sainz — his worst qualifying result at his home event — in 18th, Esteban Ocon of Haas and Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg.

For Tsunoda, it was a major setback as he sought to solve Red Bull's dilemma in searching for a partner to push Verstappen.

At the front, Piastri topped Verstappen and Norris.

In Q2, McLaren's duo led the first runs ahead of Verstappen, Russell and a revived Hamilton before choosing not to take a second go as Hadjar shone, taking sixth and splitting the Ferraris. Out went Alex Albon of Williams, Sauber's Gabriel Bortoletto, Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson, Stroll and Oliver Bearman in his Haas.

The top 10 shootout began with Piastri lapping in 1:11.836 before Norris overhauled him by 0.017sec for provisional pole on the opening charge.

Russell was third ahead of Leclerc, Verstappen and Hamilton before a late Alonso lap lifted him to fifth amid roaring appreciation.

Cloud cover affected conditions for the second runs as both McLaren men fought for pole with the Australian prevailing.

It was McLaren's first front row lockout in Spain since 1998.

PARIS: Alexander Zverev in action against Flavio Cobolli of Italy during the Men's Singles third Round match on Day Seven of the 2025 French Open.

‘I want to play red-ball cricket heart and soul’: Haris Rauf

LAHORE (APP): Pace bowler Haris Rauf has said that he wanted to play red-ball heart and soul but national duty did not allow him to spare time for domestic cricket to prepare for the red-ball test.

Speaking at the post-match press conference after second T20Is at the Gaddafi stadium media center late Friday night, he said I never imagined in my wildest dreams that I would not play red-ball cricket but preparation was a must.

The controversy around Haris Rauf not playing red-ball cricket for the country started in November 2023 when Haris Rauf opted out of the Australia-bound test squad citing lack of readiness for the challenge of test cricket. Since then, questions have been asked about Haris Rauf's willingness to play red-ball cricket.

To a question, a visibly disturbed Haris Rauf said there has been lot of talk about him playing red-ball cricket, but nobody has bothered to see how much time I get for the preparation to play red-ball cricket. "Should I quite T20I and ODI cricket duty?" Haris added.

"A fast bowler's body must get used to bowling long spells of fast bowling

before playing red-ball cricket but I hardly get time from international duty for white-ball cricket," adding that it was too taxing to play red-ball without your body tuned up for the job.

"I did play two four-day matches and bowled long spell of fast bowling when Pakistan test squad played against South Africa in December-January 2024-25 but that was not enough to be ready to face the rigors of red-ball cricket," Haris Rauf defended.

He said nobody would prefer domestic cricket if he is called for nation duty in white-ball cricket and the fact deprives him of vital time for practice.

On Sahibzada Farhan's come-back in the team, Haris praised the top-order batter's consistency, adding that Sahibzada Farhan's performance has been remarkable in the domestic circuit as well as PSL X. He said it is heartening for a batter to win Player of the Match on his return to international duty.

Haris Rauf said that all international sides adopt rotation policy to give proper rest to their main cricketers so that they remain fit and fresh, expressing the hope the PCB will adopt the policy in future.

Haris Rauf said the team performance is affected by the change of management, adding that the experience of working under newly-inducted captain Salman Ali Agha has been good as he takes the team along. He expressed the hope that the team will do good under the new management.

On missing his bowling partner Shaheen Shah Afridi and batting duo of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan, Haris Rauf parried away the question. He said he had good understanding with Shaheen and Nasseem but he was equally good with Hasan Ali with whom he had played lots of cricket in early part of his career.

Haris Rauf dispelled the impression that bowlers were not ready to the call of modern-day cricket, adding that the bowlers are well aware of the requirements of the changing cricket. He said bowlers are always under the knife considering the fact the batting-friendly pitches and smaller boundaries in modern-day cricket, adding bowlers always make effort to keep the score under 200 which is a par score in today's cricket. He said if the bowlers can restrict a team to 170 or 180 runs, it is a victory for the team.



In brief

Rawat police arrested thief

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested thief involved in a house robbery in the jurisdiction of Rawat police station here on Saturday. According to police spokesman, the theft took place while the owner was away from house. The thief reportedly fled after stealing \$811 and Rs. 300,000 from the house. Acting on the complaint, Rawat Police launched an immediate investigation and used all available resources to track down the accused. Within a short time, police successfully arrested the suspect and recovered the stolen amount from his possession. SP Saddar Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar, commended police team and said that suspect will be presented in court with strong evidence to ensure justice is served. A case was registered promptly and further legal proceedings are underway, he added.

Police arrest three bike lifters

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Islamabad Capital Territory Police, under the directions of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq, carried out a successful crackdown against a gang involved in multiple motorcycle thefts. According to the spokesperson of Islamabad Police, the Koral Police Station has arrested three members of a notorious and organized group wanted in several motorcycle theft cases. The arrested suspects have been identified as Hamid, Bilawal Rasheed, and Nadeem Ali. During the operation, six stolen motorcycles were recovered from the possession of the accused. DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq stated that operations against such criminal elements will continue. He affirmed that accomplices and facilitators of the arrested suspects will also be apprehended. The police remain committed to protecting citizens from losing their valuable assets, he added.

Over 1,200 road accidents reported

RAWALPINDI (APP): A total of 1,226 road traffic accidents were reported to Rescue 1122 in Rawalpindi district during the month of May, according to Muhammad Usman Gujjar, Media Coordinator for Rescue Rawalpindi. These accidents affected 1,388 people in total. Furthermore, Rescue 1122 responded to every emergency call promptly and provided immediate assistance to all victims, maintaining their average response time. Sadly, 14 people lost their lives in these accidents. Another 608 suffered serious injuries, while 766 sustained minor injuries. Most of the accidents involved cars and motorcycles. Among the 1,388 victims, 1,187 were men and 201 were women. A large number of the victims were between the ages of 11 and 40. The common causes of the accidents included speeding, driver carelessness, wrong turns, tire bursts, and other traffic violations. Despite the high number, the Rescue Service reported a slight decrease in overall accidents compared to previous months. Rescue 1122 spokesman urged the public to follow traffic rules strictly to prevent further loss of life and injuries. Meanwhile, 173 fire incidents were reported in Rawalpindi district. Rescue teams reached these incidents on time and carried out rescue operations. A total of 37 people were injured in these fire incidents. Rescue firefighters controlled these fire incidents in a timely manner with professional skills.

Naqvi directs to intensify crackdown on illegal foreigners

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday chaired the third high-level meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the "Harden the State" Committee to review internal security, law enforcement coordination, and anti-crime measures across Pakistan.

During the meeting, a major decision was made to intensify operations against illegally residing foreign nationals. The Interior Minister directed that the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) will provide real-time data verification facilities at all exit points to ensure effective tracking and documentation.

He stressed the need for full implementation of the "One Document Regime", urging all national institutions to work collaboratively. "To eliminate the illegal spectrum from the country, federal and provincial institutions must work hand-in-hand," he emphasized.

Mohsin Naqvi strongly

condemned the growing issue of organized beggar mafias, calling them a source of national embarrassment. He stated that begging should be declared a non-bailable offense and action must be taken against those involved. On other issues, the Interior Minister assured full support to the Ministry of Energy and provincial governments in preventing electricity theft, noting that over 250 intelligence-based operations are being conducted daily. According to a briefing, collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Interior and provincial governments have led to recoveries worth Rs 142 billion.

The meeting also reviewed the progress on anti-encroachment operations, establishment of the Pakistan Port Authority, updates on Gwadar Safe City Project and the Protection Wall, development of Digital Enforcement Stations along the Indus River, implementation of an Intelligent Transportation System for improved monitoring of

motorways and highways and steps towards digitalization of petrol pumps to curb illegal and smuggled fuel.

Under the new legislation, customs officials and relevant deputy commissioners will have authority to seal fuel stations and seize vehicles involved in smuggling, officials informed. Prominent attendees included: Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Punjab Law Minister Sohaib Ahmed Bharrh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information

Advisor Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Home Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, senior officials such as the Federal Secretary for Interior, Inspectors General (IGs) of Police from all provinces, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, Home Secretaries, Director General Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), National Coordinator NACTA, Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Coordinator of the National Action Plan, and senior security officials.

Secretary emphasizes discipline among pilgrims during hajj

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Secretary, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Dr. Syed Ata ur Rehman advised pilgrims to maintain Pakistan's reputation during Hajj by adhering to Saudi laws, which are in place to ensure a smooth and successful pilgrimage.

During a recent conversation with Radio Pakistan, Secretary Religious Affairs asked Pakistani pilgrims to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the country's reputation during Hajj.

Ata ur Rehman stressed that the government is

working tirelessly to provide a positive and memorable experience for Pakistani pilgrims, adding that he said with the government's support in place, it is now up to the Pakistani Hajjaj to focus on their spiritual journey and perform Hajj with sincerity.

While highlighting recent improvements, Dr. Syed Ata ur Rehman shared that the government has upgraded facilities for pilgrims, including replacing traditional mattresses with sofa-cumbeds, installing air conditioners in addition to air coolers and introducing

elevated luggage storage racks and shoe racks for added comfort.

He further pointed out the remarkable arrangements organized for the benefit of Hajjaj during the Mashair days, showcasing the government's commitment to their comfort and well-being.

According to the Secretary Religious Affairs, more than 87,000 pilgrims have landed in Saudi Arabia under the government scheme, while 21,984 have traveled privately. Five more flights are set to depart from Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore today.



ISLAMABAD: A person feeding his sacrificial animal at the green belt area ahead of Eid ul Adha in Federal Capital. —APP Photo

CDA pushes for high-tech upgrades to Electric Bus System

ISLAMABAD (PPI): In a high-level meeting held here at the CDA Headquarters on Saturday, Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa issued key directives aimed at enhancing the city's electric bus system.

The meeting was attended by CDA Board members, CEO NRTC, Director General Civil Defence, and other senior officials. The session focused on improving feeder electric bus operations and expanding travel facilities for the citizens of Islamabad.

Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized leveraging digital tools to maximize convenience and accessibility for commuters. He directed that all electric bus routes, stations, and schedules be fully integrated with Google Maps, allowing passengers to easily plan their journeys.

He stressed that bus

routes should be color-coded with stop details clearly marked to enable real-time visibility of buses and facilitate better time management for users.

The CDA Chairman also ordered the introduction of cashless fare systems. He instructed the concerned departments to coordinate with banks to enable fare payments through Mastercard, Visa, and other widely used cards.

In a move aimed at increasing affordability, the Chairman called for the launch of special discount packages for regular commuters, including daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly fare passes.

He further announced discounted fares for students, senior citizens, and people with disabilities, reinforcing CDA's commitment to inclusive and eco-friendly public transport.

Officials briefed the Chairman that the electric bus project is progressing

successfully, with ridership surpassing projections and reaching around 95,000 passengers. Importantly, there has been no fare increase since the service's inception.

Chairman Randhawa reiterated his vision to align Islamabad's electric bus system with international standards through the use of modern technology, transparent systems, and passenger-centric services. He emphasized increasing the number of electric buses and enhancing daily ridership on feeder routes.

To reduce financial dependency on government subsidies, he proposed monetizing advertising opportunities through digital display boards at bus terminals, subject to legal provisions.

The CDA chairman reaffirmed his commitment to providing Islamabad's residents with a world-class, safe, and environment-friendly transport system.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a high-level meeting. —APP Photo

Authority to conduct hearing for daily wagers' issue

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Health Authority has called its daily wagers for hearing of the case related to regularization of their employment. The employees have filed a petition in the court seeking permanent employment, to which Lahore High Court has directed the health authority for reconsideration.

Dr. Asif Arab Khan Niazi, Chief Executive Officer of the Rawalpindi Health Authority has said that the court has directed the authority to re-examine the case of daily wage employees in light of relevant laws and regulations, rather than ordering immediate regularization.

He confirmed APP that the employees have been summoned for a hearing on June 04, after which a decision will be made based on legal provisions.

The daily wage employees of the District Health Authority Rawalpindi had filed a petition in the Lahore High Court, seeking permanent employment. They argued that, under government rules, employees working on a daily wage basis for more than 89 days should be considered for regularization.

However, the court instructed the health authority to review the matter in accordance with the law. On May 22, the court ruled that the authority must reconsider the matter and make a decision while ensuring compliance with relevant regulations.

On the other side, the workers union has celebrated the court order considering it to be their victory.

RWMC cleanliness initiatives in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman Chief Minister Inspection Team, Raja Muhammad Hanif on Saturday visited the cleanliness awareness camp set up by the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) in preparation for Eid-ul-Azha.

During the visit, he distributed biodegradable waste bags and awareness pamphlets to citizens, encouraging safe disposal of animal waste during the Eid holidays.

Earlier, RWMC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Rana Sajid Safdar gave a detailed briefing to Raja Hanif about the company's Eid cleanliness plan. He informed that hundreds of sanitation workers have been deployed across the city. A round-the-clock monitoring system and a quick complaint redressal mechanism have also been activated to ensure timely removal of sacrificial waste, he told.

While speaking on the occasion, Raja Hanif emphasized that keeping the environment clean was both a civic and religious obligation. He praised the RWMC's preparations and said the efforts made to facilitate the public are commendable.

He added that, following the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, sanitation systems were being improved across the province and Rawalpindi would be a model for other districts. Raja Hanif also directed RWMC officers to remain in the field during all three days of Eid and personally supervise operations to ensure cleanliness.

Abbasi emphasises enhancing passenger services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Saturday underscored the importance of enhancing passenger services and raising overall service standards.

Chairing a high-level meeting to comprehensively review the ongoing and upcoming development projects of Pakistan Railways, he approved several strategic measures aimed at boosting performance across all sectors of the department.

The meeting brought together Divisional Superintendents from across the country through online participation. They present-

ed detailed progress reports on various initiatives currently underway, with a strong emphasis on transparency, timely completion and clear target setting.

One of the key outcomes of the meeting was a directive to expedite the completion of all development works. The minister reaffirmed the organization's commitment to delivering efficient, reliable, and high-quality transport services to the public.

Thd plans to upgrade the railway infrastructure with modern technology were also discussed. The approvals were granted for new projects designed to improve employee per-

formance and optimize operational efficiency.

Hanif Abbasi stressed the need for environmental and sanitation improvements within railway colonies. He called for immediate solutions to pressing issues and outlined a robust, long-term strategic framework to guide future developments.

The meeting concluded with a call for unity and teamwork at all levels to elevate Pakistan Railways to new heights. Under the leadership of Hanif Abbasi, these discussions marked the beginning of a transformative phase aimed at ushering in positive change across the railway network.

Police finalize security plan for Eid-ul-Adha

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A high-level Operational Commanders Conference was held under the chairmanship of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, here on Saturday to review and finalize Eid-ul-Adha security arrangements across the federal capital.

The conference began with a prayer for the martyred police official Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Sudheer Ahmad Abbasi and for the swift recovery of the injured police constable, Jafar Jahangir. Briefings were given on crime control and the comprehensive security strategy for the Eid holidays. IGP Rizvi emphasized that Eid symbolizes interfaith and inter-sect harmony and sacrifice.

The IGP informed that six designated cattle markets have been set up across Islamabad where over 1,000

police officers and security guards will be deployed for public safety. Police help desks will be established at all cattle markets to address issues related to fraud, counterfeit currency, and general assistance.

A total of 832 Eid prayer gatherings will be held in the city, with special security posts and duty points to ensure a peaceful environment. On the night of Eid, 1,000 additional police officers will be deployed at 44 key points for enhanced vigilance.

According to the IGP, a special patrolling plan has been formulated under which 982 police officers will conduct round-the-clock patrolling. Moreover, 1,040 police personnel will be on duty at public and recreational spots to maintain order. To curb house burglaries during the Eid holidays, special home security duties and patrols

will be intensified under the Neighborhood Watch System, which will be fully activated.

A dedicated traffic management plan will be implemented to manage expected congestion, and police help desks will be set up in all major commercial centers for prompt public assistance. Furthermore, a special patrolling plan has also been developed for the Margalla Hills to ensure the safety of visitors. The IGP reiterated a strict crackdown against one-wheeling, aerial firing, and illegal weapons during the Eid festivities.

All cattle markets will operate only in designated areas, and senior officers will conduct visits to various markets. A zero-tolerance policy will be implemented against beggars. Search and sweep operations across the city will be intensified in the lead-up to Eid, the IGP concluded.

Pakistan must match Central Asia's resolve against extremism: PIPS President



ISLAMABAD (APP): Prominent counter terrorism analyst, and President of the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), Amir Rana has delivered an insightful lecture at the Institute of Regional Studies, (IRS) Islamabad.

The lecture held under the prestigious Eminent Speaker Series, the talk was titled "Counter terrorism Challenges in Central Asia: A Pakistani Perspective", said a press release issued here on Saturday.

In his address, Rana provided a comprehensive analysis of the shifting security landscape across Central Asia, offering critical insights and lessons for Pakistan as it navigates its own internal and regional counter terrorism challenges.

He praised Central Asian states for their firm

and consistent policies in tackling violent extremism—particularly their efforts to ban extremist groups and political entities. Pakistan, he stressed, must adopt a similarly resolute and unambiguous approach, and ensure that counter-extremism efforts are holistic and inclusive.

"Terrorism demands a holistic, objective strategy, grounded in both political resolve and societal resilience," Rana added.

Highlighting persistent threats from groups like ISKP and Al Qaeda, Rana warned against lowering security vigilance, even in periods of relative calm. He noted that transformative extremist currents—from Tunisia to Malaysia—continue to shape global trends, posing potential threats to regional and international stability.

A key focus of his talk was the need to further curb any financial infrastructure of terrorism. Rana advocated for enhanced regulatory oversight and intelligence cooperation to ensure a complete cut off of funding to extremists. He further stressed the role of regional platforms, especially the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in mounting a coordinated response to transnational terrorism and radicalization.

"Security in Central Asia is intrinsically tied to strategic choices in South Asia. What we need is cooperation, not complacency," he concluded.

The session attracted a diverse audience of scholars, diplomats, policy experts, and practitioners, sparking an engaging discussion on shared regional threats and the future of counter terrorism collaboration.

The Institute of Regional Studies continues to serve as a key forum for fostering dialogue on Pakistan's strategic priorities, bringing together experts and stakeholders for meaningful exchanges on issues of national and regional importance.

Man commits suicide

KABUL (Pajhwok): A man has committed suicide after killing his parents in the capital of Nangarhar, an official said on Saturday. Police spokesman Syed Tayeb Hammad said the incident occurred in the 5th police district of Jalalabad on Friday. He said the man fatally stabbed his mother and father before committing suicide. He added security forces rushed to the scene shortly after the parricide and launched investigation into the motive behind the killings.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil Hajj 04, 1446 — Sunday, June 01, 2025

50 Afghan migrants deported

KABUL (Ariana News): Tajikistan has deported 49 Afghan migrants, according to a statement released Saturday by Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. The deportations took place over two days, with the migrants returning to Afghanistan via the Sher Khan border crossing in Kunduz province on Wednesday and Thursday. Among those deported, 36 individuals held Tajik residence permits, while 12 were in the country on visas, the ministry reported.

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

Cooking oil, petrol, gas and gold down in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of cooking oil, petro, gas and gold declined, but the rate of diesel surged in Kabul during the outgoing week, market sources said on Saturday.

Fuel

A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok Afghan News the rate of one litre of petrol decreased from 59afs to 58afs, but the diesel price went up from 55afs to 57afs.

He added the price of one kilogram of liquefied gas went down from 48afs to 46afs.

Food items

Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking decreased from 1,650afs to 1,600afs.

The price of a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice remained unchanged at 2,600afs. A 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar also remained stable at 2,500afs and a 49-kg sack of Kazakh cost 1,300afs, – the same rate as last weeks.

He added one kilogram of African black tea accounted for 400afs and the same amount of Indonesian green tea for 350afs.

Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of flour at 1,350afs, a 24-kg bag of rice at 2,650afs and a 49-kg sack of sugar at 2,550afs.

A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil cost 1,650afs, he said, adding one kilogram of black tea accounted for

400afs and the same quantity of green tea for 450afs.

Gold down

Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Russian gold declined from 4,850afs to 4,700afs and the same amount of Arabian gold fell from 6,000afs to 5,950afs.

Afghani vs dollar

Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said one US dollar was traded at 69afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 240afs against their previous week's rates of 78.80afs and 240afs.

The spike in the afghani value is essentially linked to periodic dollar auctions by the central bank.

Over 22m people in Afghanistan need aid

KABUL (Khaama Press): UNICEF reports over 22 million people in Afghanistan, including 12 million children, urgently require humanitarian assistance and support services.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has reported that more than 22 million people in Afghanistan, including 12 million children, are currently in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. This alarming figure underscores the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing the country.

During a recent monitoring period, over 829,000 children were screened for severe acute malnutrition. Among them, approximately 37,000 children—59% of whom were girls—received treatment, highlighting UNICEF's focus on addressing child malnutrition across Afghanistan.

UNICEF supports basic, secondary, and specialized healthcare services in 34 provinces of Afghanistan through 2,406 fixed health centers. These centers play a crucial role in delivering vital health interventions amid the country's complex emergency environment.

In addition to healthcare, UNICEF has provided support for 15,775 community-based educational classes across 32 provinces. This effort has enabled over 348,000 children, including 66 percent girls, to access education, a significant achievement given the challenges facing the Afghanistan education sector.

Moreover, more than 47,000 children and their caregivers have received child protection services, ensuring their safety and well-being in a context of ongoing conflict and instability.

UNICEF officials have repeatedly warned about the decreasing funding levels and their detrimental impact on humanitarian services. Without sustained financial support, the continuity of these essential health, education, and protection programs remains at risk.

IE Envoy met with his Spanish counterpart

KABUL (BNA): Mohammad Suhail Shaheen, the ambassador of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met with Ricardo Losa, the Spanish ambassador to Afghanistan, in Doha, Qatar.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Spain. Key topics included the current political landscape in Afghanistan, the provision of consular services for Afghan citizens in Spain, and the ongoing humanitarian aid efforts to support Afghanistan.

Both diplomats expressed a commitment to fostering cooperation and addressing mutual interests, paving the way for enhanced dialogue between the two nations.

UNICEF donates teaching materials to Education Dept



PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has donated teaching materials worth 77,000 US dollars to the Education Department of central Logar province, an official said on Saturday.

Shahpor Arab, spokesman for the department, told Pajhwok Afghan News the assistance included 797 teacher kits, each contain-

ing a handbag and 26 essential teaching items.

The kits will be distributed soon to teachers responsible for classroom management in 288 schools across the province.

He hoped the aid would help overcome a teaching resource shortage in the province, enabling them to improve the quality of education.

Abdullah, a teacher in

Pul-i-Alam, welcomed the aid and said UNICEF had made significant contributions to the education sector this year.

He noted such assistance helps helped resolve shortages of textbooks and teaching tools, improving the overall learning environment.

Last week, UNICEF had donated 12,000 textbooks to students in the province.

Taliban earn hefty sums from Gulf-linked camps

KANDAHAR (Amu TV): Taliban are reportedly receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars each month from a group of Arab nationals who have established a fortified compound in the desert between Spin Boldak and Takhtapul districts in the southern province of Kandahar, local sources said.

The individuals, believed to be from Gulf countries, were granted permission to reside in the area under what sources describe as a private arrangement with the Taliban governor in Kandahar, who is a close aide to Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. In return, they are said to pay substantial sums in exchange for exclusive access to a remote stretch of land near the Pakistan border, sources said.

While the group claims to be in the region for hunting, residents say the terrain is barren and not known for wildlife at any time of year, sources said. "There is nothing to hunt here," one local said.

The camp is heavily secured and equipped with modern facilities. Movements in and out are discreet and accompanied by armed guards, adding to public speculation about the true nature of the compound.

Taliban have not commented publicly on the matter. The purpose of the group's presence remains unclear, but the secrecy surrounding the arrangement has raised questions about the potential use of the site and the nature of the financial ties.

Khpalwak wins tournament



MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): A week-long 20-over cricket tournament, featuring five teams, has concluded in the capital of northern Balkh province, with the Balkh Khpalwak team clinching the title.

Provincial Cricket Director Mohammadullah Sabit told Pajhwok Afghan News Balkh Khpalwak and

Mazar-i-Sharif Municipality found their way to the final of the short-format tournament.

Balkh Khpalwak defeated the opposition by 29 runs in the final on Friday, he said, adding the event was aimed to hunt talented players and prepare them for upcoming inter-club competitions.

Participants voiced satisfaction with the organisation of the tournament. One of them, Amin Safi, urged the Afghanistan Cricket Board to focus on facilitating provincial players.

Balkh Khpalwak's Omid Safi was named the man of the match for his outstanding 123-run innings in the final.

Kabul eyes trade with Moscow, Beijing in local currencies

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Commerce and Industry Nooruddin Azizi has announced the caretaker government is in advanced negotiations with Russia and China to conduct trade transactions using national currencies.

In an interview with Reuters, Azizi said that proposals had been submitted in this regard to both Russia and the Chinese Embassy in Kabul.

Technical teams from Afghanistan and Russia are currently working on details of the agreement, according to the interim commerce minister.

The initiative aligns with Moscow's efforts to reduce reliance on the US dollar and comes as Afghanistan faces a significant decline in US currency inflows due to international aid cuts.

"We are currently engaged in specialised discussions on this matter, taking into account regional and global economic conditions, sanctions and the challenges faced by both Afghanistan and Russia. Technical talks are ongoing," Nooruddin Azizi said.

He noted that annual bilateral trade between Afghanistan and Russia cur-



rently stood at around \$300 million and was expected to grow substantially as investment increased.

He indicated that Afghanistan planned to expand imports of petroleum products and plastics from Russia.

"I am confident that this is a very good option... We can use it to serve the interests and benefit of our people and our country," Azizi commented.

He added, "We intend to pursue similar arrangements with China." Trade between Afghanistan and China currently amounts to approximately \$1 billion annually.

"A joint working group, composed of representatives from the Afghan Ministry of Commerce and the Chinese Embassy—an authorised body representing China in economic

programmes—has been formed, and discussions are ongoing."

Afghanistan's financial sector has been largely isolated from the global banking system due to sanctions imposed on certain leaders of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, who assumed power in 2021 following the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Abdul Nasir Rashtia, an economic expert, told Pajhwok Afghan News conducting foreign trade in the national currency could be advantageous for any country – particularly for import-dependent nations such as Afghanistan.

"When demand for foreign currency is high in the market, it can weaken the national currency, drive up prices and diminish the purchasing power of the people.

"If we are able to conduct foreign trade using the afghani, it could strengthen the currency, reduce demand for foreign exchange, stabilise trade and help Afghanistan gain financial independence," he believed.

Overall, Rashtia concluded, trade conducted in national currency could offer considerable benefits for Afghanistan.

Drought-hit Faryab farmers seek aid

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): The Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock says crops on nearly all rain-fed and 50 percent of irrigated lands have gone dry in northern Faryab province.

As a result of a severe drought, growers and livestock owners in the province have voiced deep concern, calling for urgent assistance.

Farmers' concerns

Mohammad Maroof Nekzad, a farmer from Lawlash district, stood gazing at his parched wheat fields, lost in worries.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News the area used to receive regular snowfall and rain, resulting in good harvests every year.

However, he said: "There has been neither snow nor rain until now this year. All our crops have gone parched and destroyed."

Nekzad, an experienced farmer, warned if growers were not provided with aid, they could end up in serious trouble this year.

Ahmad, hailing from the Hawz Maran village of the same district, had painstakingly sown 1,050 kilograms of wheat, said his entire crop had been lost.

The 75-year-old added: "In my lifetime, I have never seen such a drought. We have lost all hope." He also asked the caretaker government and aid organisations for assistance.

Another resident, Abdul Qayyum, said farming had been the sole source of income for his 20-member family. But the drought has dashed all his hopes.

Several tribal elders and farmers

from Bandar and Lawlash districts, who travelled to Maimana, the provincial capital, to seek help, described their situation as deeply worrying.

Ghulam Jilani Kohistani, a tribal elder from the area, noted 90 percent of the population in Kohistanat relied on agriculture and livestock.

These areas once supplied wheat and meat to meet the needs of Faryab. But now, this unprecedented drought has severely affected both sectors.

The elder added the people of Bandar and Lawlash lived far away from the provincial capital. Their plight is exacerbated by impassable roads and lack of markets and employment opportunities.

A shortage of food supplies and the closure of strategic reserves belonging to organisations such as the Agriculture Programme and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) are adding to their woes.

He warned: "If the government and international organisations do not take swift action, people will be forced to either leave the country or become displaced within other provinces."

Kohistani continued: "Farmers, especially labourers who used to earn a living through harvesting and manual work, are now unemployed and. Many are even ready to work for food, but sadly, even that is hard to come by."

Unprecedented drought in 50 years

Haji Mohammad Amin, a livestock owner from Kohistan district, said

such a drought had not occurred in the area over the past 50 years.

"All farmlands stand parched. There is no wheat, and there is no fodder for our animals," he regretted.

Food and livestock feed were no longer available in Kohistan, Amin complained. Even in spring, animals are already going hungry.

If the government and international bodies did not take immediate action to save people from hunger and poverty, he feared: "Most of our livestock will either perish before winter or will have to be sold at dirt-cheap prices."

Rain-fed lands left bone-dry

Agriculture Director Maulvi Jan Murad Waqar acknowledged the concerns of farmers and livestock owners.

"Ninety percent of the population's needs and expenses are met through farming and livestock. But this year's drought and has nearly destroyed all rain-fed farms, fuelling serious concern among livestock owners."

Waqar estimated 91,000 hectares of rain-fed land and nearly 50,000 hectares of irrigated lands in Faryab had been sown with wheat this year.

Almost all rain-fed crops had been lost and up to 50 percent of irrigated farms damaged in the province, the official claimed.

"The people, especially farmers, are in a state of extreme distress. We are working to coordinate aid for them with international organisations. If no support is provided, a major disaster is inevitable."

their children from going to school.

Abdul Hai, a resident of Surpan village explained: "Crossing with these cable cars is not only dangerous, also it takes a lot of time. Sometimes we wait for hours to cross. Someone has to be on this side and that side of the water to pull us, and it is very difficult for those who are sick or have urgent work".

Similarly, Abdul Manan, another resident complained crossing the river by cable cars was dangerous, remembering seeing children and adults falling into the water.

He said: "Unfortunately when the water level rises, everyone uses this cable car to get around, and we have witnessed children and adults falling into the water from it".

According to him, some families prevent their children from going to school because there is no bridge

and it could be dangerous for their children.

Abdul Manan asked Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to take action to rebuild this bridge so that people could get a sigh of relief.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud Sultani, a teacher in Sorpan village, explained: "Mostly, children cannot come to school for fear of falling into the river. We ask the government and institutions to address our problems and build a bridge so that the children can reach their school and travel easily".

On the other hand, Obaidullah Moradi, head of regional council, confirms the problem, but adds building this bridge valued more than two million afghanis.

"When floods destroyed this bridge, a government delegation came and surveyed it, but it has not been built yet and we have many

problems. The bridge that was destroyed connects seven villages".

Moradi urged the government and charity foundations to pay seriously attention in this regard.

Ghulam Sakhi Moradi, a social affairs expert, considers the use of cable cars a temporary solution.

"The cable cars cannot replace the bridge that people used to cross and transport their basic needs. Cable cars are dangerous for everyone, especially the young and the elderly".

"If a public bridge is not built in this village, people will be deprived of basic services, and their life quality will be destroyed because they will not be able to take their patients to the doctor on time or meet their other needs".

Ghulam Sakhi considered reconstruction of the bridge a basic and urgent

need of the people.

Ghulam Sakhi called on the IEA and charity foundations to cooperate with residents and seek a sustainable and safe solution.

Zabihullah Ghousizada, press officer at the Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department, acknowledged to Pajhwok that people were facing serious problems in crossing the river.

According to him, lack of funding has prevented them from being able to rebuild destroyed projects such as bridges.

"We accept people's problems and try to share them with central officials, and these people must also submit a request so that we can share the issue in writing".

Ghousizada hoped that they would be able to obtain funding for the construction of this bridge and begin construction work as soon as possible.

Lack of bridge on Harirud strands residents in 7 Ghor villages



FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Some residents of Shahrak Ghor district of western Ghor province say floods have destroyed the only bridge over the Harirud River, forcing them to use ropeway to cross the river that in some cases proves dangerous.

Residents said last year flash floods destroyed the

bridge over Harirud River that linked Sorpan, Nal Bast, Paitangi, Dahan Kangi, Dahan Zardak, Pashta Kangi and Taraki Sorpan villages of Sharang district.

Additionally, these floods damaged public properties, roads, bridges, and culverts in most villages. Some roads were

cleared and reopened, but no action has been taken to rebuild this bridge and people are still facing problems.

It is early morning and a thin moon falls on the calm waters of Harirud River, and some people have come from their villages to the shore to reach the other side of the river.

Ali Ahmad, a resident of Dahan Kang village, told Pajhwok Afghan News last year the only communication bridge was damaged due by flash floods and now the residents were facing problems.

Families cross the bridge to obtain their basic necessities and are now forced to use cable car, he added.

"When the bridge was there, we would easily transport our food and other necessities by cars, motorbikes, and donkeys. But since last year, our bridge has been damaged, and we have been shifting our food and other necessities in small cable car, which is very time-consuming and difficult. We are asking the government to address this problem".

According to Ali Ahmad, the lack of a bridge in their village has not only limited people's movement and access to basic necessities of life, but has also kept

Trump says Gaza ceasefire very close

GAZA CITY (AFP): Israel said Hamas must accept a hostage deal in Gaza or “be annihilated,” as US President Donald Trump announced that a ceasefire agreement was “very close.” It came amid dire conditions on the ground, with the United Nations warning that Gaza’s entire population was at risk of famine.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said Hamas must agree to a ceasefire proposal presented by US envoy Steve Witkoff or be destroyed, after the Palestinian militant group said the deal failed to satisfy its demands. “The Hamas murderers will now be forced to choose: accept the terms of the ‘Witkoff Deal’ for the release of the hostages – or be annihilated.”

Israel has repeatedly said that the destruction of Hamas was a key aim of the war. Negotiations to end nearly 20 months of war in Gaza have so far failed to achieve a breakthrough, with Israel resuming operations in March following a short-lived truce. In the United States, Trump told reporters “they’re very close to an agreement on Gaza,” adding: “We’ll let you know about it during the day or maybe tomorrow.”

Food shortages in Gaza persist, with aid only trickling in after the partial lifting by Israel of a more than two-month blockade. Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency, called Gaza “the hungriest place on Earth.”

“It’s the only defined area – a country or defined territory within a country – where you have the entire population at risk of famine,” he said. Later, the UN condemned the “looting of large quantities of medical

equipment” and other supplies “intended for malnourished children” from one of its Gaza warehouses by armed individuals. Aid groups have warned that desperation for food and medicine among Gazans was causing security to deteriorate.

Israel has doubled down on its settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, while defying calls from French President Emmanuel Macron and other world leaders for a two-state solution. This week Israel announced the creation of 22 new settlements in the Palestinian territory, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

London said the move was a “deliberate obstacle” to Palestinian statehood while Egypt called it “a provocative and blatant new violation of international law and Palestinian rights.” The 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which includes Egypt, also condemned Israel’s decision. On Friday, Katz vowed to build a “Jewish Israeli state” in the West Bank.

Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory are considered illegal under international law and seen as a major obstacle to a lasting peace in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Katz framed the move as a direct rebuke to Macron and others pushing for recognition of a Palestinian state. Macron on Friday said that recognition of a Palestinian state, with some conditions, was “not only a moral duty, but a political necessity.”

Israel’s foreign ministry accused the French president of undertaking a “crusade against the Jewish state.” Separately, a diplomatic source said

that Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan would make the first visit of its kind to the West Bank on Sunday. The White House announced on Thursday that Israel had “signed off” on a new ceasefire proposal submitted to Hamas.

The Palestinian group said the deal failed to satisfy its demands, but stopped short of rejecting it outright, saying it was “holding consultations” on the proposal. Gaza’s civil defense agency said that at least 45 people had been killed in Israeli attacks on Friday, including seven in a strike targeting a family home in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.

Palestinians sobbed over the bodies of their loved ones at Gaza City’s Al-Shifa Hospital following the strike, AFP TV footage showed. “These were civilians and were sleeping at their homes,” said neighbor Mahmud Al-Ghaf, describing “children in pieces.” The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but said separately that the air force had hit “dozens of targets” across Gaza over the past day.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said on Friday that at least 4,058 people had been killed since Israel resumed operations on March 18, taking the war’s overall toll to 54,321, mostly civilians. Hamas’s 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,218 people, also mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Of the 251 hostages seized during Hamas’s attack, 57 remain in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead.



GAZA CITY: Palestinians flee for their lives in the aftermath of an Israeli strike on a house.

Rainfall, windstorm claim 10 lives in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Rainfall and windstorm claimed 10 lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while 30 others were injured in calamitous weather incident, PDMA said on Saturday.

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in a report stated that 10 people were killed in rainfall and storm in KP, including five men, three women and two children. Those injured included 13 men, 10 women and seven children, disaster management authority shared in its report.

The rain and storm thoroughly damaged two houses, while 34 properties were partly affected. PDMA stated that the weather-related mishaps took place in Peshawar, Swabi, Shangla, Swat and Haripur districts of the province.

Earlier, ferocious windstorm on May 19 lashed Peshawar and other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed at least three lives while 14 were injured in different incidents. PDMA in a report on losses in the storm said that the weather event claimed lives of two men and a child. A man was killed in Khyber, while a tower and several solar panels fell down due to strong winds. The man was killed by a falling solar panel.

Moreover, eight men, three women and three children were among 14 injured in the storm. “The storm partially damaged five properties including three houses and two building,” PDMA said. “Incidents of falling walls and uprooted trees were also reported from Charsadda, Khyber, Nowshera and Peshawar,” according to the report.

Govt to pace up action against illegal foreigners

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to accelerate operations against foreign nationals residing illegally in Pakistan. The decision was taken at a meeting of Counter-Terrorism and Harden the State Committees held in Islamabad today, with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in the chair.

The Minister said NADRA will provide live data verification facilities at exit points to support the operations. He said all federal and provincial agencies and institutions must work together to fully implement the “One Document Regime” and eliminate the illegal spectrum from the country.

Emphasizing strict action against beggar mafia, Mohsin Naqvi underscored the need to declare begging a non-bailable offence. Regarding action against power pilferage, the Interior Minister said every possible support is being provided to the Ministry of Energy and provincial governments to prevent electricity theft.

The meeting was briefed that 142 billion rupees have been recovered through cooperation between the Interior Ministry and provincial governments. The meeting also reviewed progress on anti-encroachment operations and the establishment of Pakistan Port Authority.

Sindh to present people friendly budget: CM

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday held a high-level Cabinet meeting with Ministers, Advisors, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah and relevant secretaries to deliberate on provincial budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year 2025-26.

The meeting underscored government’s commitment to inclusive development, poverty alleviation, and sustainable progress in line with the directives of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Opening the session, Murad Shah said, “I want to engage all cabinet members thoroughly in shaping the next budget to ensure it addresses the real needs of our people. Under Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s leadership, we have collected proposals from every district to make this budget representative and impactful.”

The Chief Minister outlined the core focus areas of the new budget, emphasising water supply and drainage, solar energy expansion, education, healthcare, agriculture, and industrial growth. “This year (2024-25), we have not introduced any new schemes under the priority to complete ongoing projects,” he said.

He added that in the upcoming budget, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto has issued instructions for launching new initiatives that bring tangible benefits to the people. The important highlights from the meeting include continued rehabilitation efforts for flood-affected communities, repair of schools and hospitals, and launching new

mega projects through Public-Private Partnerships to boost infrastructure and services, strengthening social protection programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and increasing budget allocations for repair and maintenance, as well as upgrading hospital equipment and completion of transport projects in Karachi to improve urban mobility.

Proposals given by the cabinet members include reducing non-development expenditures and empowering local governments to become financially self-reliant, introducing digital cash transfers with incentives to enhance social welfare delivery, expanding solid waste management and solar energy systems across the province, and constructing new bus stands in multiple districts to improve public transportation.

The CM also highlighted the importance of federal-provincial coordination, stating, “We will finalise the budget based on the federal government’s funding commitments (provincial share) and our provincial revenue targets to ensure fiscal responsibility and effectiveness.” “After Eid, we will hold further meetings to finalise and approve the budget proposals.

Our goal is to present a budget that is transparent, development-oriented, and focused on improving the lives of every Sindh resident,” the Chief Minister concluded. This proactive approach signals Sindh’s dedication to sustainable development, social equity, and efficient governance in the coming financial year.

China’s navy conducts combat patrols near Sea

BEIJING: China’s navy has conducted “combat readiness patrols” near the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, while South Korean officials separately announced the discovery of more Chinese buoys in contested waters in the Yellow Sea.

The Southern Theatre Command of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) conducted the drills in the “territorial waters and airspace of China’s Huangyan Island and surrounding areas”, state-run news outlet Xinhua reported on Saturday, using China’s name for the Scarborough Shoal. The report said the PLA had been conducting drills in the area throughout May to “further strengthen the control of relevant sea and air areas, resolutely defend national sovereignty and security, and resolutely maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea”.

The Scarborough Shoal is a rocky islet claimed by The Philippines, located 220km (119 miles) west of Luzon, the nearest land-mass. Beijing blockaded and seized the territory, a traditional fishing ground, from Manila in 2012. The Chinese navy regularly carries out provocative military drills in the area as part of its claims of sovereignty over almost all of the South China Sea, despite a 2016 international tribunal ruling that Beijing’s claims had no legal basis under international law.

In late April, Manila accused Beijing of carrying out “dangerous manoeuvres and obstruction” after a Chinese naval ship damaged a Philippine coast-guard ship with a water cannon near the shoal. Also on Saturday, South Korean officials announced they had recorded three new Chinese buoys installed near overlapping waters with South Korea, bringing the total number of such devices installed by China in the Yellow Sea to 13.

“[We] are closely monitoring activities within the provisional maritime zone [PMZ], including China’s unauthorised installation of structures, and will closely [cooperate] with relevant agencies to protect our maritime sovereignty,” a Ministry of Defence official said, according to South Korea’s official Yonhap news agency. Two of the Chinese buoys – first detected in May 2023, but only announced this week – have been installed near the

zone, according to Yonhap. The third buoy is located inside the maritime zone, a contested area where the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) claims of South Korea and China overlap, Yonhap added. China asserts its maritime boundary is based on a 1962 agreement signed with North Korea which cuts into waters South Korea considers part of its economic zone.

The Yellow Sea PMZ allows joint management of marine resources and prohibits activities beyond navigation and fishing. However, tensions have grown between Beijing and Seoul as China has repeatedly erected installations in the waters, including 10 three-metre-wide and six-metre-tall observation buoys since 2018 and a fixed steel structure in 2022.

Last week, China declared three no-sail zones within the zone, in a move “believed to be for military training purposes”, according to the Korea JoongAng Daily newspaper. The no-sail declarations caused concern in Seoul over a potential uptick in Chinese military activity in the area. — Aljazeera

151 dead in Nigeria floods, thousands displaced

MOKWA: More than 150 people have been killed and thousands displaced after floods devastated parts of central Nigeria, local authorities said, as rescue teams continue to recover bodies and search for the missing. The flooding struck the rural town of Mokwa in Niger State following torrential rains that began late on Wednesday and continued into Thursday.

The death toll has risen to 151 after more bodies were recovered nearly 10km (6 miles) from Mokwa, said Ibrahim Audu Hussein, a spokesman for the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA) on Saturday. The death toll is in reality likely to be higher,

said Al Jazeera’s Ahmed Idris, reporting from Mokwa.

“The usual thing is when an official tells you 151 are dead or missing, you are likely to multiply that by two, three or four,” said Idris. At least 3,018 people have been displaced, while 265 houses were “completely destroyed” in the floods, he said, adding that many victims were believed to have been swept down the Niger River, warning that the toll could still rise. President Bola Tinubu extended his condolences overnight and said search-and-rescue operations were ongoing with the support of Nigeria’s security forces.

“Relief materials and temporary shelter assistance are being deployed without

delay,” he wrote in a post on social media. “We lost everything, the families. We don’t have anywhere else to go, the property has gone,” Mohammed Tanko, a local, told Al Jazeera. “We lost at least 15 from this house.” Another survivor said: “I escaped with only my night-dress. Right now, I can’t even identify where our home used to be.”

“The grim task of recovering bodies and what little the residents and victims of this disaster can is what’s been going on since we arrived here in the early afternoon,” said Idris, standing in front of a dilapidated house as children and adults alike dig for belongings and bodies. — Aljazeera

Pentagon chief warns China ‘preparing’ to use mly force in Asia

WASHINGTON (AFP): US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth warned on Saturday that China was “credibly preparing” to use military force to upend the balance of power in Asia, vowing the United States was “here to stay” in the region.

The Pentagon chief made the remarks at an annual security forum in Singapore as the administration of US President Donald Trump spars with Beijing on trade, technology, and influence over strategic corners of the globe. China’s embassy in Singapore blasted the speech, accusing Washington of escalating tensions in the region and “profiting from creating risks of war”.

Trump has launched a trade war with China since taking office in January, has sought to curb its access to key AI technologies and deepened security ties with allies such as the Philippines, which is engaged in escalating territorial disputes with Beijing. “The threat China poses is real and it could be imminent,” Hegseth said at the Shangri-La Dialogue attended by defence officials from around the world. Beijing is “credibly preparing to potentially use military force to alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific”, he said.

Hegseth warned that the Chinese military was building the capabilities to invade Taiwan and “rehearsing for the real deal”. China has ramped up military pressure on Taiwan and held large-scale exercises around the island that are often described as preparations for a blockade or invasion.

The United States was “reorienting toward deterring aggression by communist China”, Hegseth said, calling on US allies and partners in Asia to swiftly upgrade their defences in the face of mounting threats. Hegseth described China’s conduct as a “wake-up call”, accusing Beijing of endangering lives with cyber attacks, harassing its neighbours, and “illegally seizing and militarising lands” in the disputed South China Sea.

Beijing claims almost the entire waterway, through which more than 60 per cent of global maritime trade passes, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no merit. It has clashed repeatedly with the Philippines in the strategic waters in recent months, with the flashpoint set to dominate discussions at the Singapore forum, according to US officials.

As Hegseth spoke in Singapore, China’s military announced that its navy and air force were carrying out routine “combat readiness patrols” around the Scarborough Shoal, a chain of reefs and rocks Beijing disputes with the Philippines. Hegseth’s hard-hitting address drew a critical reaction from the Chinese embassy in the city-state.

“The speech is steeped in provocations and instigation,” the embassy wrote on its Facebook page. “Mr Hegseth repeatedly smeared and attacked China and relentlessly played up the so-called ‘China threat,’” the statement said, accusing the United States of being the “biggest troublemaker” in the region. Beijing did not send any top defence

ministry officials to the summit, dispatching instead a delegation from the People’s Liberation Army National Defence University led by Rear Admiral Hu Gangfeng.

Without referring to Hegseth by name, Hu said of his speech that “these actions are essentially about stirring up trouble, creating division, inciting confrontation, and destabilising the Asia-Pacific”. Hegseth’s comments came after Trump stoked new trade tensions with China, arguing that Beijing had “violated” a deal to de-escalate tariffs as the two sides appeared deadlocked in negotiations.

The world’s two biggest economies had agreed to temporarily lower eye-watering tariffs they had imposed on each other, pausing them for 90 days. “Cannot dominate”

Reassuring US allies on Saturday, Hegseth said the Asia-Pacific region was “America’s priority theatre”, pledging to ensure “China cannot dominate us — or our allies and partners”. He said the United States had stepped up cooperation with allies, including the Philippines and Japan, and reiterated Trump’s vow that “China will not invade [Taiwan] on his watch”.

However, he called on US partners in the region to ramp up spending on their militaries and “quickly upgrade their own defences”. “Asian allies should look to countries in Europe for a newfound example,” Hegseth said, citing pledges by Nato members, including Germany, to move towards Trump’s defence spending target of 5pc of GDP. “Deterrence doesn’t come on the cheap.”

appointed by Trump during his first term as president. “President Trump is acting within his lawful authority to deport illegal aliens and protect the American people. While the Supreme Court has rightfully acknowledged the president’s authority in some cases, in others they have invented new due process rights for illegal aliens that will make America less safe. We are confident in the legality of our actions and will continue fighting to keep President Trump’s promises.” White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson told Reuters.

The justices twice – on April 7 and on May 16 – have placed limits on the administration’s attempt to implement Trump’s invocation of a 1798 law called the Alien Enemies Act, which historically has been employed only in wartime, to swiftly deport Venezuelan migrants who it has accused of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang. Lawyers and family members of some of the migrants have disputed the gang membership allegation. On May 16, the justices also said a bid by the administration to deport migrants from a detention center in Texas failed basic constitutional requirements. Giving migrants “notice roughly 24 hours before removal, devoid of information about how to exercise due process rights to contest that removal, surely does not pass muster,” the court stated.

Due process generally requires the government to provide notice and an opportunity for a hearing before taking certain adverse actions. The court has not outright barred the administration from pursuing these deportations under the Alien Enemies Act, as the justices have yet to decide the legality of using the law for this purpose. The US government last invoked the Alien Enemies Act during World War Two to intern and deport people of Japanese, German and Italian descent.

“The Supreme Court has in several

cases reaffirmed some basic principles of constitutional law (including that the due process clause applies to all people on US soil,” said Elora Mukherjee, director of Columbia Law School’s immigrants’ rights clinic. Even for alleged gang members, Mukherjee said, the court “has been extremely clear that they are entitled to notice before they can be summarily deported from the United States.”

In a separate case, the court on April 10 ordered the administration to facilitate the release from custody in El Salvador of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran migrant who was living in Maryland. The administration has acknowledged that Abrego Garcia was wrongly deported to El Salvador. The administration has yet to return Abrego Garcia to the United States, which according to some critics amounts to defiance of the Supreme Court. The administration deported on March 15 more than 200 people to El Salvador, where they were detained in the country’s massive anti-terrorism prison under a deal in which the United States is paying President Nayib Bukele’s government \$6 million.

Ilya Somin, a constitutional law professor at George Mason University, said the Supreme Court overall has tried to curb the administration’s “more extreme and most blatantly illegal policies” without abandoning its traditional deference to presidential authority on immigration issues. “I think they have made a solid effort to strike a balance,” said Somin, referring to the Alien Enemies Act and Abrego Garcia cases. “But I still think there is excessive deference, and a tolerance for things that would not be permitted outside the immigration field.” That deference was on display over the past two weeks with the court’s decisions letting Trump terminate the grants of temporary protected status and humanitarian parole previously given to migrants.