

Fazl calls for national unity
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Maulana Fazlur Rehman Friday emphasized the urgent need to strengthen Pakistan's defense institutions, declaring that national unity is the key to overcoming current challenges. Speaking in the National Assembly, Fazlur Rehman announced that his party has decided to observe the current day as "National Defense Day."

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

Kartarpur Corridor closed
F.P. Report

KARTARPUR: Kartarpur Corridor in Narowal remained closed for the third consecutive day due to tense border situation between Pakistan and India. The management of Kartarpur Corridor said that Zero Line Gate from Indian side is closed for Sikh yatrees so they are unable to travel to Pakistan. Now management has decided to close Kartarpur Corridor for Sikh pilgrims for indefinite period.

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 101

Regd. No. 241

ZIQAAD 12 1446 -- SATURDAY, MAY 10 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

India supporting terrorism in Pakistan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Friday accused India of actively supporting terrorism inside Pakistan.

Speaking to foreign journalists alongside Director General Public Relations (DGPR) of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Vice Marshal Aurangzeb Ahmed and Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff Operations Rear Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz, he said, "India is directly involved in terrorism in Pakistan." He also presented video evidence showing Indian government representatives supporting anti-Pakistan terrorist activities.

"There are people in India who fund, train, and supply weapons to terrorists operating in Pakistan," he added. The DG ISPR said that several terrorists captured in Pakistan confessed to receiving funding, training, and support from Indian intelligence agencies. He added that an audio tape revealed Indian officers admitting they had been operating a terror network in Lahore and Balochistan for years. He said terrorist camps were

running in India, adding that they were confessing that they were sponsoring terrorists in Balochistan. "India is involved in terrorism not only in Pakistan but also in Canada," he added. He said that New Delhi was supporting different terrorist groups in Pakistan, including "Fitna al Khawarij." "The time has come to question the Indian government," he added.

The DG ISPR further said that one of the objectives of the Pahalgam attack and the subsequent Indian actions is to divert Pakistan's armed forces and security agencies' attention from anti-terror operations in the country. He said, "Government of Pakistan, its armed forces and security forces are on a daily basis, tightening the noose around India-sponsored terrorism. One of the objectives is to distract and divert the security agencies and armed forces from these counter-terrorist operations."

He shared a video interview of a man from Balochistan who admitted to receiving support from India. Another clip featured a spokesperson of the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) giving a live interview to Indian media during an attack on

the Jaffer Express. "Indian media aired this interview and glorified the act of a terrorist group," he said. DG ISPR questioned why Indian media was the first to broadcast the video of the Jaffer Express bombing, asking, "Where did the video come from, and who aired it first? It was India."

He explained that the attack happened around 1 p.m., and the footage was broadcast almost immediately, proving a link between the terrorists and Indian media. While briefing on the Pahalgam incident, he said India accused Pakistan of involvement without presenting any solid proof. Providing details of the way the Indian media blamed Pakistan shortly after the Pahalgam attack on April 22 without any evidence, the DG ISPR maintained that India had adopted a similar stance in the past as well. "Is this the first time India is doing this? There is a history to it," he said.

"How did the Indian government jump to the conclusion regarding who the attackers were within 10 minutes of the incident? When you don't have any evidence, what do you do? You open up the military front." He went on to say that India was shifting the blame for the attack on Pakistan to

divert attention from its internal problems. He said that India launched attacks on Pakistan and targeting civilians, including women and children.

"The attack ended at 2:20 p.m., and by 2:30 p.m., the FIR was already filed. That means within 10 minutes, police investigated and concluded Pakistan was involved. This is not humanly possible," he said. He added that Indian social media accounts started blaming Pakistan by 3:00 p.m., even though no evidence had been presented. "Where is the proof? Where did they get it so fast?" he asked. The DG ISPR said that India has "no evidence" for its allegations of Pakistan's involvement in the Pahalgam attack.

"You just concoct stories. I think the time has come to ask the real and bitter questions that Indian government needs to stop living in cinema and theatrics." He said Indian forces had carried out attacks across the Line of Control (LoC), especially targeting residential areas and mosques at night. "This reflects the extremist mindset of the Modi-led government," he added.

He also played videos of Indian

citizens and politicians questioning their government's narrative and security failures in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Even their own people are raising questions, but the government has no answers, he added. DG ISPR said India has a history of blaming Pakistan for attacks to serve political purposes. "They use terror incidents for domestic political gains and then kill innocent Kashmiris and Muslims, labelling them as terrorists."

He also played an interview of a former Indian governor of IIOJK, who blamed the Indian government for orchestrating the Pulwama incident. "India must stop blaming Pakistan without proof," the DG ISPR said. "If there is any real evidence, bring it before an independent, neutral commission for investigation. No country has the right to be the judge, jury, and executioner." He also revealed that two days after the Pahalgam incident, Indian media falsely reported that two Pakistani terrorists were killed during an infiltration attempt. "They were over 50-year-old civilians from a divided village in Azad Kashmir. Fake weapons were planted to pres-



ent them as terrorists." "These kinds of fake encounters happen regularly. India murders innocent people and labels them as terrorists while the world watches," he added.

Lt Gen Chaudhry said India banned thousands of social media accounts, including those based in Pakistan, to control the narrative and prevent people from hearing the truth. The DG ISPR has said that the military has neutralised 77 Israeli drones sent by India so far. "We are taking each one of them out. Not one of them has been able to go back to India, and not one of them will be able to go back."

Saudi Arabia calls for peaceful resolution of Pak-India disputes

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday received Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Adel Al-Jubeir, here at the PM House and discussed the prevailing situation in South Asia.

During the meeting, the Saudi minister said that the Kingdom was deeply concerned about the current situation in South Asia, reiterating his country's call for de-escalation, as well as peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes between Pakistan and India, in accordance with international law and the UN Security Council's relevant resolutions. The Saudi Minister of State is on a day-long official visit to Pakistan.

PM Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction at the positive trajectory of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia brotherly relations, while appreciating the Kingdom's steadfast and unwavering support to Pakistan, through thick and thin. While discussing the prevailing situation in South Asia, the prime minister strongly condemned India's missile and drone strikes against Pakistan that had resulted in the martyrdom of scores of innocent civilians, including women and children, as well as damage to civilian infrastructures.

He stressed that India's unprovoked and unjustified acts of aggression had violated Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and seriously endangered regional peace and stability. The prime minister paid tribute to the valiant armed forces of Pakistan, who had demonstrated exemplary commitment and courage in the defence of the nation, against the enemy's nefarious advances.

He said Pakistan was fully determined to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. He appreciated the Kingdom's diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation and bring peace in the region. The Saudi minister expressed heartfelt condolences over the loss of precious civilian lives.

The prime minister also conveyed



UK FS, Turkish FM briefed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday received a telephone call from UK Secretary of State David Lammy, who expressed deep concern over the unfolding situation between Pakistan and India. The UK foreign secretary conveyed his condolences on the tragic loss of civilian lives and underscored the need for both sides to exercise restraint and de-escalate, according to a Foreign Office press release.

DPM Dar briefed him on the regional situation due to India's illegal and unprovoked attacks on multiple cities across Pakistan that resulted in the martyrdom of innocent civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. He emphasized that Pakistan had demonstrated restraint in the face of these violations of international law and the UN Charter that threatened regional peace and security. The Government of Pakistan remained firmly committed to defending the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Dar added.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, spoke on the telephone with the Foreign Minister of Türkiye, Hakan Fidan and discussed with him about the ongoing situation in the region. The DPM/FM briefed him about the deteriorating regional situation and India's continued illegal and unprovoked attacks on mosques, residential areas, and other religious places resulting in the loss of innocent civilian lives. Ishaq Dar reiterated that Pakistan reserved the right to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity under the UN Charter and international law. The Turkish foreign minister conveyed condolences over the loss of lives and expressed solidarity with Pakistan.

his warm regards and respects to The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, as well as to the Crown Prince & Prime Minister, Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday received Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Adel Al-Jubeir here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and discussed matters

of mutual interests.

During the meeting, the two leaders exchanged perspectives on the evolving regional situation. The deputy PM expressed appreciation for the Kingdom's constructive diplomatic efforts in promoting peace and stability in the region. The two sides also held discussions on the full spectrum of bilateral relations, reaffirming their commitment to further strengthening the time-tested and fraternal ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan proved clear superiority over India

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that Pakistan's clear superiority in conventional warfare had been proven by successfully shooting down five Indian aircraft and 77 drones.

In a statement issued here, the minister said Pakistan's armed forces gave a befitting reply to the enemy's aggression. "The successful shooting down of five Indian warplanes and 77 Indian drones so far was a clear manifestation of Pakistan's air capabilities and military superiority", he added.

By clearly outmanoeuvring India, Pakistan has gained superiority over India in conventional warfare, he maintained. "Pakistan is a peaceful country, however, it is our legal, moral and state right to defend ourselves against any aggression. Pakistan has exercised this right responsibly and will do so in future as well," he remarked.

In recent days, he added, India has not only provoked on the military front but has also launched the worst propaganda campaign in the media at the internal level to mislead its people. The minister said a false narrative is being systematically fabricated on the Indian media through fake news, old photos and fake videos, which was clear proof of the panic, failure and madness of the Indian government.

"Pakistan has fully exposed India's false propaganda, which has led to further defeat for India, he said. Tarar said that the entire world had seen the failed attempt to hide India's failure through a false narrative and India has faced further embarrassment.

Indian media uses propaganda

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indian media is spreading misinformation to divert public attention from recent failures of its armed forces, sources said on Friday.

According to the sources, a coordinated propaganda campaign has been launched, with fabricated stories and dramatized reports resembling Bollywood productions. The campaign reportedly aims to distract from operational shortcomings by presenting false narratives and exaggerated claims.

Concerns have also been raised about media freedom in India, as access to the independent news outlet 'The Wire' has reportedly been restricted, signaling a rise in censorship. Adding to the controversy, an Indian businessman admitted deleting several tweets after discovering they were based on unverified reports aired by mainstream Indian channels.

Five martyred in Indian army's shelling on LoC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Five civilians were martyred on Friday in Indian army's shelling on residential areas after suffering heavy damage at the hands of Pakistan army along Line of Control (LoC).

According to security sources, the Indian army shelled civilian areas in Hajira, Forward Kahuta, and Khoi Ratta. They said seven other civilians were injured in the Indian army's shelling in different areas. The Pakistan army's retaliatory action silenced the Indian army's guns, they

added.

Earlier, the Pakistan army gave a befitting response to Indian aggression along the LoC in Kashmir sector and destroyed a military headquarters and several checkpoints on Friday. According to sources, the Dooba Mor post in the Kailer sector, the Sooji Battalion Headquarters, and the Jabbar and Tarkhiyan complexes in the Peer Kanthi sector were completely destroyed by Pakistan army.

They said Pakistan army retaliated to the unprovoked firing and shelling by the Indian forces which

injured four Pakistani civilians. They said the Pakistan army destroyed the Jhanda Ziarat post. The destruction of this post inflicted significant losses on the enemy.

In Hajira, Rawalakot, three civilians were injured as a result of Indian shelling, while another was wounded in Palyarni Colony. Pakistan also launched an effective counteraction in the Pandu sector, destroying the Indian army's headquarters. According to sources, the Pakistan army shot down an Indian quadcopter in Bagसर. The quadcopter was targeted and downed at 3:15am.

IMF okays \$1b loan tranche for Pakistan

WASHINGTON: The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has formally approved a \$1 billion disbursement for Pakistan under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), marking a significant step in the country's ongoing economic stabilisation efforts.

As per official sources, the tranche was greenlit following Pakistan's successful completion of key performance benchmarks. The EFF program, which is designed to support countries facing balance-of-payment difficulties, spans a 37-month period.

Additionally, Pakistan is also a participant in the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), which is aimed at enhancing climate resilience and spans 28 months. However, the current disbursement only pertains to the EFF. This immediate release of funds is expected to provide crucial support to Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, ease fiscal pressure, and help maintain economic momentum amid ongoing global financial uncertainty.

The IMF's decision comes after Pakistan fulfilled major structural benchmarks, including improvements in the tax-to-GDP ratio, maintaining a primary fiscal surplus, and achieving provincial fiscal targets. Economic analysts have lauded the development, noting that this financial injection is

vital for Pakistan's economic stability and investor confidence. They emphasized that it will not only ease short-term fiscal challenges but also bolster Pakistan's credibility in the eyes of international lenders.

In a geopolitical twist, reports suggest that India attempted to obstruct the approval process. However, the move failed, and in response, India allegedly withdrew its representative from the IMF Executive Board. Looking ahead, an IMF delegation is scheduled to visit Pakistan from May 14 to May 22. The team will work closely with Pakistani authorities in finalizing the upcoming federal budget and ensuring alignment with the IMF's fiscal discipline and reform agenda. — Agencies

Armed forces actively countering Indian aggression, NA informed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Friday assured the National Assembly that country was actively engaging with the international community amid heightened tensions with India, saying that no nation in the world has been left out of Pakistan's diplomatic outreach.

Speaking in the House, he said, "We have engaged everyone. Daily contact is being maintained, particularly with our brothers in the Gulf. Iran's Foreign Minister visited Pakistan two days ago and a full day was spent discussing various strategic options." He said Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar is in regular contact with the leadership of the UAE and Saudi Arabia. "Our communication with China is also on a daily basis and our mission at the United Nations is actively countering India's aggressive designs in an effective and impactful manner."

Khawaja Asif emphasized the need to further intensify these diplomatic efforts to make them more effective. "The results of Pakistan's successful diplomacy are already visible," he said. "Except for a few minor nations, no country

has come out in support of India. The majority of the world remains neutral, while key allies such as Türkiye, China and Azerbaijan have openly backed Pakistan."

He said that even India's traditional allies have refrained from standing by New Delhi, contrasting it with Israel's support for India, which he described as a "natural alliance between two anti-Islam states." The minister said the partnership between India and Israel reflects their true intentions and enmity toward Muslim nations.

Khawaja Asif lauded religious seminars and their students, calling them Pakistan's "second line of defence." He highlighted their readiness and potential role in national defence, saying, "These children, deeply rooted in religious values, play an important and positive role in national development and can be fully mobilized if needed."

He praised the Pakistan armed forces for their courageous performance along the Line of Control (LoC) and the working boundary, calling it unprecedented in the region's history. Despite India's numerical and technological superiority, including a much larger air force, he proudly said, "Pakistan has shot down five Indian fighter jets – a milestone in

aerial warfare history."

Commenting on the recent Indian drone attack, Khawaja Asif said it was an attempt to detect Pakistani positions. "The drones were not intercepted immediately to avoid revealing our locations. Once they reached a safe zone, they were neutralized," he added. He emphasized that all domestic challenges would be handled through national consensus. "The ongoing session of the National Assembly shows the seriousness of the government. The parliament, as the voice of the people, is actively addressing the current crisis," he said.

Khawaja Asif reassured the nation of the military's full readiness and active operations. "Let there be no doubt – the Pakistan armed forces are responding decisively and are in a position to carry out continued retaliatory actions, day and night." The minister said the political leadership and the nation, including people from all walks of life are united and proud of the armed forces.

"This is a time of national resilience. The enemy's morale has collapsed, while our people stand like an iron wall behind their army. In the coming days, the world will witness how Pakistan safeguards its land," he affirmed.

India's reckless conduct brought two N-states closer to major conflict: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday unequivocally condemning the Indian illegal acts of violating its sovereignty, said that India's reckless conduct had brought two nuclear-armed states closer to a major conflict, and that the country's jingoism and war hysteria should be a source of serious concern for the world.

"Indian actions were a flagrant violation of the UN Charter, international law, and established norms governing the inter-state relations. It is most unfortunate that India's reckless conduct has brought the two nuclear-armed states closer to a major conflict. India's jingoism and war hysteria should be a source of serious concern for the world," Foreign Office spokesperson Shafiqat Ali Khan said at his weekly press briefing. He said that India had been violating Pakistan's sovereignty since May 7 and that Indian strikes against Pakistan had endangered the regional peace and stability.

He said that being a home to over one-fifth of the world population, South Asia could ill-afford the irresponsible actions like the ones being carried out by India. He said that in the wake of Pahalgam attack, the Indian leadership had once again used the bogey of terrorism to advance its sham narrative of victimhood, jeopardizing regional peace. We once again reject any attempt to link the Pahalgam Attack with Pakistan, he

added. He said that international organizations like the United Nations and OIC had called for exercise of restraint during the last two weeks to which India did not pay heed.

Referring to the Indian foreign secretary's accusations against Pakistan at a special press briefing, the spokesperson said that alleging Pakistan of escalating the situation through the Pahalgam attack was "totally absurd" as India could not yet produce any credible and verifiable evidence of Pakistan's involvement. "The Pakistani forces did not attack Pahalgam but the Indian forces did attack multiple locations in Pakistan. Accordingly, Pakistan reserves the right to take all appropriate measures in its self-defence."

He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif proposed a transparent and independent probe into Pahalgam Attack through neutral investigators but India chose the path of belligerence and aggression. "Can any country in the world be allowed to attack another country on the basis of a few social media posts? India is attempting to act as a judge, jury and executioner," he remarked.

Spokesperson Khan told the media that the investigations in Mumbai and Pathankot incidents could not make progress due to India's non-cooperative attitude which remains reluctant to send 27 key witnesses in Mumbai case to Pakistan for physical appearance before the trial court in Islamabad. He said that

while portraying itself as a victim of terror, India conveniently ignored its own role in planning, sponsoring and abetting terrorism in Pakistan.

"It is no secret that India's network of targeted assassination and other subversive activities has gone global. Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav, a serving officer of Indian Navy, is a living proof of the Indian state's involvement in terror, subversion and espionage in Pakistan," referring to Samjhota Express tragedy, he said that the culprits, who had links with India's ruling dispensation, were acquitted.

Terming Indian claims of targeting the terrorists or terrorist infrastructure only, as "patently false" he said the strikes resulted in martyrdom of civilians, including women and children and mosques destroyed. Also mentioning the damage to Neelum Jhelum Hydroelectric Project, he demanded that India should be held accountable for these crimes. The spokesperson said that the Indus Waters Treaty withstood tests of wars and stand-offs but the current Indian dispensation was bent upon weaponizing water. "Holding in abeyance of IWT is unilateral and illegal. There are no such provisions in the treaty... It sets a dangerous precedent... Pakistan is an agrarian economy. Millions of people are dependent on the waters being regulated by this Treaty. The Indian decision is equivalent to an attack on the people of Pakistan, and its economy," he remarked.



Public Notice

This is to inform our valued customers that the business operations of the following branches will be converted to Islamic banking operations by September 2025.

Individual communication with the necessary details is being arranged for all customers via their latest registered mailing addresses, phone numbers, and other contact details available with HBL.

In case of any query or to get further assistance, kindly visit your respective branch or contact HBL Contact Centre at 111-111-425.

S. No.	Branch To Be Converted	Branch Details
Abbottabad		
1	Abbottabad-Mansehra Road Branch Code: 281	Shop No. 567, Al-Yousaf Plaza, Mansehra Road, Abbottabad 0992- 330308 0992-335397
2	Abbottabad-Jinnah Road Branch Code: 416	Cantonment Board, Shop No. 112, Block IV 0992-335528 0992-343723 0992-335524
Alpuri		
3	Bisham Branch Code: 1192	Khasra No. 1695-96 Bisham, Shangla 0996-400174 0996-400313
Azakhel		
4	Azakhel Bala, District Nowshera Branch Code: 327	Village Azakhel Bala, Tehsil & District Nowshera 0923-580001 0923-580213
Badhber		
5	Badhber Branch Code: 1855	2288 Scheme Chowk Badhber 2288, Tehsil & District Peshawar 091 2323570
Bahadur Khel		
6	Bahadur Khel Branch Code: 1606	PMDC Colony, Bahadur Khel Tehsil & District Karak 0927 222116
Balakot		
7	Kaghan Branch Code: 329	Khewat No. 380/591, Khasra No. 4620, 4621, Tehsil Balakot, District Mansehra 0997-420007
8	Balakot Kaghan Road Branch Branch Code: 613	Khasra No. 3351/3311/1900, Khata No. 1050, Khatooni No. 1368, Mouza Balakot Tehsil Balakot District Mansehra 0997-500333 0997-500222
Barikot		
9	Khazana Branch Code: 1488	Khazana, Tehsil Barikot, District Swat, Lower 0946-855600
Batkhela		
10	Batkhela Branch Code: 2565	Near Sabzi Mandi, Main Bazar Batkhela, Tehsil Batkhela & District Malakand 0932-411911
Battagram		
11	Ajmera Branch Code: 367	Khasra No. 3312/92, Thai Hotel, Main Karakoram Highway, Tehsil & District Battagram 0997-310114 0997-310014 0997-312114
Booni		
12	Booni, District Chitral Branch Code: 382	Village Booni, District Chitral 0943-470660 0943-470011
Chakesar		
13	Chakesar Branch Code: 1334	Chakesar Branch, Tehsil Chakesar, District Shangla 0996-855054
Charbagh		
14	Charbagh Branch Code: 1080	Plot No. 22 Trunk Road Charbagh, District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 0946-730252 0946-731348
Charsadda		
15	Charsadda-Tehsil Bazar Branch Code: 217	Tehsil Bazar, District Charsadda 091-6514235 091-6512518 091-6511928
16	Shabqadar Branch Branch Code: 1401	Khata No. 995/2572, Main Shabqadar, Tehsil Shabqadar District Charsadda 091- 6290046
Chitral		
17	Ayun District Chitral Branch Code: 383	18-Main Bazar Ayun, Tehsil & District Chitral 0943-490016
18	Chitral Branch Code: 975	Shah Plaza Bazar Chitral 0943-413100-413269
Dagai		
19	Dagai Branch Code: 323	Khasra No. 3720, Khata No. 491/476 Tehsil & District Swabi 0938-283029 0938-283030
Daggar		
20	Sowari Branch Code: 932	Khasra No. 3251, Main Bazar Sowari, District Buner 0939-555050 -0939-555040
Deewana Baba		
21	Deewana Baba Branch Code: 349	Khatooni No. 1458, Khasra No. 1293, Khewat No. 993, Sultan Plaza, Main Bazar, Chagharzai Road, Deewana Baba, Tehsil Gagra, District Buner 0939-540217
Lower Dir		
22	Timergara Branch Code: 1150	Timergara Branch, Tehsil Timergara, District Lower Dir 0945-823750 0945-821250 0945-822750
23	Rabat Branch Code: 1162	Rabat Branch, Tehsil Balambat, District Lower Dir 0345-222343
24	Koto Branch Code: 1743	Koto Branch, Tehsil Balambat, District Lower Dir 0945-890343
25	Samar Bagh Branch Code: 1744	Samar Bagh Branch, Tehsil Samar Bagh District Lower Dir 0945-850014

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Dobandi		
26	Dheri Khattak Branch Code: 535	Khasra No. 898/619, 901/618, Khatooni No. 120/129, Bahram Centre, G.T. Road, Tehsil Jehangira, District Nowshera 0923-510448 0923-510447
Dobian		
27	Dobian Branch Code: 332	Tehsil Lahor, District Swabi 0938-440209
Garam Chashma		
28	Garam Chashma Branch Code: 1498	Village Garam Chashma Tehsil Lotkoh District Chitral 0943-488044
Ghazi		
29	Ghazi Branch (Tarbela Dam Colony) Branch Code: 575	Rehman Plaza Ghazi, Khasra No. 1279, Khatooni No. 244, Tehsil Ghazi, District Haripur 0995-661535 0995-660012
Haripur		
30	Haripur-Main Bazar Branch Code: 198	No. 863/C, Sheranwala Gate, Main Bazar Haripur 0995-629075 0995-628650
31	Kot Najibullah Branch Code: 280	Khata No. 1074/1408 Khasra No. 4427 Hattar Road Tehsil & District Haripur 0995-618223 0995-618221
32	Hattar Industrial Estate Branch (Former Hattar Branch) Branch Code: 1410	Plot No. 19/2, Khewat No. 1243, Khatooni No. 1556, Hattar Industrial Estate, (Bandi Gullo), Haripur 0995-617580 0995-617581
33	Bandi Seeran Branch Code: 1760	Khasra No. 616, Village & PO Bandi Seeran Tehsil & District Haripur 0995-321509
Havelian		
34	Havelian-Main Bazar Branch Code: 660	Khasra No. 3084/1649/3083/1649, Z.K. Plaza Abbottabad Road, Havelian, Abbottabad 0992-810505 0992-810536
35	Ghambir Branch Code: 1528	Khasra No. 480/1, Ghambir, Tehsil Havelian, District Abbottabad 0992-468080 0992-468123
Hayatabad		
36	Hayatabad, Peshawar Branch Code: 1113	Plot No. 45, Sector B-1, Phase-5, Hayatabad, Peshawar 091-5822018
Kamer Sher		
37	Shewa Adda Branch Code: 288	Shewa Adda Branch, Tehsil & District Swabi, Khasra No. 1812-1826-1829-1830 0938-311182 0938-313194
Karak		
38	Karak Branch Code: 1435	Karak City Karak 0927-210706
Kohat		
39	Cantt. Branch, Kohat Branch Code: 218	K.C.B. III 7-A/7-B, Kohat City 0922-510007
40	Kohat University of Science & Tech. Kohat Branch Code: 343	Kohat University of Science & Technology Bannu Road, Kohat, Hangu 0922 554482
41	Cadet College Branch, Kohat Branch Code: 2460	Khasra No. 4189/1, Khata No. 4985, Cadet College, Main Pindi Road, Kohat 0922-864604
Kotli Kalan		
42	Kotli Kalan Branch Code: 1665	Village & P.O. Kotli Kalan (Saleh Khana) Nowshera 0923-650133
Kuza Bandai		
43	Kuza Bandai Branch Code: 351	Kuza Bandai Branch, Tehsil Kabal, District Swat 0946-880155 0946-880016
Kumber		
44	Kumber Branch Code: 1104	Kumber Branch, Tehsil Lal Qila, District Lower Dir 0945-885007 0945-885850
Lachi		
45	Lachi, Kohat Branch Code: 435	Lachi Kohat 0922-550011
Latamber		
46	Latamber, Karak Branch Code: 340	Property No. 1045/1020 Kohat Road Latamber Tehsil & District Karak 0927-220201
Lahor		
47	Favjoon Branch Code: 507	Khasra No. 3528 Favjoon (Lahor) District Swabi 0938-300006 0938-300005
Madyan		
48	Madyan Branch Code: 458	Khasra No. 736, Madyan Branch, Tehsil & District Swat 0946-882008 0946-882009
Mansehra		
49	Mansehra-Abbottabad Road Branch Code: 663	3697/3 Khata No. 1963/3707 4461/4154, Abbottabad Road, Tehsil & District Mansehra 0997-301074 0997-305694
Marai		
50	Marai Branch Code: 1761	Marai Payan Tehsil & District Kohat 0922-585101

S. No.	Branch To Be Converted	Branch Details
Mardan		
51	Mardan-Bank Road Branch Code: 219	Own Property Plot No. # C/933/233/0/216511 Bank Road Mardan 0937-866696 0937-863106 0937-863054 0937-862813 0937-863280
52	Mardan-Cantt. Branch Code: 1275	Shops # 6,7,8,9 & 10, CMH Plaza Near Pakistan Chowk, Cantt. Mardan 0937-863101 0937-863114
Mastuj		
53	Mastuj Chitral Branch Code: 2561	Main Bazar, Mastuj, Tehsil Mastuj & District Chitral 0943-486208 0943-486209
Matta		
54	Matta-New College Chowk Branch Code: 1942	Near College Chowk Bagh Dherai Road, Teh Matta District Swat 0946-790405 0946-793139
Mingora		
55	Mingora-Bank Square Branch Code: 221	Bank Square Main Bazar Mingora District Swat 0946-711178 0946-710535 0946-711159 0946-711211 0946-729501 0946-712212 0946-711354
Mitha Khel		
56	Mitha Khel Branch Code: 1596	826-Village Mitha Khel District Karak 0927 260022
Nizampur		
57	Nizampur Branch Code: 348	Khasra No. 322, Nizampur, Tehsil & District Nowshera 0333-5984964 0336-8409780
Nowshera		
58	Nowshera-Cantt. Branch Code: 222	83/38 83/4, G.T. Road Cantt. Army Area, Mall Road, Nowshera 0923-610501 0923-610522 0923-610524
59	Risalpur-PAF Academy Branch Code: 910	PAF Academy Branch, Risalpur, District Nowshera in the vicinity of Pakistan Air Force 0923-631522 0923-631322
Nusrat Khel		
60	Nusrat Khel, Kohat Branch Code: 338	Village & P.O. Nusrat Khel Kohat 0922-865507
Oughi		
61	Oughi Bazar Branch Code: 1448	Khasra No. 2364/2229/194, Khewat No. 1521, Khatooni No. 2133, Oughi Bazar, Shergarh Road, Oughi 0997-320022 0997-322533
Pabbi		
62	Pabbi, District Nowshera Branch Code: 235	Village & P.O. Pabbi District Nowshera 0923-528368
Par Hoti		
63	Mardan-Par Hoti Branch Code: 441	Khasra No. 741/742 Tehsil & District Mardan 0937-560907 0937-561347
Peshawar		
64	Dabgari Gate, Peshawar Branch Code: 90	Dabgari Gate P/No. 34510/458C 091-2212319
65	University Campus, Peshawar Branch Code: 404	Adjacent to Coffee Shop, Refreshment Centre (Canteen) University Campus, Peshawar 091-5611318
66	Khyber Bazar, Peshawar Branch Code: 696	Khyber Bazar, Peshawar 091-2566287
67	Super Market (Commercial Centre), Peshawar Branch Code: 959	Shop No. 1 to 3 (Ground Floor) and Shop No. 1 to 7 (First Floor), Saddar Road, Peshawar 091-5271892
68	Arbab Road, Peshawar Branch Code: 1161	No. 1 Arbab Road, Peshawar Cantt. 091-5278869
69	G.T. Road, Peshawar Branch Code: 1181	Orakzai Green Tower, Main G.T. Road, Tehsil & District Peshawar 091-2590623
70	Agriculture University, Peshawar Branch Code: 1487	NWFP Agriculture University, Peshawar 091-5701558
71	University Town, Peshawar Branch Code: 1697	8-E Park Road. University Town Peshawar 091-5703411
72	Gulbahar Colony No. 2, Peshawar Branch Code: 2242	Katha No. 485/823, Khasra No. .2295/131, 2300/131, Gulbahar Colony No. 2, Ishrat Cinema Road, Near Kids Montessori School Town No. 1, Peshawar City 091-2261393
73	Ring Road Branch, Peshawar Branch Code: 2362	Shop No. 1, Ground Floor, Subhan Tower, Pishtakhara Chowk, Ring Road, Hayatabad, Peshawar 091-5230676
74	New Fruit Market Peshawar Branch Code: 2560	Arbab Atta Ullah Jan Market, Nasirpur G.T. Road Tehsil & District Peshawar
75	University Road, Peshawar Branch Code: 2562	Khata No. 669/665, Khatooni No. 1347/1350, Ground First Jabbar Flats, University Road, Peshawar 091-5854380

S. No.	Branch To Be Converted	Branch Details
Barikot		
76	Barikot Branch Code: 1718	Khasra No. 1334, Khatooni No. 235, Main Bazar Pir Baba Road, Tehsil Barikot, District Swat 0946-751074 0946-753074
Palosa Sar		
77	Darosh, District Chitral Branch Code: 977	New Bazar Darosh District Chitral 0943-480217
Ranizai		
78	Thana Branch Code: 1419	Thana Branch, Tehsil Swat Ranizai, Malakand Agency, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 0932-440269
79	Totakan Branch Code: 1139	Tehsil Ranizai Swat, District Malakand Agency 0932-430020
80	Palai Dara Branch Code: 1959	3-Khanullah Market Main Bazar, Palai Dara, Tehsil Ranizai, Malakand Agency 0932-351105
Sama Ranizai		
81	Dargai Branch Code: 480	Dargai Branch, Tehsil Dargai, Malakand Agency 0932-332083 0932-332803 0932-332085
82	Kot Branch Code: 1137	Main Adda, Kot Malakand Agency Khasra No. 386, Khatooni No. 251, Tehsil Sama Ranizai, Malakand Agency 0932-353046
83	Sakhakot Branch Code: 1225	Sakhakot, 103, Main Bazar, Tehsil Sama Ranizai, Malakand Agency Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 0932-310301 0932-311031
Shagram		
84	Shagram Branch Code: 1821	Shagram Bazar Tehsil Torkow District Chitral 0943-476011 0943-476263
Shakardara		
85	Shakardara, District Kohat Branch Code: 341	Main Bazar Shakardara District Kohat 0922-553021
Sher Kot		
86	Sher Kot Branch Code: 1347	Sher Kot District Kohat 0922-80418
Shergarh		
87	Shergarh Branch Code: 825	Village P.O. Shergarh Tehsil Takht-i-Bhai, District Mardan 0937-830501 0937-830502 0937-830503
Swabi		
88	Swabi Branch Code: 201	Khasra No. 2461, Jehangira Road Swabi 0938-222071 0938- 221228
89	Zaida Branch Code: 1227	Khasra No. 2087/3, Khewat No. 1544, Khatooni No. 2883, Karim Khan Market, Main Bazar Zaida, Tehsil & District Swabi 0938-210415
90	Topi-GIK Institute of Engineering Sciences & Technology Branch Code: 1979	Topi GIK Institute Branch, Tehsil & District Swabi GIK-Institute Govt. Property 0938-281031 0938-281056
Takht-i-Bhai		
91	Takht-i-Bhai Branch Code: 472	Khata No. 391/706, Khasra No. 4177/897 to 899/1, Opposite Police Station, Main Malakand Road, Tehsil Takht-i-Bhai, District Mardan 0937-551010 0937-553219
92	Qasmi Branch Code: 1946	Qasmi Branch, Tehsil Takht-i-Bhai, District Mardan 0937-520059
93	Jalala Branch Code: 1957	Jalala Branch, Tehsil Takht-i-Bahi District Mardan 0937-506185 506186
Takht-e-Nasrati		
94	Takht-e-Nasrati Bala Branch Code: 1468	Village Takht-e-Nasrati, Karak 0927-250204
Tangi		
95	Tangi Branch Branch Code: 1799	Khasra No. 1557, Khewat No. 1128, Khatooni No. 1797 (Adjacent to Old Premises) Tehsil Tangi, District Charsadda 091-655534
Totalai		
96	Totalai Branch Code: 357	Totalai Branch, Tehsil Daggar, District Buner 0939-500097
Upper Dir		
97	Chakdara Branch Code: 278	Chakdara Branch, Tehsil Adenzai District Dir 0945-761075 0945-763775
98	Darora Branch Code: 1538	Khewat No. 1 & 6, Fazal Din Plaza, Main Bazar, Darora, Tehsil & District Upper Dir 0944-870277 0944-870040
Usterzai		
99	Usterzai Bala Branch Code: 1482	Village & P.O. Usterzai Tehsil & District Kohat 0922-580232
Zarobi		
100	Zarobi Branch Code: 277	Zarobi Branch, Tehsil & District Swabi Khasra No. 6403-6404-6405 0938-480105

Thalassemia cases increased: Governor Kundi expresses concern

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Friday expressed deep concern over the increasing number of thalassemia patients in the province, calling it an alarming situation that demands immediate and comprehensive action.

Speaking as the chief guest at an event organized by the Hamza Foundation at the Governor House on World Thalassemia Day, he stressed the need for utilizing all available resources to combat the disease.

"It is not just a medical issue, but a social and community challenge. Ensuring a healthy and safe future for our children requires a collective effort," the Governor said. He also announced plans to consult with all political parties to introduce legislation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly aimed at controlling the spread of thalassemia.

The event was attended by a large number of thalassemia patients, healthcare professionals, renowned actor Ajab Gul Afridi, and the founder chairman of the Hamza Foundation, Ijaz Ali Khan.

Highlighting the foundation's contributions, Ijaz Khan said that Hamza Foundation

has been providing free medical treatment, including blood transfusions and medication, to 1,526 registered thalassemia patients in the province for the past two decades.

Governor Kundi praised the foundation's efforts and reiterated his support for all organizations working to eradicate thalassemia. He urged all segments of society particularly religious scholars, teachers, media, and civil society to play their role in raising public awareness about the disease.

The event concluded with the Governor distributing appreciation shields to the organizers and individuals recognized for their contributions to the cause.

Timergara, Takht Bhai Bar Associations call on Governor Kundi: Governor Faisal Karim Kundi held separate meetings with Timergara Bar Association and the Takht Bhai Bar Association at Governor House on Friday.

President of the Peoples Lawyers Forum Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Advocate Gohar Rehman, was also present during the meetings.

The delegation from the Timergara Bar Association, led by President Advocate

Saleem Khan and General Secretary Advocate Zakir Khan, requested the Governor to release a special grant for the Bar and also establishment of Peshawar High Court Bench cooperation.

They emphasized that the grant would be used to improve infrastructure, install a solar energy system, establish a library, and meet other essential needs of the Bar.

Meanwhile, President of Takht Bhai Bar Association, Advocate Saifullah Khan, also apprised the Governor of the challenges faced by the legal community in his area.

Speaking to the delegations, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi acknowledged the significant role lawyers have played in Pakistan's politics and democratic development.

He said that the legal fraternity has always stood for constitutional supremacy and played a vital role in strengthening democracy.

The visiting delegations expressed their appreciation for the Governor's continued support of the Peoples Lawyers Forum and his efforts to strengthen the party. They also extended an invitation for the Governor to visit the Takht Bhai Bar.



PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati presiding over a meeting with Director General Audit regarding Kohistan Scandal.

PHC seeks reply against appointment of teachers Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Naeem Anwar and Justice Kamran Hayat has ordered provincial government to reply against the appointment of teaching cadre officers to management cadre posts in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Department of Education.

The writ filed by Muhammad Azam challenging the appointment of teaching cadre officers to management cadre posts, arguing that it is contrary to the law.

Speaker preside meeting regarding Kohistan Scandal

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting regarding the Kohistan Scandal was held under the chairmanship of Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati in the Assembly's Conference Room. The meeting was attended by the Director General (DG) Audit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and relevant officials of the Assembly Secretariat.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was provided regarding the ten-year audit of the suspicious bank accounts involved in the Kohistan Scandal. The briefing included an in-depth discussion on account access and the Terms of Reference (TORs) to ensure the audit process is transparent and effective.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati directed that the audit process be conducted with utmost integrity and transparency, so that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) can take effective action in recovering the misappropriated funds and ensure strict legal action against those responsible.

DG Audit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provided a detailed briefing on the scope of the audit and matters related to account access during the meeting. Speaker Babar Saleem Swati emphasized that the Provincial Assembly would fulfill its constitutional and legal duties with integrity, and the PAC is fully functional.

He stated that actions will be taken based on the findings that emerge from the audit process.

Speaker Babar Saleem

Tribunal dismisses appeal against appointment of district surgeon

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Services Tribunal has upheld the appointment of Dr. Inayat Ullah Safi as District Specialist Surgeon at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Dargai, Malakand, and dismissed the appeal filed by Dr. Syed Adil Shah, on Friday.

The counsel Khalid Rehman advocate informed that Dr. Inayat Ullah Safi was appointed as District Specialist Surgeon on August 12, 2024.

Dr. Syed Adil Shah, a Senior Medical Officer in Grade 18, filed an appeal against Dr. Inayat Ullah Safi's appointment, claiming that it was incorrect because Dr. Inayat Ullah Safi is a Grade 17 Medical Officer and was appointed to a Grade 18 post.

The tribunal, after hearing the arguments, dismissed Dr. Syed Adil Shah's appeal and upheld Dr. Inayat Ullah Safi's appointment.

Dr. Inayatullah Safi has completed MBBS and surgery degrees and has performed thousands of operations. He is a senior doctor and has previously worked in the same position.

The tribunal cited Supreme Court judgments, emphasizing that service tribunals cannot intervene in such matters unless bad faith is proven. The Secretary Health had approved Dr. Inayat Ullah Safi's appeal and restored him to the post of District Specialist Surgeon.

The provincial government argued that it has the authority to appoint doctors to various posts in public interest, and such decisions are part of executive authority.

Dr. Ismat Ara defends Ph.D thesis

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Ismat Ara has defended her Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D) thesis in Education from the Institute of Research and Education, University of Peshawar. Her research thesis was titled "Administrative Strategies of Headmasters, Teachers' Performance, and Students' Academic Achievement in Government High Schools of Peshawar District."

The scholar Dr. Ismat Ara, a teacher at Islamia Collegiate School thesis was supervised Dr. Syed Mian Munir while Dr. Farzana Naheed served as the external examiner. Dr. Ismat Ara is the first female teacher of Islamia Collegiate School to achieve a Ph.D. degree in Education. Dr. Ismat Ara dedicated her achievement to her parents.

This achievement highlights Dr. Ismat Ara's commitment to education and research, and her contribution to the field of education in Peshawar. Her research thesis provides valuable insights into the impact on teachers' performance and students' academic achievement.



KMU organizes event to mark World Thalassemia Day

FP Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University, Peshawar on Friday organized an event in collaboration of Institute of Pathology and Diagnostic Medicine (IPDM), Public Health Reference Laboratory (PHRL) and Dosti Welfare Organization.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Dr. Yasir Mahmood Yousafzai, Director IPDM/PHRL and Dr. Musharraf Jilani, Director Center for OMIC Sciences, Islamia College Peshawar.

The highlight of the event was a panel discussion on the theme "Together for Thalassemia: Uniting Communities, Prioritizing Patients". The panel discussion brought together experts from healthcare and academia, followed by an engaging Q&A session with the audience.

A play titled "Thalassemia Free Pakistan" was presented by the team of Abasin University. Dr. Syed Ijaz Ali Shah, Chief Health Sector Reforms Unit (HSRU), Health Department, KP, delivered the keynote address.

The speakers said that Thalassemia is a hereditary disease in which the body is unable to produce red blood cells properly, due to which the patient has to undergo repeated blood transfusions.

This disease is transmitted from parents to children and if both parents are carriers of this disease,



then their children are at risk of developing Thalassemia Major, which is a severe disease. Repeated blood transfusions can also expose the patient to other deadly diseases such as hepatitis or HIV.

Medical experts said that prevention of Thalassemia is possible through measures such as pre-marital blood tests for Thalassemia, public awareness campaigns, screening programs and free testing and counseling under government sponsorship.

Irfan Khan, Program Manager of Dosti Welfare Organization, delivered the closing remarks of the event, while the ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates in appreciation of the valuable presence and participation of the speakers, panelists, organizers, and assistants.



پی اے ایف بیس، رسالپور

ٹیٹنڈر برائے فراہمی کٹروڈنشی اشیاء

پی اے ایف بیس، رسالپور کو مالیاتی سال 2024-25 کے لیے مختلف اقسام کی کٹروڈنشی اشیاء بشمول چونا (تازہ)، چونا پاؤڈر، جھاڑو، فیٹل، سویپ، سرف، صابن، ڈیول، سرف کلیر، ٹوائلٹ آئٹم، دم، تیزاب اور دیگر جراثیم کش چیزیں برائش بیگز، مختلف سائز کے ڈسٹ بزاوردیگر اشیاء کی فراہمی کے لیے گورنمنٹ سے منظور شدہ ٹنڈر کیلراور جزل آرڈر سپلائر سے ٹینڈر درکار ہیں۔ سر بہر ٹینڈر قائم اس خبر کی اشاعت کے 15 یوم کے اندر اندر آفیسر انچارج، پرنسپل اسکول ڈرن پی اے ایف بیس، رسالپور کے آفس میں شام 10 بجے تک وصول کیے جائیں گے۔ ٹینڈر ای دن دوپہر 12 بجے کو لے جائیں گے۔ بیس انتظامیہ کو یہ حق حاصل ہے کہ کنگنیں وجوہ کی بنیاد پر کوئی بھی ٹینڈر رد کر دے۔

آفیسر انچارج، پرنسپل اسکول ڈرن

پی اے ایف بیس، رسالپور

فون نمبر: 0923-631391

موبائل نمبر: 0323-9413312

Third phase of mass marriages completed

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, stated that the process of nikah (marriage) should be made easier. In line with this mission, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa successfully organized the third phase of mass marriages. On Friday, during a ceremony held in Peshawar, 50 underprivileged and orphaned couples were united in marriage. The Provincial Minister participated as the chief guest and congratulated the couples, saying that in the current era of inflation, fulfilling the sacred duty of marriage has become a burden for many families.

To address this social issue, the government has decided to provide interest-free loans, financial assistance, and other facilities. During the mass wedding ceremony, each bride received financial assistance of Rs. 200,000 from the Zakat Committee Peshawar, while the groom was provided with an interest-free loan of up to Rs. 500,000 to help them start a respectable life.

Referring to Imran Khan's welfare vision and the directives of Chief Minister, Syed Qasim Ali Shah said that the program is being expanded across the province, and similar events will be held in other districts in the coming phases. The ceremony also included a banquet for guests, gifts for the newlywed couples, distribution of cheques, and pick-and-drop service to the wedding hall.

In conclusion, the Provincial Minister expressed special thanks to the Social Welfare Department and the autonomous organization Savi for making the program successful. He said such charitable spirit deserves appreciation at all levels.



State of brinkmanship

Laiba Khan

As India's war rhetoric resurfaces following its overnight missile strikes under Operation Sindoor, and with Hindutva-aligned media escalating tensions through a tightly controlled narrative, South Asia is once again teetering on the edge of conflict. In the aftermath of the Pahalgam massacre and its politicized coverage, it has become evident that in a climate steeped in ultra-nationalism, reason and restraint are swiftly eclipsed.

New Delhi's response to any terror incident within its borders appears to follow a troublingly predictable trajectory: an incident occurs, immediate blame is cast on Pakistan without conclusive evidence, followed by the rollout of a provocative military or political response. This playbook has been seen before.

During the 2019 Pulwama attack, eleven intelligence warnings were reportedly ignored, yet the incident was weaponized to justify air strikes across the border. A similar pattern has emerged post-Pahalgam, where pre-attack intelligence inputs were overlooked, only to be followed by inflammatory rhetoric and policy hardening. This negligence is then transformed into a strategic opportunity to bolster domestic political capital through external escalation.

In the case of Pahalgam, India swiftly shifted from crisis management to conflict exploitation. Even before a conclusive investigation could be launched, New Delhi named Pakistan as the orchestrator, using the tragedy to set the stage for Operation Sindoor—an overnight missile offensive targeting alleged militant infrastructure in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Media narratives were quickly synchronized to frame the strikes as decisive and heroic, drowning out calls for restraint or verification. By projecting retaliatory aggression as national strength, the Indian government not only diverted attention from its own security lapses but also reignited nationalist fervor ahead of upcoming regional elections. In doing so, the Pahalgam incident became less about justice for the victims and more about crafting a politically convenient spectacle of strength.

The pattern of provocation following domestic crises has direct implications for regional stability—especially given the nuclear backdrop of South Asia. While the likelihood of full-scale war remains low due to mutual deterrence, the possibility of low-intensity conflicts escalating beyond control is dangerously high. This is where the stability-instability paradox becomes especially relevant.

Nuclear weapons deter all-out war, yet they simultaneously embolden limited conflict under the assumption that the nuclear threshold won't be crossed. This paradox is now a central feature of Indo-Pak dynamics.

Ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, militant incidents, and state-sponsored rhetorical aggression all feed into a cycle of escalation, often under the delusion that nuclear deterrence will contain any fallout. But this is a perilous gamble—one the BJP-led government in India seems willing to make, even at the cost of regional security. The belief in a "space for limited war under the nuclear umbrella" is not only flawed but also increasingly reckless in a context where a single miscalculation could spiral into catastrophic conflict.

Weaponizing incidents like Pahalgam without transparent investigation pushes the region toward a tipping point.

The post-Pulwama-Balakot episode of 2019 shattered long-held assumptions about strategic restraint. India conducted air strikes deep into Pakistani territory, while Pakistan responded with measured yet assertive retaliation. This marked the first direct military engagement between two nuclear powers since the 1999 Kargil conflict. The lesson was stark: deterrence cannot be blindly trusted to prevent military exchanges.

India's evolving strategic posture suggests it is operating under the illusion that it can

achieve tactical gains without provoking strategic consequences. But such a belief fails to consider the structural volatility of South Asia, where conventional and nuclear capabilities coexist within an atmosphere of deep mistrust and minimal dialogue.

In a region that collectively holds around 350 nuclear warheads, the use of even a fraction could result in devastation on an unimaginable scale. Studies suggest that the use of just 20 percent of these arsenals could lead to nearly 100 million deaths. These are not abstract figures—they are real human costs that underline the urgency of de-escalation.

The current Indo-Pak escalation is not merely a bilateral flashpoint—it is a litmus test for regional peace, economic progress, and collective security. Although standoffs are not new in Indo-Pak history, this new escalation is distinct due to the strong influence of external dynamics. India's increasingly assertive regional posture stems from its expanding global engagements, particularly with the US, France, and Australia, as well as its economic ambitions within the Indo-Pacific framework. Conversely, Pakistan's growing partnerships with China, Gulf States, and regional multilateral forums such as the SCO act as strategic counterweights. These external orientations are reshaping South Asia's security architecture and deepening polarization.

Amidst such complex entanglements, India's decision to provoke Pakistan militarily is not only irresponsible—it is perilous. Any miscalculation under the current conditions could trigger a chain reaction involving multiple regional actors, dragging South Asia into a broader conflict. With both India and Pakistan being nuclear-armed states, the risk of escalation crossing a catastrophic threshold cannot be ignored. Unlike conventional skirmishes, nuclear posturing introduces an existential dimension to the crisis—one where deterrence can quickly erode under political pressure and nationalist fervor. In such a scenario, regional cooperation, trade, and stability would be the first casualties, replaced by widespread insecurity and global alarm.

India's evolving strategic posture suggests it is operating under the illusion that it can



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- The firms must be General Sales Tax (GST) - registered.
- Quotations should be valid for minimum of 90 days, and the envelope should be marked with the Tender opening time and date.
- Last Date of Submission within **15 days** from the publishing of said advertisement which will be opened on the same date on 1200 Hrs. Bidders authorized reps are required to be present at the time of tender opening.
- The Officer Commanding reserves the right to accept or reject any part or the entire tender, on technical grounds.
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In brief

ADR cut burden from judiciary F.P. Report

BANNU: Deputy Commissioner Bannu has said that the Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) system introduced by the provincial government has proved successful in resolving people's civil and criminal nature disputes amicably. This he said while speaking at a meeting in his office in which Additional deputy commissioner and members of alternate dispute resolution (ADR) committee were in attendance. The participants discussed the role of ADR in quick and prompt resolution of disputes with details and declared it a quiet revolution in the justice system. The members of the ADR committee presented valuable suggestions to make the ADR system more effective and workable. A member termed the initiative a positive step for the promotion of sustainable peace, justice and mutual understanding in the region. The deputy commissioner Muhammad Fahim said that the aim of ADR practices was to resolve civil and criminal disputes in accordance with traditions, culture and local customs, through speedy and cheap justice.

Gul Da Namair festival concluded F.P. Report

BUNER: The three-day festival "Buner Gul Da Namair" concluded at Government Degree College and Girls College Hashim Sar. In the separately held closing ceremonies, DC and Chairman DDAC in Sawari and AC Mandanr Maryam Bakhtawar and College Principal Sadaf at Hashim Sar gave special awards of Fakhar-e-Buner to male and female officers, players, political, social and religious figures of various institutions. While hundreds of trophies and shields were given to Assistant Commissioners, TMOs and various fields promoters including Hockey Promoter Zahid Ali and others for individual performance. Besides, trophies and shields were given to Meena Bazaars, Stalls, Games and Sports, Speeches and Stage Shows for good performance at Girls College Hashim Sar. The closing ceremonies featured documentaries of the three days of activities and special performances were presented on the occasion of the day, which were enjoyed separately by thousands of men and women who participated in the closing ceremonies. They applauded the performers with great enthusiasm, whistling and shouting slogans, and creating a buzz of joy in the air with loud music and loud clapping.

Solidarity held F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: A "Pakistan Zindabad" rally in support of Pakistan Army held in Shahdadkot was led by Assistant Commissioner Mohsin Sheikh, a large number of citizens from the AC office carried Pakistani flags and chanted slogans and reached Koto Moto Chowk, on Friday. Addressing to a large number of citizens, Assistant Commissioner Mohsin Sheikh, DSP Malik Shahzad and others said that the Pakistan Army is the protector of the country's borders and the guarantor of national security, due to which the entire nation stands with its army and will continue to demonstrate solidarity in every difficult time. The teachers and students of Government High School Ghogharo, Kamber, expressed solidarity with the Pakistan Army, a wonderful rally was taken out from the school under the supervision of Headmaster Muhammad Nawaz Mangan and Senior Teacher Irshad Ali Wagan.



QUETTA: Residents of Hazara Town holding placards during a protest against shortage of water supply and electricity.

Heavy downpour damages standing crops

F.P. Report

WANA: Torrential rains and sudden flooding have wreaked havoc in the South Waziristan region, leaving local farmers grappling with substantial financial losses. The unremitting downpour, accompanied by strong winds, triggered massive floodwaters that swept through farmlands, devastating standing crops and critical infrastructure.

Local farmers are reeling from the damage. Among them is Jibrin, whose wheat fields were completely destroyed by the surging waters. Speaking to media outlets, he expressed his distress: "Yesterday's rain completely destroyed our wheat crop. The harvest was ongoing, but during the process, floodwaters washed away all the

wheat." He further revealed that the harsh weather conditions also shattered several solar panels, crippling their solar-powered irrigation systems. "The rain and strong winds broke many of our solar plates, and now our entire solar system is useless," Jibrin lamented. The agricultural impact extends beyond wheat. Faiz Muhammad, another farmer from the region, highlighted the widespread destruction of other vital crops. "The rain caused severe damage to the mung beans, cotton, and vegetable crops," he shared. "Every year, natural disasters cause heavy financial losses to local farmers in Waziristan," he added, underlining the community's ongoing struggle against climate-related

challenges.

Faiz Muhammad urged the provincial government to step in with immediate support. "The government should announce financial assistance for local farmers so that the losses can be compensated," he appealed, stressing that many farmers are left with nothing to rebuild their livelihoods.

According to local reports, the Laman area of Spain bore the brunt of the storm's fury. Entire fields were submerged, solar panels shattered, and irrigation systems left in ruins. As recovery efforts begin, the affected farmers are calling for urgent government intervention to alleviate their mounting losses and restore hope for the upcoming planting season.

Dr. Jamil take charge as VC AWKUM F.P. Report

MARDAN: The newly appointed Vice Chancellor Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmed, has taken charge. Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmed holds a PhD in Artificial Intelligence from King's College London, on Friday.

He has extensive experience in the field of IT, in addition to more than 28 years of administrative, teaching, research and project management experience, has held senior positions in Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute (GIK), Bahrain University and has served as Vice Chancellor of Hazara University, Iqra University, Kohat University and Abasin University Peshawar.

The appointment of Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmed as Vice Chancellor of Abdul Wali University Mardan is certainly a positive step. His leadership and experience can play a significant role in the overall development of the university. Especially his expertise in the field of IT will further develop in this field. His involvement in exploring new technological avenues, creating modern curricula and improving the educational environment can definitely take the institution to new heights.

Councilors annoy absent depts officers F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Tehsil Council presiding officer Wali Muhammad Shinwari and councilors disapproved poor participation of various government department officers in tehsil council meeting and declared it anti-Local Government Act.

In a press statement issued on Friday Wali Muhammad Shinwari and other councilors' regretted that repeatedly the officials of different departments have remained absent from the council meeting that showed their least interest in addressing issues being faced by the laymen. They disapproved of the arrogant and irresponsible behavior of the government officials towards the elected representatives of the people and sought legal action against them. They came hard on the AC, Landi Kotal who is administrative highup and responsible for efficiency of the government departments. Neither the AC nor the departments officers participate in the tehsil council that is against the Local Government Act, they added.

KP Minister inaugurates key projects in Swat

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation, Aaqib ullah Khan, has launched two major projects in Swat, aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and mitigating flood risks.

The minister inaugurated the restored Aziz Khel, Janki Khel, and Matorzi irrigation scheme in Fatehpur, completed at a cost of Rs. 123.38 million. This scheme will benefit over 6 villages, including Ziarat Nawikale, Nala Qala, and Farhat abad, by increasing crop production and improving farmers' economic conditions.

The second project involves clearing flood debris from the Swat River and Daral Khwar streams at Bahrain, undertaken at a cost of Rs. 157.5 million. This initiative aims to



reduce flood risks and address issues faced by locals.

Minister Aaqib ullah Khan reaffirmed the government's commitment to modernizing agriculture and ensuring water accessibility for farmers. He announced plans to implement similar schemes in other districts to achieve sustainable agricultural development.

The inauguration cere-

monies were attended by Provincial Assembly members, senior officials, and local dignitaries, highlighting the government's efforts to develop the agricultural sector and improve residents' lives. The projects demonstrate the government's focus on developing the agricultural sector and improving the lives of farmers and residents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

JI mobilizes public in support of Kashmir

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: On the call of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan chief Hafiz Naem ur Rehman, Youm-e-Azam (Day of Resolve) was observed with fervor across nine districts in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Upper Chitral, Lower Chitral, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangla, and Bajaur. Large rallies were held in various cities here on Friday.

The central rally was addressed by Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North chief Inayatullah Khan, who strongly criticized the government's 2019 stance on the Kashmir issue. "The then government under

Prime Minister Imran Khan and Army Chief General Bajwa made a U-turn when India revoked Kashmir's special status," he said, reiterating that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had called Kashmir Pakistan's lifeline—a stance Jamaat-e-Islami still upholds.

Inayatullah Khan emphasized that the water dispute between Pakistan and India can only be resolved if Kashmir becomes part of Pakistan. He called for a shift from a defensive to an offensive policy, urging the government to give India a firm response and reclaim occupied Kashmir. "We will also raise our voice for Palestine and stand by our defense institutions for the protection of Pakistan," he

added. The JI district chief and former MNA Maulana Asadullah, Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Faheem, and minority representative Sudesh Kumar also addressed the rally. The speakers condemned India's failed military actions against Pakistan and termed them cowardly. They expressed solidarity with the people and stressed the need for national unity.

At the conclusion of the rally, it was announced that an "India and Israel Downfall March" would be held in Chakdara on May 18. Hafiz Naem ur Rehman is scheduled to address the gathering, and the public has been urged to participate in large numbers.

Protest demonstration against Indian aggression

F.P. Report

BUNER: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has staged a protest demonstration in the main business hub in Sawari on Friday against Indian aggression. The protesters were holding banners and placards on which slogans were written against the war madness of India and Modi.

The protesters were addressed by JI Emir Engineer Nasir Ali, former Emir Muhammad Hanif, and Youth president Abbas Shaheen. They strongly

condemned the Indian forces' attack on civilian settlements and targeting of personal and religious places in the dark of night, calling it a cowardly act.

The speakers also reacted strongly to the use of Israeli drones in the attacks by the Indian forces, calling it a global alliance and a big conspiracy of the Zionist powers against Islam, Muslims and Pakistan. They gave a clear message that despite the policy and political differences with the government and institutions, Jamaat-e-Islami

stands with Pakistan for its security, integrity and stability.

They assured the government and army that the nation is with them as a united force in this hour of trouble. They urged the government and the army to take advantage of this opportunity and attack India with full force and punish India for its war-madness in such a way that it will remember it forever and even after forgetting it, it will not dare to look with dirty eyes against Islam and Pakistan again.

Lawyers playing key role for establishing rule of law

F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Vice President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce, Haji Ghulam Ali, stated that lawyers have always stood up to tyrannical and authoritarian forces for the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in the country.

He emphasized that lawyers are an honorable and responsible segment of society, and their powerful role in upholding the supremacy of the Constitution and opposing Un-Islamic laws has always been exemplary. He added

that the leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman, has consistently raised a strong voice inside and outside the assemblies against Un-Islamic laws and injustice. He was speaking as the chief guest at the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected cabinet of the Jamiat Lawyers Forum (JLF), Takht Bhai chapter, held at the Bar Room of the Tehsil Complex, Takht Bhai.

Earlier, Haji Ghulam Ali administered the oath to the newly elected JLF officials including President Muhammad Ikram Safi Advocate, General Secretary Mian Ijaz Ali Shah, Joint Secretary Shah Masood Advocate, Finance Secretary Hafiz Farmanullah Advocate, and Patron-in-Chief Mian Zahid Ali Advocate.

The event was also addressed by former Member of the National Assembly Maulana Muhammad Qasim, former provincial JUI and District Emir of Mardan Maulana Amanat Shah, JLF President Muhammad Ikram Safi Advocate, General Secretary Mian Ijaz Ali Shah, and President of the Takht Bhai Bar, Saifullah Khan Mohmand Advocate.

Advocate, General Secretary Mian Ijaz Ali Shah, Joint Secretary Shah Masood Advocate, Finance Secretary Hafiz Farmanullah Advocate, and Patron-in-Chief Mian Zahid Ali Advocate.

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In times of crisis, nations are tested, and Hafizabad today stood as a shining example of how differences can be set aside in the face of a greater national cause. The rally reaffirmed the unwavering trust of the Pakistani people in their Armed Forces and their collective resolve to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and dignity at all costs.

Nation stand firmly with Pak armed forces: Saira Afzal

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In a powerful and historic display of national solidarity, political leaders from both ruling and opposition parties in Hafizabad set aside their political differences and joined hands to express unwavering support for the Pakistan Armed Forces. A large and symbolic rally, jointly organized by political and civil leadership, commenced from the District Complex and culminated at Fawara Chowk, resonating with patriotic chants and a unified call for the defense of the homeland.

The rally was spearheaded by Punjab Chief Minister

Coordinator and former Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tarar, PTI MPA Ch. Zameer-ul-Hassan Bhatti, and Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party ticket holder Mamoon Jafar Tarar. Senior administrative and law enforcement officials, including Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq and District Police Officer Atif Nazir, also participated, underscoring the joint resolve of the civil administration and political forces to stand with the nation's defenders.

Prominent local figures such as Ch. Tahawur Hussain Tarar, Muhammad Bukhsh Tarar, Muhammad Zaman Bhoon, and representatives from various religious, social, and community

organizations added further strength to the rally, which saw hundreds of citizens joining on motorcycles and cars, waving national flags and chanting slogans of unity.

Addressing the media at Fawara Chowk, Saira Afzal Tarar strongly condemned the recent unprovoked aggression by India, stating, "India's cowardly attack under the cover of darkness was met with an immediate and befitting response by the Pakistan Air Force and our valiant Armed Forces. This once again affirms that Pakistan's military ranks among the finest in the world." She emphasized that the people of Pakistan, including the residents of

Hafizabad, have risen above political, sectarian, and ideological divides to rally behind the Pakistan Army. "We are a nation rooted in faith, if martyred, we achieve eternal honor; if victorious and we uphold our sovereignty. The spirit of sacrifice and valor runs deep in our blood," she asserted.

Ch. Zameer-ul-Hassan Bhatti, representing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, echoed similar sentiments, stating, "Our first identity is that we are Pakistanis. We may differ in politics, but in matters of national security, we are united. India will be answered not just in words but in kind, brick for brick, and stone for stone, by our brave soldiers." He applauded

the discipline, preparedness, and professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and reiterated his full support on behalf of his party.

Mamoon Jafar Tarar, ticket holder of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, condemned the enemy's actions and called for national unity. "The enemy struck at night, but our forces responded like a thunderbolt. India will soon learn the consequences of provoking a nation united in its love for its country. This is not just a show of support, it is a declaration that we stand resolute with our military in defense of every inch of our land," he said.

The rally, marked by the par-



GAZA: A drone view showing houses destroyed by Israel in Beit Hanoun.

Europe's costly military pensions complicate defence build-up

PARIS (Reuters): European nations want to spend big on artillery, missiles and drones, but costly military pension commitments risk constraining those ambitious plans, according to previously unreported NATO-member defence budget data compiled by Reuters. NATO's European members are rushing to ramp up spending on military hardware as a bellicose Russia threatens their eastern flank and US President Donald Trump's long-term commitment to European security appears suddenly in doubt. But for over a dozen NATO members, whose military spending Reuters analysed, pensions make up a large - and largely overlooked - chunk of their defence budgets.

While those are funds that could potentially be redirected toward firepower, experts warn that any cuts to generous retirement benefits could make it harder to recruit personnel. "A non-insignificant portion of what is accepted as defence spending doesn't deliver any capabilities, nor more troops, nor anything, but is earmarked for pensions," said Camille Grand, a former NATO assistant secretary general for defence investment. European nations' historical failure to meet a target to spend the equivalent of 2% of economic output on their militaries to shore up NATO's collective defences has angered Trump, who now wants to hike the threshold to 5%. And while 23 of NATO's 32 members now meet the 2% target - up from just six in 2021 - rules allowing governments to include military pension spending distort that picture.

NATO does not publish the individual military pension expenditures of its members, 30 of which are European. Reuters, however, compiled data that 13 NATO members - the United States, Canada and 11 European allies - reported either in their national budgets or, for some, to the United Nations. In Belgium, Bulgaria and Italy, nearly 20% of defence budgets are used to pay soldiers' retirements, while France is not far behind at nearly 16%. Germany's pension burden is comparatively lower at 11.5% of defence spending, shining a kinder light on a country whose complex history has traditionally made it unwilling to countenance greater militarisation but which is now ramping up its capabilities. Germany's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment. The average pension spend among the 13 nations analysed by Reuters was 12% of defence budgets. Eight of the 11 European nations met the 2% of GDP spending target last year. Excluding pensions, however, that number falls to just five. Although NATO spending has been rising, some members are still lagging behind.

Belgium, Italy and Spain have notably committed to meet the 2% target this year, in time for a June 24-25 NATO summit in The Hague where Trump wants a deal on a 5% target. NATO chief Mark Rutte has proposed members boost defence spending to 3.5% of GDP and commit a further 1.5% to broader security-related spending to meet Trump's demand, Reuters reported last week.

As countries debate spending hikes, however, they need to ensure the goal is actually increasing firepower, said Armin Steinbach with the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel.

"If much of the money goes into salaries or pensions, this is not productive investment," he said. That won't be easy. Italy's economy minister Giancarlo Giorgetti said last month he was "acutely aware" a spending hike was needed. But he also said the government, which currently excludes pensions from reported military spending, would change its accounting in part to reflect those costs as it seeks to meet NATO's expectations. Italy reported to the United Nations that it spent 5.2 billion euros (\$5.9 billion) on military pensions in 2023, or 18% of total military expenditure, more than it spent on aircraft and ships. France, whose hopes for a defence build-up are limited by a huge budget deficit, only just meets the 2% target thanks to pension spending. Without that outlay, NATO's fourth-biggest military would only be at 1.7% this year.

France's 2025 defence budget includes 9.5 billion euros on pensions, far greater than the 5.7 billion euros it spends on maintaining its air and submarine-borne nuclear arsenal. In contrast to its European allies' often bloated pension burdens, the United States, NATO's biggest military, spends the equivalent of 8.5% of its defence budget on retirement benefits. And Washington shifts much of that cost to other parts of the government, limiting the direct impact on defence spending.

Black smoke signals no pope elected in first conclave vote

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Black smoke billowed from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel, signalling an inconclusive first vote by cardinals locked in the Sistine Chapel in a conclave to elect a new pope to guide the Roman Catholic Church. Thousands of faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square waiting for smoke to pour from a narrow flue on the roof of the chapel at the end of a day rich in ritual and pageantry, with prelates praying for divine guidance in their secret ballot. The crowds had to be patient as it took longer than expected for the smoke to appear, more than three hours after the start of the conclave. This was an hour more than it took for smoke to be seen after the first vote in the 2013 conclave that picked the late Pope Francis.

When a pope is chosen, white smoke will emerge, but this had not been

expected a pontiff has not been picked on the first day of a conclave in modern times. However, some cardinals said this week that they hoped to wrap things up to show the Church can remain unified after the often divisive, 12-year papacy of Francis, who died last month. The 133 cardinal electors, who are all aged under 80, will spend the night secluded in one of two Vatican guest-houses - where they can continue their deliberations in a more informal setting before returning to the chapel.

Following single round of voting, the red-hatted "princes of the Church" will hold two votes in the morning session and two in the afternoon, continuing in coming days until one man has secured a majority of at least two-thirds - 89 cardinals this time around. Their only communication with the outside world will be

the smoke from the chimney as they burn their completed ballot papers mixed with special chemicals - black when a voting session ends with no result, white when a pontiff is elected. Modern papal conclaves are typically short. The 2013 conclave lasted just two days, likewise in 2005 when his predecessor, Benedict XVI, was picked. In recent days, cardinals have offered different assessments of what they are looking for in the next pontiff who will lead the 1.4-billion-member Church. While some have called for continuity with Francis' vision of greater openness and reform, others have said they want to turn the clock back and embrace old traditions. Many have indicated they want a more predictable, measured pontificate. In a sermon ahead of the conclave, Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, who

at 91 is too old to take part in the vote, told his fellow prelates they must set aside "every personal consideration" in choosing the new pontiff and keep in mind "only ... the good of the Church and of humanity".

He also suggested the next pope had to respect diversity within the Church. "Unity does not mean uniformity, but a firm and profound communion in diversity," he said. Some ultra-conservatives had branded Francis as a heretic, accusing him of being too welcoming to the LGBT community, too accommodating to Protestants and Muslims and too open on a range of topics, including offering communion for the divorced. No clear favourite has emerged, although Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle are considered the front-runners.

Swiftly deporting migrants to Libya would violate court order, US judge rules

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A US judge said any effort by the Trump administration to deport migrants to Libya would clearly violate a prior court order barring officials from swiftly deporting migrants to countries other than their own without first weighing whether they risk persecution or torture if sent there.

US District Judge Brian Murphy issued an order restricting their removal after Reuters, citing three US officials, reported that the Trump administration may for the first time deport migrants to Libya despite previous US condemnation of Libya's harsh treatment of detainees. Two of the officials said the US military could fly the migrants to the North African country, but stressed that plans could change.

Reuters could not deter-

mine how many migrants would be sent to Libya or the nationalities of those the administration was eyeing for deportation, including whether any were Libyan nationals. The relatives of one Mexican national told Reuters he had been instructed to sign a document allowing for his deportation to the African nation. Immigration rights advocates said in court filings that individuals potentially subject to deportation to Libya also included Filipino, Laotian and Vietnamese migrants.

When asked about the planned deportations, President Donald Trump said he did not know whether they were happening. "You'll have to ask Homeland Security," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. The Pentagon referred queries to the White House. The White

House and the Department of Homeland Security did not respond to requests for comment. A State Department spokesperson said: "We do not discuss the details of our diplomatic communications with other governments."

Libya's Government of National Unity said it rejected the use of Libyan territory as a destination for deporting migrants without its knowledge or consent. It also said there was no coordination with the United States regarding the transfer of migrants. Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army, which controls eastern Libya, also rejected the idea, saying in a statement that taking in migrants deported from the US "violates the sovereignty of the homeland." After news broke of the potential flight to Libya, lawyers for a group of migrants pursuing

a class action lawsuit made an emergency request that Murphy block migrants from being deported to Libya or any country en route, including Saudi Arabia, without ensuring their due process rights were met.

Murphy, who was appointed by Democratic President Joe Biden, wrote: "If there is any doubt - the Court sees none - the allegedly imminent removals, as reported by news agencies and as Plaintiffs seek to corroborate with class-member accounts and public information, would clearly violate this Court's Order." The administration had recently argued that Murphy's prior order only applied to DHS and not the Department of Defense, which US officials told Reuters would be involved in flying migrants to Libya.

Germany to reject undocumented migrants

BERLIN (Reuters): German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt issued an order to reject undocumented migrants, including asylum seekers, at the country's borders, on the first day of work for the new coalition government of Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

Dobrindt announced the decision to rescind a 2015 instruction that had allowed entry for undocumented third-country nationals, with the aim of reducing illegal migration, saying the numbers were still too high. "This issue is about clarity, consistency and control," Dobrindt told reporters. Germany's Bild newspaper first reported the plans.

The rejection of asylum seekers is legally controversial. The coalition agreement between Merz's conservatives and the Social Democrats says the move should be made in coordination with neighbouring countries. Dobrindt, a member of Merz's conservative bloc, plans to send up to 3,000 additional officers to the borders to curb irregular migration, raising the number of border police to up to 14,000, according to Bild's report. The 2015 instruction was given under then-chancellor Angela Merkel, whose term was defined by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers in Germany, many fleeing war in Syria.

Before Germany's federal election in February, Merz had promised a crackdown on migration after a spate of violent crimes involving migrants and rising support for the far-right. His coalition has since agreed to reject asylum seekers at borders, enable deportations to Syria and suspend family reunions.

Greece, Bulgaria reach water deal

ATHENS/SOFIA (Reuters): After months of negotiations, Bulgaria and Greece have signed a five-year water deal, the Bulgarian foreign ministry confirmed, a decision that prompted relief among Greek farmers anxious about their crops. The deal replaces a 60-year agreement that expired last July, underscoring just how precarious water resources have become in the Mediterranean region due to climate change.

The impasse over a deal had alarmed farmers in the northern Greek region of Evros, who staged tractor blockades in January demanding a solution. It has proven controversial in Bulgaria, where opposition parties have accused the government of giving away a valuable resource for free. Under a joint declaration signed by the two neighbours' foreign ministers on May 2, Bulgaria will release water from the River Arda flowing from its mountains into 50,000 acres (20,000 hectares) of the Evros plain in northern Greece.

The amount will be decided annually after assessing Bulgaria's own needs, the Bulgarian foreign ministry told Reuters. "The two sides stress the importance of water resources... as well as the need to protect these resources in view of the risks posed by climate change," the ministry said, without providing any further details.

Greek farmers had hoped for a longer-term deal but welcomed the new agreement. "At the very last minute, there was a solution," said Dimitris Drakoudis, head of a local farmers' association.

"We were worried because the irrigation season has started," he said, adding that farmers were still waiting for more details on the terms of the deal. The expired deal was part of World War Two reparations agreement signed in 1964 and had obliged Bulgaria to release 186 million cubic metres of water every year from May to September, from hydro-electric dams to Evros. Greece has no functioning reservoirs in the area to retain water and is required to upgrade or build necessary water storage facilities under the new agreement, Bulgaria said.

European leaders, aid groups criticise Israeli aid plans for Gaza

JERUSALEM/GENEVA (Reuters): European leaders and aid groups have criticised Israeli plans to take over distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza and use private companies to get food to families after two months in which the military has prevented supplies entering the Strip.

Israel has given few details of its aid plans, which are part of an expanded operation announced that could include seizing the entire Palestinian enclave. For now, the blockade will continue until a large-scale displacement of people from northern and central areas of Gaza to the south, where a specially designated area protected by the Israeli military will be cleared near the southern city of Rafah, Israeli officials have said.

They said those entering the zone will be vetted by Israeli forces to ensure that supplies do not reach Hamas, with what aid agencies have described as special "hubs" to handle distribution by private contractors. Israel has cleared around a third of the territory to create "security zones" and the aid policy, combined with plans for moving much of the population to the south, have reinforced fears that the overall intention is full occupation. UN agencies, aid groups and European leaders condemned Israel's plans, calling for the aid blockade to be lifted and for supplies to be distributed by humanitarian organisations that are not party to the conflict.

The European Union said humanitarian aid "must never be politicised or militarised", echoing concerns expressed by

leaders including Germany's newly elected Chancellor Friedrich Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron, who said the situation in Gaza was "the worst we've ever seen". European Union foreign ministers meeting in Warsaw will discuss EU-Israel relations following a request by Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp, the EU's Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas told reporters. The letter in which Veldkamp made the request, seen by Reuters, stated that relations between the EU and Israel must align with human rights and democratic values under the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

"In my view, the humanitarian blockade is a violation of Israel's obligations under International Humanitarian Law and thereby of ... the Association Agreement," Veldkamp wrote. UN humanitarian agency OCHA said that what Israel was proposing was "the opposite of what is needed". However, aid officials have also said they have limited insight into the plan, on which they have only been briefed verbally. Aid officials have frequently accused Israel of deliberately disregarding the complexity of aid distribution in an environment such as Gaza, laid waste by 19 months of a war that has destroyed much of its infrastructure and displaced almost all of its 2.3 million population several times. Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, said on the social media platform X that it was "totally wrong" for one party in a conflict to be distributing aid. "This

new Israeli aid plan is both totally insufficient to meet the needs in Gaza, and a complete breach of all humanitarian principles," he said.

Israel has accused agencies including the United Nations of allowing large quantities of aid to fall into the hands of Hamas, which it accuses of seizing supplies intended for civilians and using them for its own forces. "If Hamas continues to steal the aid from the people as well as earning money from it, the war will continue forever," Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said in a statement. However, aid agencies say the plan would compel a transfer of civilians from the north to the south, contributing to conditions that could lead to them being forced out of Gaza permanently. Israeli hardliners have made no secret of their desire to see the Palestinian population moved out of Gaza, with politicians including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declaring the plan would result in a full occupation of Gaza.

An earlier Israeli plan, known as the General Eiland plan, foresaw severe restrictions on aid to Gaza as a way of choking off supplies to Hamas, and Israeli hardliners have often harked back to that. Many Palestinians believe Israel's ultimate aim is to use aid as leverage to force them to leave and to occupy Gaza. In Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa denounced what he described as international silence and inaction. "Do not let the besieged children of Gaza starve to death," he said.

Police must not be caught off-guard again after riots

LONDON (Reuters): Nation-wide rioting that shook Britain last summer was not coordinated by specific groups, but police must do more to counter false narratives online to avoid similar events in future, England's police watchdog said.

Racist unrest involving far-right supporters erupted at anti-immigration protests across Britain last summer after false information circulated online that a British teenager who killed three young girls at a Taylor Swift-themed dance event was an Islamist migrant. Axel Rudakubana, 18, admitted killing the girls and stabbing 10 others last July in the northern English town of Southport. He was sentenced to at least 52 years behind bars in January.

In a report, His Majesty's Inspectorate of

Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services said those who took part in the riots were mostly "disaffected individuals, influencers or groups that incited people to act violently", rather than criminal factions or extremists. "It was mainly unrelated to their ideology or political views," the inspectorate said in the report. "The causes of the disorder were complex, but the overwhelming speed and volume of online content further fuelled its spread." HMICFRS said the police had not kept pace with the fast-developing nature of online communications, and that such events required forces to counter false narratives online and be innovative in their approach. "Policing cannot be passive when public safety is at risk," HMICFRS said.

HMICFRS also found

the police did not sufficiently prioritise intelligence on disorder and that lessons had not been learned from previous outbreaks. Chief Inspector Andy Cooke said the police "should not be caught off-guard again". The National Police Chiefs' Council welcomed the report but said it failed to accurately assess the forces' role in countering harmful online content. "It overlooks the reality that law enforcement cannot and should not regulate social media, placing unrealistic expectations on policing while ignoring the critical responsibility of platform providers and regulators," the NPCC said. "Without robust detection, moderation, and removal of false narratives, misinformation will continue to fuel unrest unchecked," the NPCC added.

US intel should not help Germany far-right party

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The Republican chairman of the US Senate intelligence committee called for American spy agencies to "pause" intelligence sharing with Germany's domestic intelligence agency that could be used to target the far right Alternative for Germany party (AfD).

"I understand that liberal elites on both sides of the Atlantic loathe the AfD, but AfD's platform has resonated with many Germans," Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas wrote in a letter to Tulsi Gabbard, President Donald Trump's director of National Intelligence. Germany's domestic intelligence service classified the AfD on May 2 as an "extremist" group, enabling it to step up monitoring of the country's biggest opposition party. The AfD

declared the move a "blow against democracy" and has filed suit.

Cotton's letter follows a series of expressions of support for the AfD from members of Trump's circle. In it he asked that, until Germany's government "treats the AfD as a legitimate opposition party," Gabbard pause sharing of intelligence that could be used to target the party and refuse requests of assistance from German intelligence that could be used to surveil the AfD. Cotton also asked for a review of whether US intelligence under former President Joe Biden, a Democrat, cooperated with German requests to surveil the AfD or other opposition parties, and notify the Senate of the findings of that review. Gabbard's office did not

immediately respond to a request for comment. The German embassy in Washington also did not immediately respond. The new German chancellor, Friedrich Merz, a conservative, has warned the US to stay out of his country's politics.

Members of Trump's inner circle have voiced support for the AfD. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is now also Trump's national security adviser, said Germany should reverse course on branding the AfD as "extremist." Vice President JD Vance attacked German bureaucrats for "trying to destroy" the AfD. And close Trump ally billionaire Elon Musk threw his support behind the AfD before Germany's elections and warned against banning it.

Biden accuses Trump of appeasement of Russia

LONDON (Reuters): Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin believes Ukraine is part of "mother Russia" and "anybody who thinks he's going to stop is just foolish".

"I just don't understand how people think that if we allow a dictator, a thug, to decide he's going to take significant portions of land that aren't his, that that's going to

Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin believes Ukraine is part of "mother Russia" and "anybody who thinks he's going to stop is just foolish".

"I just don't understand how people think that if we allow a dictator, a thug, to decide he's going to take significant portions of land that aren't his, that that's going to

satisfy him." Biden said in the interview which was broadcast and the BBC said was recorded. Trump has changed US policy toward the war in Ukraine, pressing Kyiv to agree to a ceasefire while easing pressure on Russia, which launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbour in 2022. Trump has said he wants to stop the killing.

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

Turkish, Italian ties

THE 4th Italy-Türkiye Intergovernmental Summit, held in Rome on April 29, crowns the historic friendship between the two countries and elevates their relationship to a new level of strategic partnership. The visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni confirms an extraordinary relationship that hinges on several complementarities in various sectors, including the political and diplomatic ones. At a bilateral level, it would not be unreasonable to assert that we are witnessing a new phase of crucial importance, as it is also proven by the signature of over ten agreements in many fields under the competence of different ministries, from social affairs to culture and tourism, but also business and technology, science, sports, and work.

With an eye to both the present and the future, several agreements focus on R&D and scientific cooperation in innovative sectors -- raw-material extraction, the blue economy, and the space economy. The memorandum of understanding signed by the two space agencies aims to foster cooperation in peaceful space activities. The strong mutual collaboration is also visible at the "people-to-people" level -- through sports diplomacy and the joint hosting of the EURO 2032.

Besides, many other issues were on the table, and they were tackled with the sole objective of further strengthening the bilateral relationship. Prime Minister Meloni and President Erdogan issued a joint declaration aiming to increase bilateral trade to \$40 billion in the medium term. It is an ambitious goal, which, however, reflects the positive trend of the economic data in terms of greater business potential. The bilateral trade flow has long been recording constant growth; in 2019, it stood at \$19 billion, in 2023 it reached \$26 billion, and it sealed \$32 billion in 2024. The significant increase signals the great resilience and recovery capacity of both Italy and Türkiye, especially in the post-pandemic world and at a time of global economic turmoil. However, it pivots on the traditional congruence of the respective industrial and business sectors by recording important numbers in the presence of Italian companies and investments in Türkiye and increasing growth of the Turkish companies in Italy. With a well-balanced bilateral exchange and a complementary business environment, today Italy ranks as Türkiye's first partner in the Mediterranean and the second within the European area. As the Minister of Made in Italy, Adolfo Urso, defined, "Italy and Türkiye are the two lungs of economic growth in the Euro-Mediterranean," an area where they historically belong.

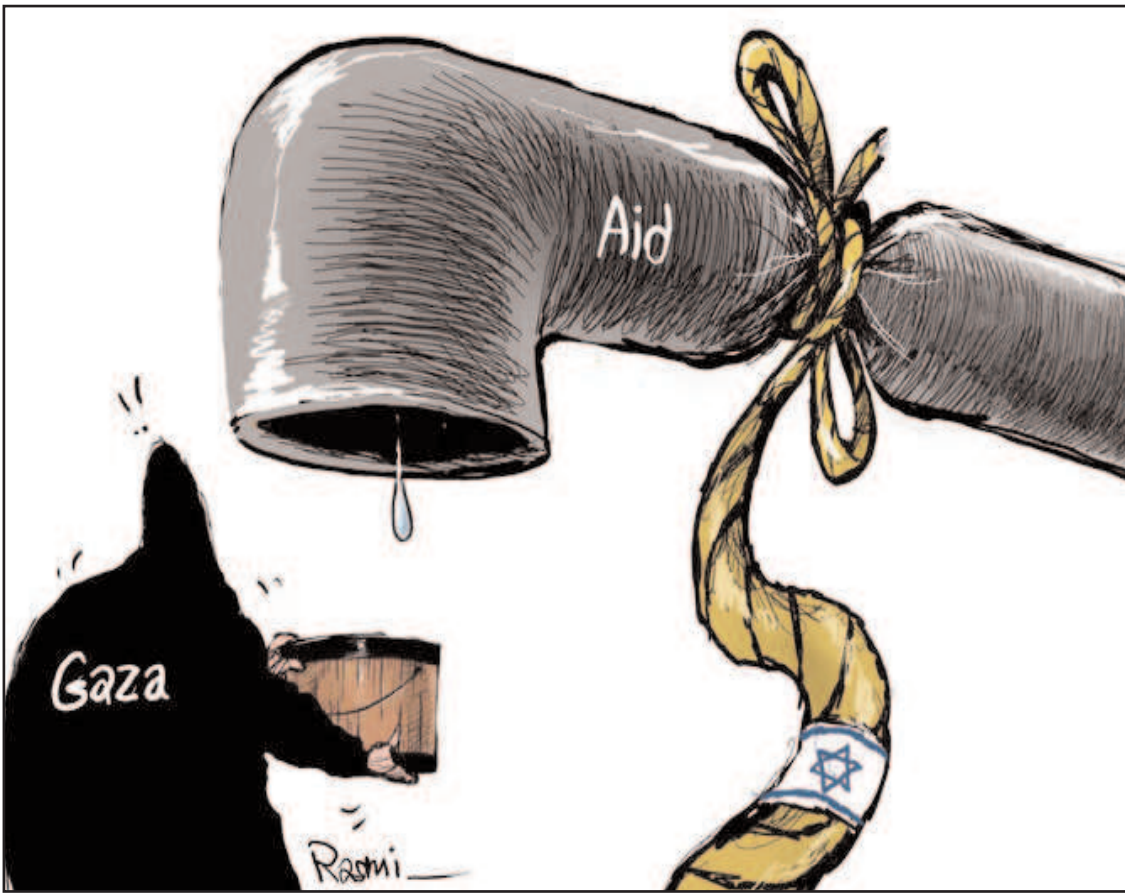
Here, the Turkish-Italian collaboration is destined to mark a new geopolitical direction that starts from South Europe and crosses the Mediterranean towards Southeast Asia. Therefore, in a moment of great global volatility and unpredictability, in which the challenges are many and of a different nature, the goal is to consolidate the Turkish-Italian axis, aiming at reducing any critical impact. Under this vision, a large delegation of entrepreneurs and business leaders accompanied the heads of state at a business forum to explore cooperation opportunities in key sectors such as energy, circular economy, advanced manufacturing, with particular attention to innovation and new technologies; infrastructure, connectivity and defense. Enforcing supply chains through joint actions and investments allows Italy and Türkiye to play a key international role also in the perspective of strategic independence. The synergies are expressed on multiple levels in a geographical area where both Ankara and Rome have the historical responsibility of guaranteeing stability and security.

Regarding energy, cooperation is tangible with several dossiers: Türkiye is recognized as a key partner in the TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline) project, and Italian investments related to the Sakarya field are increasing. Nevertheless, defense is the rising star of the new Turkish-Italian partnership. During the Summit, Leonardo and Baykar sealed their memorandum of understanding by leading towards the production of Turkish unmanned drones (UAVs) on Italian soil. This is to be considered a successful joint venture, to be read also in light of the one already finalized by Koc and Whirlpool. The growing synergies are therefore destined to increase the respective investments, also in view of joint ventures and integration towards third markets.

This vision is also confirmed by the attention that Meloni and Erdogan give to the international dossiers. For Rome, the key role of Türkiye in Europe is indisputable; in this regard, Meloni thanked Erdogan for his mediation on Ukraine and for constraining irregular migration toward Europe. The convergence on the need to stabilize Syria and guarantee the territorial integrity, together with a lasting ceasefire in Gaza and a joint commitment to stabilize Libya, were the main points of the bilateral talks. All issues were discussed in a climate of great cordiality and friendship. As a matter of fact, the 4th Intergovernmental Summit demonstrates once again the "extraordinary role of Türkiye as a friendly country, ally and strategic partner," Meloni said. As Erdogan acknowledged "Meloni's 'courage' in boosting Turkish-Italian cohesion," there are reasons to believe that the new dimension of Italy and Türkiye relations and the solidity of the Turkish-Italian axis as the main point of reference for regional and international dynamics have been sealed in Rome.

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The untold story of the battle that helped end WW2 in Europe

Katy Prickett

OPERATION Varsity "was the battle that ended" World War Two in Europe, yet it is largely unknown to all but military history buffs. British, Canadian and American forces took off mostly from Essex airfields on 24 March 1945, to be dropped directly on top of the German lines at the River Rhine. Paratroopers and gliders packed with men descended into fierce fighting conditions which resulted in rapid success, but huge loss of life. About six weeks later, Victory in Europe was declared.

Chris Bullock has organised an event at one of the departure airfields, RAF Rivenhall, to remember those who died, saying "it's an untold story". "When you see a video of the men at Rivenhall with their final brew, giving the thumbs up and the V for victory sign before they get into their gliders and you know some of them didn't come home, within three hours they were dead - it's important to tell that story," he said. Peter Davies, 102, took off from RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk towed by a Dakota plane and carrying "a 17-pounder gun, towing vehicle and gun detachment of eight personnel". He had volunteered for the Glider Pilot Regiment in 1942 because he thought it would be "more exciting" than his time as an Army private manning a Royal Artillery anti-aircraft unit. "It's like flying a brick - there's only one way, and it's down," said Mr Davies, from Bollington, Cheshire, describing what it was like once the glider was loosed.

"There was a hell of a lot of flak, we lost our controls and having lost a great chunk of one wing, we were pulling deeper and deeper into enemy ground. "When we hit the ground - and I do mean hit - we were very much in the wrong place amongst a load of very angry Germans, and it was total chaos." One American glider came down within 50m (about 160ft) of him, "and not one man got out alive because the Germans were there as well". But with co-pilot Bert Bowman, he made it across the battlefield to their intended drop zone and returned to Britain. "The Allies landed directly

on top of the Germans and lots of gliders were shot down and lots of paratroopers were shot in the skies - 80 people from RAF Rivenhall alone lost their lives," said Mr Bullock, 56, who served in the 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment for 25 years. Operation Varsity was the

But with co-pilot Bert Bowman, he made it across the battlefield to their intended drop zone and returned to Britain. "The Allies landed directly on top of the Germans and lots of gliders were shot down and lots of paratroopers were shot in the skies - 80 people from RAF Rivenhall alone lost their lives," said Mr Bullock, 56, who served in the 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment for 25 years. Operation Varsity was the largest single airborne operation in history, with more than 16,000 men were dropped into western Germany on the same day.

largest single airborne operation in history, with more than 16,000 men were dropped into western Germany on the same day. Its aim was to establish a bridgehead across the River Rhine for the main Allied advance into Germany and push rapidly towards the Russian forces arriving from the east. The first part was the ground offensive Operation Plunder, "which was the biggest-ever river crossing and was done by British and Canadian forces", Mr Bullock said. The intention was for the amphibious troops on the western side of the Rhine to join up with the airborne troops dropped to its east. Varsity took place just five months after the disastrous Battle of Arnhem, which resulted in 90% casualties to the Glider Pilot Regiment.

RAF pilots such as Brian Latham, who had been sent to Texas, to learn to fly fighter planes, were among hundreds who "volunteered" for glider service.

"If we didn't volunteer, we were told we'd never fly again and be made to join the infantry or go down a mine," said Mr Latham, 101, from Llandudno, Conwy, Wales. However, he soon realised being a glider pilot was "an elite, like the Commandos". "We were not toughies and they

before, and we knew it was a suicide drop," said Danny Mason, who had qualified to join the Parachute Regiment aged 19 just a week earlier. "But it didn't bother us. We were young and keen and thought, 'We'll be all right, we'll be fine'". Now 98 and living in Ludlow, Shropshire, Mr Mason added: "We also thought the Germans were losing and weren't in good fighting condition and this'll be easy - but it wasn't. We had a very high casualty rate." At least 1,070 members of the US 17th Airborne Division and the British 6th Airborne Division, which included the Canadians, were killed and thousands more were wounded.

"But within four or five hours we had accomplished what we had set out to do," Mr Mason said. He advanced 600 miles through Germany within a fortnight until he was injured. "It was the battle that ended the war, yet nobody was interested in it," he said. "I asked my old commanding officer about it and he said it was because everyone was fed up. It was six years of war and it was such a huge relief when VE Day came."

Mr Bullock provided some additional context. "Three weeks after Varsity, Belsen concentration camp was liberated. Two weeks after, Hitler killed himself, and a week after that Germany capitulated - it's probably hardly talked about because events overtook themselves." Now working as an international operations security manager for the BBC, he lives near RAF Rivenhall and began researching its story 10 years ago. Sixty gliders towed by two RAF squadrons left the airfield at 07:00 GMT on 24 March 1945, carrying part of the 6th Airborne Division. But some of that history is still lost. "There are no records left of who flew on which glider and what happened to each man - only the anecdotal evidence and individual stories I've managed to track down," he said. He has commissioned a memorial to "remember all those who flew from Rivenhall and died on that day". It was unveiled at an event at the airfield on 23 March and a memorial service was held at 07:00 the next day.

BBC

'Parade of Pariahs'

Pyotr Kozlov & Samantha Berkhead

WHEN President Vladimir Putin addresses Russia's military to mark 80 years since Nazi Germany surrendered to the Soviet Union, he won't just be speaking to his own country. The Russian leader is expected to host at least 29 foreign leaders, largely from fellow autocracies and repressive regimes, at Friday's extravagant military parade on Red Square, ending years of relatively low turnouts due to the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine.

The Kremlin hopes to use this high turnout as a signal to its adversaries that their efforts to isolate Russia over the Ukraine invasion have failed, experts told The Moscow Times. Beyond this, it will use the spectacle of Victory Day commemorations to re-emphasize its narrative that Russia is fighting the same war against Nazism in Europe and the West that it fought during World War II - and that it will stop at nothing to win.

"The Kremlin plans to use the 80th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany to draw parallels with today [and say that] victory is just as inevitable," Boris Bondarev, a former diplomat at Russia's mission to the UN in Geneva, told The Moscow Times. "Most importantly, just like Yalta and Potsdam shaped the postwar order, [the Kremlin will say] we expect a new world order after the Ukraine war - one that's 'fair' in Russia's eyes, meaning Russia can do whatever it wants with zero consequences," said Bondarev, who resigned in protest against the full-scale invasion. But unlike Yalta and Potsdam - or even the 60th anniversary Victory Day parade in 2005, when leaders of the United States, France and Germany attended - Russia is now alienated from those allies who shared in its World War II triumph.

The heads of Serbia, as well as EU and NATO member Slovakia, will be the only European leaders present at this year's celebration. "We failed to bring together participants from the anti-Hitler Allies - and that's telling," a senior Russian diplomat told The Moscow Times, speaking on condition of anonymity to speak candidly about a political matter. The leaders of every former Soviet nation except Ukraine, Georgia and the Baltic states are set to attend, as are the heads of the break-away Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Leaders of Brazil, Burkina Faso, China, Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, Venezuela, Vietnam and Zimbabwe will also attend. "It is important that [Brazilian President] Lula is coming. The presence of Central Asian leaders is important - that was known in advance," said Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin. "What's interesting is whether someone from the US will come and at what level. The fact that there will be no Europeans - it's clear that this is a confrontation

and a correct assessment that Russia is undoubtedly using the parade for domestic and foreign political positioning of the war with Ukraine," Gabuev told The Moscow Times.

Despite Russia and India's deepening ties in recent years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declined Moscow's invitation to the May 9 parade. Modi likely did so to avoid a face-to-face with China's Xi amid the escalating tensions in the disputed territory of Kashmir, where Beijing backs Pakistan, the Russian diplomat said. "Modi is jealous of our ties with China and was surprised to learn that Xi would be the parade's main guest," the diplomat said. "He's not keen to meet Xi right now, especially in Moscow, given the China-Pakistan axis and the fresh flare-up in Kashmir."

Even Xi, Putin's closest ally among major world powers, is largely attending as a "symbolic" gesture, said an independent Russian political analyst who asked not to be named. "The only real show of solidarity comes from China and a few post-Soviet neighbors, but they don't have much of a choice," the analyst said. "Maintaining good relations with an unpredictable Russia is a matter of pragmatism. Even China's involvement is more symbolic than heartfelt." The idea of Russia's international isolation is "long dead," said Bondarev.

"Comrade Xi keeps visiting Moscow. Putin travels too. He's been to North Korea, attending summits. Trump occasionally shatters the isolation narrative, and Witkoff is constantly in Russia," he said. "Lavrov and his deputies are everywhere. Even Kirill Dmitriev went to the US despite being personally sanctioned. So stop repeating the myth. It clouds the real picture."

Domestically, Victory Day carries significant emotional weight and unifying potential for Russians, the anonymous analyst said. As Putin's regime grew more powerful in recent decades, the Kremlin co-opted the holiday's resonance to bolster public loyalty - and this co-opting will be on full display on Friday. "[Putin] effectively claimed it for himself, taking over the national narrative and even the traditional rituals, like the Immortal Regiment," he said.

"Victory is sacred and beyond reproach, which means criticizing it - or Putin - is off-limits. For an autocrat, May 9 isn't just another holiday - it's a crucial opportunity to showcase unity around him and to reinforce that unity through spectacle." At the same time, the anonymous political expert said that Russians will find little to celebrate in Friday's parade on Red Square. "This is not overcoming isolation. And the holiday itself splits the nation, as many see the celebrations as Putin's personal project, not as May 9 in its usual and customary meaning," the anonymous political expert said. "What do marching troops from Myanmar or guests from Burkina Faso have to do with our Victory?"

The Moscow Times

Putin's unilateral Easter truce was never intended to last

Alexander Baunov

US President Donald Trump stands at a crossroads. With his push for peace in Ukraine faltering, he must either go against his instincts and put pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin (a negotiating tactic that is likely to end in failure), or he must announce that the United States is giving up on its efforts to reconcile the two warring sides. From the recent statements made by Trump and his Secretary of State Marco Rubio, it seems that Washington would prefer to do the latter.

At the same time, Putin must also make a choice. The Russian leader is not afraid of the United States giving up on its mediation efforts: events on the battlefield would in any case likely continue to develop in Russia's favor as they have done for many months. But Putin clearly hasn't decided whether to ditch Trump and his attempts to bring the war

to an end, or whether to keep trying to manipulate the US president.

The last-minute announcement by Russia of an Easter truce in Ukraine was symbolic of Putin's indecision. While the Russian truce allowed Putin to postpone a decision on where he stands with Trump, it also means the Kremlin can claim it was genuine about a permanent peace if the negotiations are abandoned and a blame game begins. Over the past months, Trump had repeatedly floated Easter as a deadline for peace negotiations, so it made sense for Russia to make some sort of gesture. A truce was simultaneously something tangible, and something that did not require any irreversible commitments.

The 30-hour pause in the fighting was unveiled with typical Kremlin secrecy. Despite appearing in public many times in the weeks leading up to the announcement, Putin made no mention

of his plan. Unlike Russia's proposal for a Christmas truce, which was announced in advance, the Easter truce was clearly supposed to be unilateral. The suddenness of the announcement was intended to catch both enemies and allies off guard (after all, Easter is a public holiday in most Western countries). And that's exactly what happened: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's initial reaction was negative, but then he proposed the truce be extended to 30 days. Putin was only too happy to highlight this discrepancy, attributing it to a belated intervention by Kyiv's "Western curators."

It would have been even more to the Kremlin's advantage if Kyiv had rejected the truce outright. That would have freed Russia's hands to pursue further military action and allowed Russian officials to lay the blame for the continuing violence on Ukraine's

door. However, the Kremlin was also ready for Kyiv to agree. In that case, Russian officials would simply have accused Kyiv of violating the truce. Before the election of Trump as US president, Russia and Ukraine were locked in a verbal competition to establish themselves as the victims in this conflict. Moscow went to great lengths to try to counter the obvious fact that Ukraine was the victim of its aggression by putting forward concerns about the suffering of the "people of Donbas," apparent limitations on the rights of Russian speakers in Ukraine, and the possibility of Russia becoming a target of NATO aggression.

However, Trump puts a premium on strength, and has turned out to be less interested in establishing who is the "real" victim. As a result, Russia and Ukraine are engaged in a new competition to claim the mantle of the

most peace-loving nation. Hence, Putin's Easter truce. At the same time, a short cessation of hostilities in Ukraine gave the Kremlin an opportunity to test the reaction inside Russia. It would appear officials were particularly interested in the response from the country's ultra-patriots, who are the most vocal backers of the Russian assault on Ukraine. It might seem that the centralization of power and the submissiveness of the security agencies means Putin can impose any decision he likes without consultation. But a continuation of the fighting does depend on the Kremlin retaining the backing of Russia's pro-war contingent.

The reaction to the Easter truce among Russia's ultra-patriots was not uniform and resulted in some intriguing incidents. In one, the notorious state media propagandist Margarita Simonyan was forced to defend her boss from criticism by those opposed to the brief end to

hostilities. As for the security forces, it's much easier for them to implement the will of the Kremlin when they do not have any sympathy for those that they are repressing. If those the Kremlin wants eliminated are ultra-patriots (like the late mercenary leader-turned-insurrectionist Yevgeny Prigozhin), the security forces tend to act with less enthusiasm.

When all is said and done, Putin's truce led to a reduction in the fighting in Ukraine - albeit for just 30 hours. It also marked an intensification of Ukraine and Russia's bizarre competition to show Trump they are each keener than the other to achieve a permanent peace deal. Judging by Russian statements, the Kremlin believes that the Easter truce served its purpose. Either way, as long as a ceasefire in Ukraine is not implemented with obligations on both sides, or as a precondition for further negotiations, the Kremlin will retain the right to violate its terms.

A disastrous Black Sea oil spill unites Z-activists and anti-war Russians alike

ANAPA, Russia - Artyom, 21, remembers the night in February when the headquarters for volunteers fighting a fuel oil spill in the Krasnodar region suddenly burst into flames. "Someone shouted, 'The headquarters is on fire!' I didn't understand what was happening at first. Smoke was billowing everywhere. Volunteers broke down the door and started pulling out hazmat suits and respirators. I called the fire department, but by the time they arrived, everything had already burned down," Artyom said.

He recalled how volunteers from the ruling United Russia party also helped extinguish the fire that night. Standing nearby was Igor Kastukevich, a Russian-installed senator from occupied Kherson, who had been appointed to oversee the cleanup effort. "He was cursing loudly and yelling at everyone not to let anyone record what was happening on their phones," Artyom said. "He already had a grudge against us volunteers. The first time he visited the headquarters, he saw that someone had written 'Freedom to the seas, fuel oil to the Kremlin' on the wall in the toilet. He didn't like that very much."

Volunteers later discovered a pile of United Russia campaign leaflets among the ashes, Artyom recalled. "We even joked that it was United Russia activists who set fire to the headquarters and left the message as a hint. But some people are really sure it was them. It is suspicious that a few days before the fire, one of the coordinators of the headquarters was warned that these independent volunteers wanted to be kicked out of here," he said.

A few days before the fire, a banner reading "Government and oil - fuel oil and death" appeared near the Rosneft oil giant's office in

Kirill Ponomarev

Krasnodar. Police opened a hooliganism case, but the perpetrators were never found. Small acts of protest like this have sporadically appeared at this site, where volunteers have been tirelessly working for months to clean up one of the worst environmental disasters in recent Russian history. On Dec. 15, 2024, two aging Russian tankers carrying more than 9,000 tons of heavy fuel oil sank during a storm in the Kerch Strait, polluting coastlines from Crimea to Georgia.

Worst-hit by the spill was Russia's Krasnodar region, where thousands of seabirds, including endangered species, are believed to have died. The spill has sparked an unprecedented wave of independent volunteer efforts from across Russia - and led to widespread public discontent.

Volunteers flocked to the coasts of southern Russia and annexed Crimea from across the country. They included pensioners who had previously sent aid to soldiers, nationalists, ultra-patriotic pro-war activists, United Russia supporters, environmental activists and anti-war Russians, many of whom had taken part in opposition protests in the past. This independent organizing, taking place outside the purview of the authorities, appears to have irritated officials, who see it as a threat.

Every morning, a group of young people clad in protective suits painted with anti-war symbols is loaded into an army truck marked with the pro-war "Z" symbol. Among them are Sasha, an artist with painted nails; Semyon, an 18-year-old anarchist; Liusya, a feminist; and Dasha, an environmental activist. They travel for half an hour in the rattling truck, listening on a portable speaker to tracks by anti-war musician Noize MC, who is labeled a "foreign

agent" by the government.

The driver, Dima, is a soldier who previously delivered humanitarian aid to soldiers and civilians near the front lines in Ukraine. This surreal scene plays out in Anapa, a small resort city where the fight to save nature has brought people together from across the political spectrum. "Now that the federal authorities are increasing their pressure on self-organization, it's really important to find like-minded people on the ground," said one anti-war volunteer, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. He said he has worked alongside members of the far-right nationalist group Russkaya Obshchina ("Russian Community"), pagans, communists, Putin supporters and pro-war "Z-activists" on the beaches. "Everyone marks their emblems on their protective coveralls somehow. I thought, why not paint a peace sign on mine? I knew a lot of volunteers felt the same way. The next day, a girl I knew did the same. Then another, and another," the volunteer said. "It's nice to be among like-minded people."

Some volunteers channel broader dissatisfaction with the government into their activism on environmental issues. This includes both opposition activists and apolitical citizens frustrated with the authorities' handling of the disaster. "In the first days after the spill, officials acted like nothing had happened. Local residents came to the beaches with shovels to clean up huge layers of fuel oil themselves. The level of self-organization was simply unprecedented. People collected money and humanitarian aid on their own; they bought respirators and protective suits," said Semyon, the 18-year-old anarchist from Krasnodar.

A few days later, Anapa residents

recorded a video appeal to President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, demanding that properly equipped rescuers from across Russia be sent to the polluted areas. The Krasnodar region did not declare a regional state of emergency until 10 days after the spill on Dec. 25. The federal government followed on Dec. 26, and Crimea declared a regional emergency on Dec. 28 - after nearly two weeks had passed. An emergency response center in Krasnodar later said nearly 8,500 people, including emergencies ministry staff and volunteers, were involved in the cleanup, along with nearly 400 pieces of heavy machinery.

"They called and told him the police were going to search his home, and Kastukevich's people from United Russia threatened to send him to the war because the local authorities were fed up with him," the volunteer said. In late January, Natural Resources Minister Alexander Kozlov promised that the beaches in the Krasnodar region would be fully cleaned by the start of the summer, the peak tourist season. However, in mid-April, the national public health agency reported that 150 Black Sea beaches were still unsuitable for swimming.

While officials insist that the fuel oil spill will soon be fully cleaned up, volunteers remain skeptical. As the Black Sea warms, oil that has been sitting on the sea floor will rise and wash ashore. The long-term environmental damage will only become clear in the years to come, experts say. "The authorities want to show that they have everything under control and that the summer holiday season will resume soon," Semyon said. "We're trying to show what's really happening here. Even though the media hype has died down, there's still a lot of fuel oil. It's not going away."

Grounds for optimism

Colin Mackerras

and colleagues help each other. Though most live on campus over the years, they get on well and cooperatively. I think this is due to the harmony and peace which is taught in Chinese culture, which emphasizes the community over the individual and stresses the need for large numbers of people to get along with each other without quarreling. I'm also impressed with how respectful they are to each other, and to foreigners.

Students, with very few exceptions, are very hard-working. They are always well prepared for class, and it is rare for them not to complete assignments on time. Very few indeed drop out of a course once begun. Over the decades I have been teaching in China, levels of literacy and education have risen greatly and people have become much more interested in the outside world, especially the West. Women have tended more and more to dominate the language and social science classes I have taught. As for the economy, the miracle of China's economic rise from a poor country to being the world's number one if measured in purchasing power parity (in other words what you can actually buy with money) has become among the most important trends in the world today, if not the most important. It is obvious, among other factors, in the rising standard of living of the people, the growth of the middle-income group, the improvement of the infrastructure, including the most wonderful high-speed railway system in the world, and the fact that hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of absolute poverty. If this does not amount to progress on a miraculous scale, I don't know what does.

I'd like to add that many US citizens and other Westerners assume the credit for China's rise belongs to them, not to China. Had it not been for the United States opening to China in the early 1970s, they argue, China would still be poor. Well, I think they deceive themselves. No doubt the opening of the West to China helped, but the main reason for China's rise is the hard work of the Chinese people, supported by good policies and the effective leadership of the CPC. As an Australian, I've always been very concerned about my country's relations with China. From the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972 to about 2015,

the relationship was mainly very healthy. In general, there was good mutual trust between the two countries. Cultural and educational exchanges thrived. China became Australia's largest trading partner, while China became its biggest source of international students.

Events from about 2015 to the COVID-19 pandemic (approximately the end of 2019 to early 2023) undermined mutual trust, though bilateral trade continued to grow. Scott Morrison, who was Australian prime minister from 2018 to 2022, seems to me to have gone out of his way to insult China over a range of issues. For instance, in September 2021, he reached the AUKUS agreement with the US and the United Kingdom. Under this arrangement, Australia will spend exorbitant sums of money on nuclear-powered submarines, accessing US and UK nuclear technology. In three ways I strongly criticize AUKUS. One is the implication that China, which is apparently the target of this defence arrangement, is a military threat to Australia. This is nonsense. The revival of the "China threat theory" is unfortunate and very damaging to relations with China. The second is the acquiring of nuclear-powered submarines is provocative and dangerous. Third, the symbolism is that Australia is turning back toward old allies such as the UK and the US, and away from Asia, especially China. And we can see this year that the antics of US President Donald Trump have made the US into a very dangerous country in various ways, especially in the damage it is doing to the world economy.

Still, both Anthony Albanese and the opposition leader Peter Dutton have declared they want good relations with China. I have criticisms of both, including their support for AUKUS. However, Albanese's record otherwise shows some genuine attempts to restore a modicum of trust with China, and the minister of foreign affairs in his government, Penny Wong, appears to take a non-confrontative and generally sensible approach toward China. It is obvious that good relations with China are in Australia's best interests. I acknowledge several bad signs but remain convinced that good sense will prevail. I think there are grounds for optimism over bilateral relations. That certainly remains my fervent hope.

The China Daily

Would you send asylum seekers at risk of torture home?

THE rights of pro-Ukrainian Chechen refugees and asylum seekers in Europe - including those of pro-Ukrainian Chechen activists - are under attack. European authorities have largely failed to acknowledge that modern-day Chechnya, under Russian control, has become an Orwellian nightmare, where individuals can disappear without a trace for as little as a family member criticizing the Kremlin or local authorities.

Despite the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, several European countries continue to deport Chechen asylum seekers back to Chechnya, where they face torture, humiliation and death. On April 9, the Estonian Court of Appeal refused to grant asylum status to Maryat Batalova, a 64-year-old Chechen woman, ruling that she faced "no serious or real threat" at home. The case was so outrageous that it gained the attention of independent Russian-language media, such as Vot Tak and The Insider.

Her story is not just about one individual. It sheds light on the broader human rights violations endured by Chechen refugees in the European Union as they try to escape the brutality of Russian rule in Chechnya. Like many Chechens who remember the horrors of the Russian-Chechen wars, Batalova opposed Russia's war in Ukraine. In her interview with Vot Tak, she recounted how her ordeal began after she spoke up against the war at the funeral of a young Chechen man who had been sent to fight in Ukraine.

"Why do you allow them to be sent to war?" she asked her neighbors. "And how are your sons fight-

Ayman Eckford

ing in Ukraine any better than the Russian soldiers who came to kill us during the two [Russian-Chechen] wars?" A few days later, she was abducted by security forces. She was beaten with polypropylene pipes, tortured with a soldering iron and electric shocks and threatened with rape using a bottle. She lost consciousness during the abuse and was only released after her relatives paid a bribe of 350,000 rubles (\$4,500).

To save her life, Maryat applied for political asylum in Estonia. However, her application was denied in January and her appeal has now been rejected. Authorities deemed her story unsubstantiated, with the court questioning whether a single anti-war comment could have provoked "such a violent response from Chechen authorities."

Batalova has been banned from entering the Schengen zone for three years and ordered to leave Estonia for a third country. This decision is particularly disturbing given the well-documented brutality of Russia's rule in Chechnya. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case. "We are witnessing an alarming trend: Chechens are being deported from Europe despite their open support for Ukraine and clear opposition to the Russian regime," Amina Larsson, a lawyer from the Chechen human rights organization Vayfond told The Moscow Times.

Vayfond has handled dozens of cases involving Chechen refugees and asylum seekers in countries including Austria, Poland, France, Germany, Sweden, Croatia and Estonia. Some deportations have

already been carried out. Others are imminent, with people living in constant fear, having already received asylum rejections and being placed under deportation procedures. Larson says this is happening in the shadow of increasing prejudice and distrust toward Chechens, making it extraordinarily difficult for them to obtain protection in Europe. "This reflects a broader failure of the asylum system - one that overlooks political dissent, ignores real threats of persecution, and risks sending people back to a regime they openly oppose," she said.

"There's a deep prejudice toward Chechens in Germany," he told me. "European authorities behaved like it was us who attacked Ukraine. We all remember how the late Pope said that Chechens and Buryats, not Russians, committed atrocities in Ukraine. Many outlets shared these comments. Although Chechens started to support Ukraine en masse, Germany continued to deport Chechen refugees and asylum seekers. I wasn't a big activist or a particularly prominent person.

But I, as any decent person, openly took the Ukrainian side in the Russian-Ukrainian war." The activist said that German authorities refused to believe that the authorities in Chechnya had threatened to kill him. He believes that if he were deported to Russia, he would be tortured and blackmailed into signing a contract to fight in the war in Ukraine. European authorities continue to ignore these realities, treating Chechnya as just another part of Russia. Worse, they

allow Russia to weaponize institutions like Interpol to target political opponents, including those who have direct ties to Ukraine.

Two notable cases stand out. The first one is Amina Gerihanova, a Chechen woman who fled Ukraine with her son in 2022, was imprisoned at the Romanian border after Russia falsely accused her of terrorism and separated her from her child. Despite Ukrainian authorities confirming her innocence, Romania trusted the Kremlin. She was freed only after widespread protests of the Chechen diaspora in Europe. The second is Muslim Madiev, one of the leaders of the pro-Ukrainian Chechen Dzhokhar Dudayev battalion, who was listed by Russia as a terrorist through Interpol. His case was only reconsidered after protests in front of Interpol's headquarters in Lyon. Many Chechens have had to flee their homeland because of their support of Ukraine. They are also putting themselves and their families at risk by continuing their activism in Europe, trusting that the European countries would protect them. But Europe has repeatedly failed to do that.

European authorities must abandon Russian propaganda and Islamophobic stereotypes. Targeting Chechen activists shows that they are ready to abandon the victims of Russian aggression. The European authorities who claim to support Ukraine should see that Chechen refugees are not a threat, but a potential ally. Or, at very least, the European Union must follow its own declared European values of justice, equality and human rights.

Will the reshuffle in Trump admn increase possibility of a deal with Iran?

A. R. Ghofrani

AFTER Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi declared that the fourth round of Iran-US negotiations was postponed due to logistical considerations, speculations have been raised by both sides of the talks. According to some sources, American officials were quoted as saying, "The time of the fourth round of talks had not been decided, and the time for that round had to be fixed later."

Certainly, the postponement of the fourth round of negotiations should not be attributed merely to logistical reasons. However, it is also not unrelated to factors concerning the subject of the negotiations. As a whole, initially, this fact needs to be taken into account: President Trump is an unpredictable character, and this can be bluntly seen in other political and economic contexts that he has so far addressed and the decisions he makes. This can also be true as far as negotiations with Iran are concerned. Moreover, there have been different views among Trump administration officials regarding negotiations and the possible conclusion of a deal with Iran. This has caused significant changes in Trump's cabinet, merely within the first one hundred days of his presidency.

Mike Waltz, the White House National Security Adviser, a radical and extremist who advocates intensifying action against Iran, was politely dismissed from his job and appointed as the US representative to the United Nations. Among these significant changes, it is interesting to note that Secretary of State Marco Rubio was also given the job of

White House security advisor. Four decades since the Richard Nixon administration, this is unprecedented.

This is the first time in four decades since the Nixon administration that one person has held the two powerful positions of Secretary of State and National Security Adviser in the United States. The previous instance was when Henry Kissinger held both positions. For this reason, political experts are predicting, with a touch of irony and humor, that this 53-year-old diplomat of Cuban descent could be the second Kissinger in America. With these changes, there is speculation that the Trump cabinet has become unified regarding nuclear negotiations with Iran and possibly other global issues. Of course, before Rubio was appointed to this position and changes were made to Trump's cabinet, he was in close communication and negotiations with his British, French, and German counterparts.

At the same time, it was said that the three European countries had a different path from the United States in terms of their behavior toward Iran because, based on the data, they were more focused on activating the trigger system, which, of course, did not align with Trump's policy. The Iranian Foreign Minister was supposed to meet with the foreign ministers of the three countries in Rome last Friday, but that did not happen either.

The question now is: with Rubio's appointment and retention as White House National Security Adviser, can he coordinate views within the US

government and with its European allies on Iran? We should keep in mind that, due to his position in the State Department, Rubio, as White House National Security Adviser, is responsible for coordination between the State Department, the Defense Department, and other relevant intelligence, security, and government agencies in the United States. Naturally, if coordination occurs among its members, the National Security Council's proposal can serve as the basis for the President of the United States' decisions on global issues, including negotiations and dealings with Iran. In any case, we will have to wait and see how successful Rubio can be in this regard. Of course, it remains to be seen whether Steve Witkoff will continue to be in charge of the fourth round of negotiations or whether the State Department will take a more prominent and bolder role.

But another factor that may not be entirely within the control of the US government is Israel's behavior and reaction to the Iran deal. Israel continues to insist on dismantling all of Iran's nuclear facilities, while Rubio and possibly Trump himself want a deal similar to the 2015 JCPOA. Even Rubio has suggested that Iran import and buy uranium enriched to 3.65 percent from abroad. This has been rejected by the Iranian foreign minister. But Israel continues to insist on its position, and of course, this could create problems for negotiations and a possible agreement between Iran and the United States. Netanyahu undoubtedly does not see

any deal between Iran and the United States as favorable because he believes it would mean the end of his political career. Now the question is: we are facing a situation that has its own complexities. First, Trump may change his mind at any moment. Second, how does Secretary of State and White House National Security Adviser Rubio, who has now apparently managed to reconcile different opinions within the US government (of course, we still have to wait and see), intend to deal with someone as unpredictable as Netanyahu?

If he is truly referred to as the second Kissinger, does Rubio have the ability and power to act like that veteran politician with realism, as Kissinger did with relations with China and Vietnam, and later with the Arabs and Israel? Of course, in the meantime, this is what one of Trump's advisers (who is Iranian!) said: Although Trump is a deal-maker, dealing with him is very dangerous! Now, apart from Trump's character, methods, personality, and behavior, wouldn't dealing with Trump be even more dangerous, given the factors affecting the negotiation process with Iran? To solve this dilemma and learn from past experiences, which have been very difficult and costly, wouldn't it be better for Trump and his colleagues to have a little flexibility in making a deal in order to achieve a balanced goal that satisfies both parties? The answer is undoubtedly yes, because one of the factors that contributed to Kissinger's success was first his realism and then his flexibility when necessary.

Irma

THE year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. But in recent years, the truth about that devastating war has been ignored and twisted as the world seems to be sliding into more chaos.

Martin Sieff

The Chinese people have always known, as part of a truth key to their culture, the oldest and most continuously maintained repository of human experience in the world, that the lessons of history are central to understanding and navigating the present times, and foreseeing the trends, challenges and dangers of the future.

Therefore, remembering the true history and lessons of the defeat of the monstrous Nazi Germany, and fascist and racist Japan which sought to conquer and dominate the world remains the key to restoring mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, and laying the foundation of lasting peace in today's world. The West could not have survived, let alone shared in the triumph over the genocidal Axis in World War II, were it not for the central roles played by Russia and China.

Musing on the reasons the US emerged with relatively low casualties at the end of World War II, the beloved and acclaimed US combat correspondent Ernie Pyle said: "We won this war because our men are brave and because of many things - because of Russia, England and China and the passage of time and the gift of nature's material." Eighty years on, it is all too tragically clear that the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom and the other major Western nations that still dutifully follow them have forgotten

those wise and humble words. They even sneer at Pyle's wisdom, and have only contempt for it.

Pyle honestly and honorably acknowledged the vastly greater sacrifices that the Chinese and Russian peoples made as the worst bloodbaths swept over the great landmass of Eurasia. World War II did not start on Dec 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Nor did the war begin on Sept 1, 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland, or two days later when Britain and France declared war on Germany.

It should be recognized that the all-out war actually began on July 7, 1937, when the Japanese military created an incident at the Marco Polo Bridge at the suburb of Beijing as an excuse and justification for its full-scale invasion of China. Through that dark summer the Imperial Japanese Army drove up the Yangtze River Valley killing Chinese people. This culminated in the Nanjing Massacre when an estimated 300,000 people were massacred. It was a war crime so nefarious and horrific that it appalled even senior Nazi Party members in China who witnessed it.

Yet the Chinese people never abandoned their struggle to regain their national independence, freedom and dignity. There were an estimated 35 million casualties during the war. And because they soaked up the vast majority of the land power of the Japanese army, the US armed forces in their own advance across the Pacific Ocean and up the archipelagos of the Western Pacific were able to defeat and

destroy much smaller Japanese occupation forces in detail. However, this strategic aspect of the struggle, while acknowledged by all serious US historians, is almost never referred to or acknowledged by the US mass media or government leaders.

A similar blindness to an enormous, undeniable but also inconvenient truth lies in the parallel refusal of the Western elites and of recent generations of Western people to acknowledge that it was the Soviet Union's military that killed about 80 percent of Nazi Wehrmacht troops in Europe in World War II. The Soviet Union lost at least 27 million people in the war, with some recent estimates putting the civilian death toll significantly higher. Even wartime British prime minister Winston Churchill acknowledged while raising a toast at a Kremlin banquet in October 1944 that, "it is the Russian Armies who have done the main work in tearing the guts out of the German army".

Yet today, our modern world is still skirting the edge of global conflagration and catastrophe through the bellicosity and bluster of ignorant and irresponsible leaders across the West who remain trapped in ignorance and a maze of bigotry of their own making. The 80th anniversary of the most awful war in human memory offers them, and the craven media elites who so uncritically swallow and regurgitate this fateful, deadly nonsense, a chance to break free from what the great 18th century English poet and mystic William Blake called "the infernal grove" of lies and damnation that threaten us all.



APDA KP held detail meeting with IG Police

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level delegation of the All Pakistan Car Dealers and Importers Association (APDA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the leadership of Chairman Ghulam Bilal Javid, held a detailed meeting with Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed DIG Security Dr. Mian Saeed was also present during the meeting.

The discussion focused on the overall security situation in Peshawar, the challenges faced by the business community, and specifically the serious issues affecting car dealers. Ghulam Bilal Javid highlighted the rising crime rate, insecurity in business hubs, and growing anxiety among traders.

He emphasized the need

to enhance security in posh localities like Hayatabad, suggesting that such areas be made secure under a "gated community" model. He also raised the issue of the dormant "Safe Home Project," which was previously initiated under KPDA. The IG responded by stating the matter falls under the jurisdiction of SP Cantt, who will be instructed to pursue its activation.

Ghulam Bilal Javid further highlighted a key concern: the Hayatabad Medical Complex Road houses three major hospitals, and in emergency situations, the movement of ambulances is severely hindered due to chaotic parking and unregulated taxis. This causes inconvenience to patients, hospital visitors, and local residents. He demanded that an effective traffic and parking manage-

ment system be implemented immediately.

On the matter of car dealers, Javid expressed concern that police sometimes raid showrooms without prior notice, which is an inappropriate approach. He proposed that APDA should be formally consulted before any such action, ensuring a respectful resolution through mutual understanding.

Additionally, the meeting addressed topics such as installation of security cameras, progress on the Safe City Project, and improving surveillance in markets. The delegation proposed the establishment of a dedicated official desk for issuing driving licenses to the business community and car dealers. The IG appreciated the suggestion and assured prompt implementation.

Other prominent members of the delegation included: Senior Vice Chairman APDA Nisar Muhammad Babar, Vice Chairman Ghulam Hussain Chand, Information Secretary APDA KP Abdul Haseeb Chughtai, Finance Secretary Basit Khan, Baba-e-Tajir Amin Hussain Babar, President of Peshawar Chamber Shakeel Saraf, Senior Vice President Haji Tila Muhammad, Vice President Zohaib Arif, and others.

IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed assured full cooperation and said that ensuring the safety of the business community, addressing their issues, and facilitating commerce are top priorities for the police. DIG Security Dr. Mian Saeed also gave assurances of immediate practical steps in response to the delegation's concerns.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik meeting with representatives of Pakistan Petroleum Exploration & Production Companies Association.

SBP injects over Rs13 trillion in market

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), injected Rs 13,131.3 billion in the market through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) on Friday.

The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14 day tenors on May 09, 2025 and accepted an amount of Rs 12,800.8 billion against 37 quotes while another Rs 330.5 billion were inserted through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO.

For the Reverse Repo Purchase, the central bank received 30 quotes for the 14-day tenor cumulatively offering Rs 12,684.05 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.03% to 11.15%. SBP accepted Rs 12,410.1 billion against 30 bids at 11.03% rate of return. The total amount offered at 11.03% was Rs 3,097.8 billion, out of

which SBP accepted Rs 2,823.85 billion on a pro-rata basis.

Moreover, the SBP also received 7 bids for a 7-day tenor cumulatively offering Rs 390.7 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.10 to 11.12%. The SBP accepted all the 7 quotes with the entire amount at 11.10% rate of return.

Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for 7 and 14 day tenors and injected Rs 330.5 billion. The central bank received 4 bids for 7-day tenor offering an amount of Rs 218 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.09 to 11.12%. The SBP accepted the entire amount at a 11.09% rate of return.

The SBP also received 3 bids for 14-day tenor offering Rs 112.5 billion at rate of return ranging between 11.10 to 11.14%.

The central bank accepted the entire amount at 11.10% rate of return.

Rupee sheds 19 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Friday depreciated by 19 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.70 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.51.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 281.75 and Rs 283.25, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs0.97 to close at Rs 317.05 against the last day's closing of Rs 318.02, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.94, whereas a decrease of Rs0.46 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 373.66 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 374.12.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased

by 05 paise each to close at Rs 76.69 and Rs 75.10, respectively.

Gold prices decrease Rs1,800 to 350,900 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.1,800 on Friday and was sold at Rs.350,900 against its sale at Rs.352,700 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.1,543 to Rs.300,840 from Rs.302,383 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat decreased by Rs.1,414 to Rs.275,780 from Rs.277,194.

The rates of per tola silver and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.3,417 and Rs.2,929 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market also decreased by \$18 to \$3,325 from \$3,343 whereas that of silver remained stagnant at \$32.35, the Association reported.

Tungsten Secure, Gadoon Textiles join forces — to elevate cybersecurity resilience



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Tungsten Secure, a leading cybersecurity services provider in Pakistan, has entered into a strategic partnership with Gadoon Textiles, one of Pakistan's premier textile manufacturers, to bolster enterprise-wide cybersecurity resilience and safeguard digital assets against today's rapidly evolving digital threat landscape.

The official signing ceremony marks the beginning of a collaboration focused on strengthening Gadoon's cyber defense strategy through the implementation of Trend Micro's Apex One Endpoint Security Suite. This next-generation endpoint protection platform delivers advanced threat intelligence, ransomware protection, and zero-day threat defense, helping Gadoon future-proof its IT infrastructure while ensuring regulatory compliance and business continuity.

This partnership not only

strengthens Gadoon's cybersecurity by enhancing threat detection, automating defenses, but also accelerates incident response through XGen™ intelligence. It ensures business continuity with ransomware rollback and malware containment, while offering a scalable, cloud-ready architecture to support future digital transformation.

Comprehensive cybersecurity solutions delivered: *Advanced Endpoint Protection (Windows/Mac) powered by machine learning and behavioral analysis*

Built-in Data Loss Prevention (DLP) to protect sensitive information

Centralized visibility and policy control via Apex Central Console

Real-time virtual patching and vulnerability management

24/7 cybersecurity support and incident response readiness

On-site implementation with post-deployment

knowledge transfer

This partnership reflects Gadoon Textiles' forward-looking approach to digital risk management and commitment to securing critical infrastructure, while reinforcing Tungsten Secure's role as a trusted cybersecurity partner for Pakistan's industrial and enterprise sectors.

Tungsten Secure is a leading provider of enterprise cybersecurity solutions in Pakistan, specializing in endpoint protection, incident response, threat intelligence, and compliance readiness for businesses across multiple industries.

Gadoon Textiles, part of the Yunus Brothers Group, is a leading textile manufacturer in Pakistan, known for its high-quality yarns and fabrics. Committed to innovation and sustainability, Gadoon plays a key role in the textile industry while embracing digital transformation for long-term growth and resilience.

Workers' remittances increased

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The workers' remittances increased by 30.9 percent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, said SBP on Friday.

The remittances reached to US\$ 31.2 billion during July-April 2024-25 as against the remittances of US\$ 23.9 billion received during July-April 2023-24.

On year-on-year basis, workers' remittances during April 2025 recorded an inflow of US\$ 3.2 billion, posting an increase of 13.1 percent as compared to same month of last year.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Iftikhar Ahmed Civil Judge XI Kohat. Suit no.18/1 Date of hearing:22-05-2025, Titled:- Qabil Khan Vs Habib Sher (etc) Notice against:- (2) Insanul Haq S/o Habib Sher R/o Near Chalo Ziarat Kharmatu District Kohat. presently .R/o (now.in.Abroad Abu Nakala Kamal Market Building no.121 Zong Street 647-Qatar) (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit for against you defendant in which date of hearing 22-05-2025 is fixed for your appearance.Since your intimation/ service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 22-05-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order issued on. 30-04-2025 (Court of C.J.XI Kohat)

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Mashal Latif C.J-IV Kohat Suit no. 98/1 Date of hearing: 20-05-2025 Titled:- Mian Aman Shah Vs Usman Shah (etc) Notice against:- (2)Haris Shah (3)Masood ShahSons of MianTurab Shah R/o Shah Abad Colony Zahoar Islam Road District Kohat presently R/o (now in Abroad Dubai UAE) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 20-05-2025 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 20-05-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law.order Issued on 24-04-2025 (Court of CJ-IV Kohat)

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

CORRIGENDUM

In compliance with KPPRA Notification No.S.R.O.(23)/Vol1-34/2024-25 dated March 24, 2025, the tenders published for various schemes under the C&W Building Division Swabi, advertised in newspapers under No.INF (P) 1612/25 and uploaded on the official KPPRA and C&W websites, with the opening date of May 15, 2025, will now be processed through the EPADS online procurement system. The date of opening has been extended and now the bids will be opened on May 29, 2025.

All bidders are hereby advised to submit their bids via the EPADS system before the extended date.

Note: -All other terms and conditions shall remain intact.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER INF(P) 1807/25
C&W BUILDING DIVISION SWABI
PH: No. 0938-290029 E-Mail: cwd.swabi@gmail.com

Islamabad United partner with Daewo Battery



F.P. Report

LAHORE: As the most successful team in HBL PSL history, Islamabad United entered PSL 10 with a powerful boost by partnering with Daewo Battery as its Official Battery Partner. This collaboration between two high-performance brands is now fueling United's strong start to the season both on and off the field.

To commemorate this strategic partnership, Ali Naqvi, Owner of Islamabad United, visited the Head Office of Treet Battery Limited in Lahore, where he was warmly received by Syed Sheharyar Ali, CEO of Treet Battery Limited, along with Shoaib Zafar - COO, Muhammad Ali Khan - Head of Marketing, and Faizan Mehmood - Group Head of Corporate Communications. The

meeting concluded with a symbolic exchange of souvenirs, reinforcing the mutual vision of excellence and energy. With three championship titles (Seasons 1, 3, and 9), Islamabad United has consistently set the standard in the Pakistan Super League. Its partner, Daewo Battery - a brand of Treet Battery Limited - is known for its leadership in the battery industry, offering 100% maintenance-free automotive and deep-cycle batteries, manufactured with cutting-edge Korean technology and stringent quality controls.

Syed Sheharyar Ali, CEO of Treet Battery Limited, remarked: "Islamabad United's winning legacy and Daewo Battery's reliability are a perfect match. We are proud to stand behind a team that reflects the strength and endurance

of our brand."

Ali Naqvi, speaking on the partnership, stated: "Daewo Battery shares our values of reliability, consistency, and performance. This collaboration is more than a sponsorship - it's a joint mission to energize our fans and continue delivering results that make Pakistan proud."

Shoaib Zafar, COO of TBL, said: "Cricket connects every Pakistani. By supporting Islamabad United, we celebrate that connection while showcasing our commitment to empowering national passions."

Muhammad Ali Khan, Head of Marketing at TBL, added: "This partnership is about energy - on the field and in people's lives. Daewo Battery is proud to support Islamabad United in powering a thrilling PSL 10 season."

Hyundai launches all-new TUCSON Hybrid nationwide

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Hyundai Nishat Motor (Private) Limited successfully hosted the nationwide launch of the all-new Hyundai TUCSON Hybrid. It marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's automotive industry while building on the legacy of the TUCSON 2020, which redefined the SUV landscape in Pakistan. The all-new TUCSON Hybrid arrives as the first all-wheel drive (AWD) hybrid SUV in its segment, integrating advanced hybrid technology, latest-generation facelift design, and all-terrain capabilities to meet the evolving demands of modern drivers.

The Hyundai TUCSON Hybrid 2025, introduces segment-first technologies including memory seats, a fingerprint sensor, head-up display (HUD), and heated and ventilated seats. All this and more features backed by advanced Korean engineering offer a premium, tech-forward driving experience for future-ready drivers. Designed with the Pakistani consumer in mind, it also features multi-terrain drive modes (Snow, Mud, Sand) for greater control across challenging road conditions.

Equally important is its fuel-efficient hybrid system, delivering enhanced mileage without sacrificing performance. As the nation faces increasing energy costs and fuel dependency, the TUCSON Hybrid 2025 provides a smarter, more economical solution, offer-



ing long-term value to consumers while contributing to national energy sustainability plan.

The exclusive launch event took place at Hyundai Premium, Lahore, and brought together media representatives, industry stakeholders, and automotive

enthusiasts. Guests received an exclusive first look at both All-Wheel Drive (AWD) and Front-Wheel Drive (FWD) variants of the all-new TUCSON Hybrid, followed by a media briefing and interactive content capture sessions. The reveal showcased the SUV's latest

facelifted design, refined interior, and advanced hybrid features.

Deliveries of the all-new Hyundai TUCSON Hybrid have started on all Hyundai dealerships across the country, bringing this pioneering SUV to customers nationwide.

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO)

INVITATION FOR BID FOR "PURCHASE OF ENERGY METERS" FOR 4.2 MW RESHUN HPP, DISTRICT UPPER CHITRAL"

The Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO), invites sealed bids under Single Stage One Envelope procedure from the manufacturers registered with PPMC/NTDC/DISCOs for the purchase of the following goods for 4.2 MW Reshun HPP, District Upper Chitral:

Sr. No.	Description of item	Unit	Quantity
1	Single Phase Static Energy Meter	No.	865

Terms & Conditions:

- Eligible Bidders may obtain further information, inspect and acquire the Bidding Documents from the office No. 333, 38/B-2, Phase-5, Hayatabad, Peshawar during working hours or can download from the PEDO website via www.pedo.pk, upon submission of written application along with the bank draft of **Rs. 3,000/-** in favor of the DDO O&M Reshun HPC. The bidding documents will not be issued on the last date of bid submission.
- The manufacturers must also apply to this tender notice by getting registered on etender.pedo.pk to upload their bid proposals in soft (PDF format) and submit hard copies at Room # 333, PEDO House, 38/B-2, Phase-5, Hayatabad by **26.05.2025 till 1500 hours**.
- The bids will be opened in the presence of authorized representatives of the manufacturers who chose to attend, on the same day at 1530 hours in the Main Committee Room, PEDO House, 38/B-2, Phase-5, Hayatabad, Peshawar.

D.D.O.

O&M, 4.2 MW RESHUN HPP
PEDO, PESHAWAR

INF (P) 1830/25



In brief

MacGill avoids jail over drug deal

SYDNEY (Agencies): Former Australia cricketer Stuart MacGill has avoided jail after being found guilty of taking part in the supply of cocaine. The 54-year-old was given a 22-month intensive corrections order and 495 hours of community service on Friday. MacGill pleaded not guilty but had admitted to the use of cocaine and to introducing his brother-in-law to his drug dealer, Australian broadcaster ABC reported. Prosecutors said that the pair later made a deal for 330,000 Australian dollars (£159,000) worth of cocaine but MacGill maintained that his involvement was limited to the introduction in Sydney in April 2021. A police investigation began after MacGill claimed he had been abducted and beaten in April 2021. MacGill sustained minor injuries in the incident but didn't require medical care, police said. A group of men were arrested one month later in connection with the abduction of MacGill, who told police he had been driven to a remote site where he was assaulted and threatened at gunpoint. Spinner MacGill, who played 44 Test matches for Australia between 1998 and 2008, was charged with taking part in the supply of a large commercial quantity of a prohibited drug in September 2023.

Djokovic takes Geneva wildcard

LONDON (Agencies): Novak Djokovic has taken a wildcard to play the upcoming Geneva Open as he looks to find form and match fitness before the French Open. Djokovic, who is aiming for a standalone record 25th Grand Slam title in Paris, pulled out of this week's Italian Open. The 37-year-old Serb has lost his past three matches after early exits at clay-court events in Monte Carlo and Madrid last month. Djokovic did not give a reason for missing the ATP Masters tournament in Rome - where he is a six-time champion. Now the three-time French Open champion has decided to return to Geneva in an effort to spend more time on the red dirt before heading to Roland Garros. It has been a patchy season by Djokovic's high standards. A positive start saw him reach the Australian Open semi-finals, although he had to pull out injured against Germany's Alexander Zverev after losing the first set. The world number six, who turns 38 this month, lost three matches in a row on his comeback before rediscovering form at the Miami Open. However, he was overwhelmed by powerful Czech teenager Jakub Mensik in the final, costing him another chance to win his 100th ATP title. Overall, he has won 12 of his 19 matches this season and hopes to improve that record in Geneva. Last year, Djokovic reached the semi-finals on his first appearance in the Swiss city. He went on to reach the Roland Garros quarter-finals, but had to withdraw from his last-eight match against Casper Ruud with a knee injury picked up in the previous round. Norway's Ruud, who beat Britain's Jack Draper in the Madrid final on Sunday, is also in this year's Geneva field, along with American world number four Taylor Fritz. The ATP 250 event begins on 18 May, with the French Open starting a week later on 25 May.

Remaining matches of HBL PSL X postponed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday announced the postponement of the remaining eight matches of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10, citing worsening security conditions along the Line of Control (LoC).

According to a statement issued by the PCB, the decision was taken following consultations with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, in light of recent hostile develop-

ments, including the incursion of 78 drones and the firing of surface-to-surface missiles from India.

"The reckless aggression from India has escalated to a point where national attention and sentiments are rightly focused on the courageous efforts of the Armed Forces of Pakistan," the statement said. "Our armed forces are vociferously upholding the sovereignty of our beloved Pakistan."

The PCB expressed solidarity with the families of

the martyrs and security personnel, reiterating its support for those defending the nation during these critical times.

While acknowledging the enthusiasm and contributions of franchise owners, broadcasters, sponsors and fans, the Board emphasized that the safety and unity of the country must take precedence over sporting events. "Cricket, while being a unifying force and a source of joy, must take a respectful pause when the

country is facing such calous opposition," the statement added.

The PCB also conveyed its appreciation for the mental well-being of the participating players, especially foreign cricketers and acknowledged the concerns of their families during the current situation. The Board assured stakeholders that updates regarding the rescheduling of the remaining matches will be shared once the security situation improves.

Pakistan thrash India in Asian Beach Handball C'ship

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): In a resounding victory that left Indian fans stunned, Pakistan crushed arch-rivals India in the Asian Beach Handball Championship, sealing their spot in the quarterfinals and delivering India's worst-ever defeat in the tournament's history.

Played in Oman, the match saw Pakistan dominate from the outset, winning both sets in commanding fashion. The first set ended 35-6 in favour of Pakistan, while the second was an even bigger humiliation for India, who went

down 37-7.

Sources at the venue revealed that Indian players appeared demoralised and attempted to block live video and media coverage after their heavy loss. Reportedly, Indian team members expressed grievances, alleging that their government had initially pressured them not to play against Pakistan and later left them in diplomatic limbo post-defeat.

Despite earlier hesitation and calls from the Indian federation to ban Pakistan for five years, the match proceeded under

limited coverage as per India's request. But there was no hiding the result.

The Pakistani players erupted in celebration, raising chants of "Long Live Pakistan" and "Long Live the Pak Army," dedicating their win to the nation and offering prayers for the country's armed forces.

With this emphatic win, Pakistan has officially qualified for the quarterfinals, continuing their strong run in the championship and sending a clear message — both on and off the sand.

India suspends IPL 2025 tournament

NEW DELHI (Agencies): The Indian Premier League (IPL) was suspended on Friday indefinitely due to the escalating tensions between Pakistan and India.

"It does not look nice that cricket goes on while the country is at war," a BCCI official told Press Trust of India. On Thursday, the IPL decided to abandon the match between Punjab Kings (PBKS) and Delhi Capitals (DC) midway into the first innings.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) too has confirmed that the remaining matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10 have been shifted to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in light of growing security concerns.

The decision follows a

high-level meeting involving PCB officials, franchise representatives, and players, and comes a day after the scheduled fixture between Karachi Kings and Peshawar Zalmi at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium was postponed.

"The remaining fixtures of the HBL PSL X have been shifted to the UAE," the PCB said in a statement, adding that updated dates and venues will be announced in due course.

The latest development of the matches comes after Pakistan Army shot down 25 Israeli-made Harop drones sent by India on Thursday.

"The Pakistan armed forces, using their soft-kill (technical) and hard-kill (weaponised) skills fully, have shot down 25 Israeli-

made Harop drones sent by India," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement today.

"Following India's cowardly attack on May 6/7, which resulted in the destruction of 5 modern aircraft, drones, multiple posts, and several military casualties, India—rattled and in panic—is now attacking Pakistan using these Israeli-made Harop drones," the press release said.

DG ISPR Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry in a presser said that One drone from India managed to engage a military target in Lahore that has resulted in the injury of 4 Pakistan military personnel and some damage. One civilian was killed in Miano," the spokesperson said.

Federal Cup National Ranking Tennis begins Saturday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Tennis Association (ITA) is organizing the 37th Federal Cup National Ranking Tennis Championships (Men & Women, Boys 18 & Under, Boys 14&U and Senior Doubles 65Plus) from May 10 to 17 here at the PTF Tennis Complex.

Elite players of the country like Aqeel Khan of Wapda, Muhammad Shoaib of PAF, Muzammil Murtaza, Barkatullah, and many other National players and all affiliated units of PTF i.e. Army, Navy, Air Force, Wapda, Railway, HEC, SNGPL, POF Wah, Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Balochistan, Islamabad, AJK & Gilgit Baltistan, have been invited to participate and show their prowess at this tennis extravaganza, said a press release.

Tariq Mehmood Murtaza, Chairman, and Majid Bashir, President of the Islamabad Tennis Association, earlier chaired the Executive Committee meeting and approved the arrangements for holding the 37th Federal Cup National Ranking Tennis Championships in a befitting manner for the development & promotion of the game of tennis in the country. The Federal Cup is co-sponsored by OGDCL and Air Blue for the promotion of the game of tennis in the country.

Muhammad Khalil Chughtai, SVP, Ops of Islamabad Tennis Association named as Tournament Director, whereas International ITF White Badge Referee Arif Qureshi is nominated to work as Referee during this prestigious event.

The last date of the tournament entry was May 8, in which a total number of 150 players confirmed their entries.

A total of 24 top-ranked players are accepted directly in the Men's Singles Main Draw with 4 wild card entrants, whereas 8 players will qualify for the main draw after playing the qualifying draw of 64 players. The qualifying event will be played on Saturday.

Alcaraz, Sabalenka cruise to wins at the Italian Open



ROME (AFP): Carlos Alcaraz kicked off his bid for a first Italian Open title by cruising past Serbian qualifier Dusan Lajovic 6-3, 6-3 in Rome on Friday on his return to action from a thigh injury.

World number three Alcaraz got past Lajovic in one hour and 23 minutes in his first match since suffering the injury in his Barcelona Open final defeat to Holger Rune last month.

The Spaniard showed some signs of ring rustiness with 22 unforced errors but still managed to win the first four games of the match to give Lajovic too much to do in the first set.

And Alcaraz closed out the match in professional style with another quick start in the second set which put him three games ahead, allowing him to serve out for the win.

"Today was a really good day in the office, hopefully tomorrow and Sunday is going to be better," said Alcaraz.

"Of course I tried to make the most of my time,

when I'm not playing tournaments I always try to find the positive things... I could stay at home more with my friends, with my family, recovering and getting a little bit fresh mentally.

"It was a great performance, a great level, which was surprising for me a little bit but I'm just really happy for that." Alcaraz will now face one of Alex Michelsen and Laslo Djere in the third round as he eyes a potential final with world number one Jannik Sinner in the Italian capital.

Sinner will make his comeback from a three-month doping ban on Saturday when he takes on Mariano Navone in front of what will be a partisan crowd at the Foro Italico.

Alcaraz later told reporters that he would take it easy on his day off, keep an eye on Sinner's match and go to watch his friend Patric play for Serie A football club Lazio against Juventus at the nearby Stadio Olimpico.

Sabalenka through One of Alcaraz's poten-

tial opponents in the last 16, Grigor Dimitrov, fell at the first hurdle against wild card entrant Francesco Passaro. Bulgarian Dimitrov, the 14th seed, was beaten 7-5, 6-3 by Italian Passaro, who will take on Roman Burruchaga or Karen Khachanov in the next round.

Last year's winner Alexander Zverev is in action, against Argentina's Camilo Ugo Carabelli, in the last match of the day on centre court. Home hope Lorenzo Musetti opened his week, his first in the top 10 of the men's world rankings, with a 6-3, 6-2 win over qualifier Otto Virtanen.

In the women's draw, Aryna Sabalenka cruised past Anastasia Potapova and into the third round with a 6-2, 6-2 victory.

Last year's beaten finalist and current world number one, Sabalenka swept past Russian Potapova in just over an hour.

"I'd say that the top player is always a favourite," said a confident Sabalenka.

"I know that if I bring my best game and my fight spirit on court, I know that I can win this tournament."

Sabalenka will play Sofia Kenin in the next round after the American beat another Russian in Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in straight sets, 6-3, 6-0.

The 27-year-old Sabalenka has reached the final of her last four tournaments, with 1000 series wins in both Miami and Madrid.

Haaland 'ready and fit' to make Man City return

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City striker Erling Haaland is ready to make his return from injury this weekend, manager Pep Guardiola says.

Haaland had been sidelined since March after sustaining an ankle injury in his side's FA Cup tie against Bournemouth, but returns in time to contest the final of that competition later this month.

The Norway international, 24, was an unused substitute as City boosted their Champions League hopes by beating Wolves 1-0 in the Premier League last week.

Speaking before his side's trip to Southampton on Saturday (15:00 BST), Guardiola said on Haaland's availability: "He is ready, he is fit. [If he will] start, we will see tomorrow."

City are third in the table, three points above sixth-placed Nottingham Forest, as clubs battle to earn one of the top-five positions which this season offer Champions League football.

After facing Southampton, Guardiola's side face Crystal Palace in the FA Cup final at



Wembley on 17 May, before completing their league campaign with games against Bournemouth and Fulham.

In an interview with ESPN, external this week, Haaland said City's disappointing season after a run of four consecutive league titles was due to a loss of "hunger" in the squad.

"You can find excuses, injuries, many injuries at bad times, but in the end we haven't been performing well enough," Haaland said.

"We haven't had fully the hunger inside us. I haven't been good enough. I haven't helped the team enough. In the end, we haven't been good enough." Asked about those

quotes, Guardiola said: "If it's a feeling for Erling, the players should talk to each other and ask themselves why."

Haaland has 21 goals in 28 Premier League appearances this season - the only City player to reach double figures in the competition this term.

He has 30 goals in 40 games in all competitions in 2024-25, also contributing four assists.

Having won the Premier League's Golden Boot award in each of the past two seasons since his move to England, he is seven goals behind Liverpool's top scorer Mohamed Salah with only three games remaining.

Timberwolves overpower Warriors to level series

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): The Minnesota Timberwolves exploited the injury absence of Stephen Curry to defeat the Golden State Warriors 117-93 and level their NBA Western Conference semifinal series on Thursday.

A fired-up Timberwolves line-up, who had been stunned by the Warriors in game one on Tuesday, were always in control as they powered to a wire-to-wire victory in Minneapolis that squares the series at 1-1. Julius Randle led the scoring for Minnesota with 24 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds while Anthony Edwards finished with 20 points and nine rebounds.

Nickail Alexander-Walker added an eye-catching 20 points off the bench, including four three-pointers, on a night when five Timberwolves players finished in double figures.

Jonathan Kuminga led the Warriors scoring with 18 points from the bench, Jimmy Butler finishing with 17. Edwards said an improved defensive effort led to Minnesota's win after



a dismal offensive display in their game one loss.

"We watched film yesterday and we saw it wasn't just that we didn't make our shots -- it was more so our defensive effort and intensity. We didn't bring it," Edwards said.

"So we knew we had to bring it today."

With Golden State taking to the floor without Curry, who suffered a hamstring injury in game one, Minnesota set the tone early in the first quarter, racing into a hefty 25-7 lead that left the Warriors chasing the game.

Minnesota were given a scare when Edwards limped off with an ankle

problem in the second quarter, but the Timberwolves went into half-time with a commanding 56-39 lead.

Edwards returned for the start of the third quarter, but Minnesota were rocked by an early Golden State onslaught.

Butler and Kuminga both grabbed eight points apiece in a rally that helped the Warriors slash the Timberwolves' lead to just seven points at 62-55 with just under seven minutes remaining in the third.

The Timberwolves regrouped impressively and closed the quarter with a 20-5 run to build an 85-65 lead heading into the final frame. Without the deadly

three-point scoring threat of Curry, the Warriors never looked like closing the gap and Golden State coach Steve Kerr ran up the white flag with four minutes remaining, removing his starters as Minnesota coasted home.

Kerr said his team had learned valuable lessons on how to play without the talismanic Curry as they return to San Francisco for game three on Saturday.

The 11-time All-Star Curry was ruled out for at least a week on Wednesday.

"We're trying to figure out what we're gonna be able to do in this series without Steph, so we gave a lot of people a lot of chances," Kerr said of his shifting line-up.

"I thought we made a really spirited run to get the lead down to seven, but then we just kind of lost a little bit of composure. We turned it over a couple of times, gave up a couple of threes when we lost our defensive connection. "But we learned a lot and I think this game will help us figure out how to move forward."



In brief

Admin denies blackout rumors

ISLAMABAD (APP): The District Administration of Islamabad has strongly denied reports circulating about planned electricity blackouts during night hours. In an official statement, the administration clarified that no announcements have been made from mosques instructing residents to switch off their home lights. "These are baseless rumors. No such instructions have been issued," said the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad. The DC further warned that action would be taken against individuals spreading false information through mosque loudspeakers or other means. Citizens have been urged not to believe or spread unverified news. The public is advised to contact the District Control Center, which is available 24/7, to confirm the authenticity of any such announcements.

2 criminal gangs busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Friday busted two gangs of criminals involved in street crimes, including bike lifters, and recovered seven stolen motorcycles and other valuables from them. According to the police spokesman, the Mandra Police nabbed three suspects involved in street crime incidents. Besides recovering two stolen motorcycles, an amount of Rs 70,000 and mobile phones snatched from citizens along with weapons were recovered from them. Similarly, the New Town Police also arrested a gang of two accused involved in motorcycle theft incidents. Five stolen motorcycles were recovered from their possession, the spokesman said.

Police hold 10 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Friday during operations against criminal elements across the district held 10 accused, including liquor suppliers and illegal arms owners. According to the spokesman, four accused were taken into custody from different areas of Bani, R A Bazaar and Wah Saddar police stations on the recovery of more than 50 litres of liquor. Similarly, five suspects were arrested from different areas with illegal weapons and ammunition. Likewise, the Kallar Syedan Police have apprehended an accused who posted a video of himself with an illegal weapon on social media, which subsequently went viral.

Hina visits family of murdered teenager

LAHORE (APP): Chairperson Punjab Women Protection Authority (PWA) Hina Parvez Butt visited the family of 16-year-old Sidra in Gujjar Colony Lahore to offer condolences and express deep sorrow over the tragic incident. She assured the bereaved family of full legal support and swift justice from the government of Punjab. According to FIR No. 2792/25 registered at Kot Lakhpat Police Station, Sidra was allegedly strangled to death by her father Bashir Ahmad with the help of his brothers, Muhammad Inman and Jabbar. The suspects then secretly buried her body in Odh Mohalla graveyard. Police have arrested all three accused, and a case has been registered under Sections 302, 201, and 34 of the Pakistan Penal Code. Speaking to the media, Hina Butt condemned the act as inhumane and deeply disturbing. "We cannot remain silent on such brutal crimes," she stated. "Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has made it clear that violence against women and girls is absolutely intolerable."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with US Acting Ambassador Natalie Baker. —APP Photo

Christian community holds solidarity rally with Pakistan Army

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Christian community of Rawalpindi organized a peaceful rally on Friday to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army and condemn India's aggression towards Pakistan.

The rally, held under the auspices of the International Full Gospel Fellowship (IFGF), a leading international consortium of Global Churches, and was led by its Rawalpindi's Chairman Pastor Justin Javed, marched from Gordon College Church and concluded outside the Rawalpindi Press Club.

A large number of community members including pastors, women, children

and elders participated in the rally. Participants carried placards and chanted slogans in support of Pakistan's armed forces. They also strongly condemned India's hostilities against Pakistan.

Addressing the gathering, Pastor Justin Javed said that the Christian community stands shoulder to shoulder with the brave soldiers who are defending our motherland. He condemned the Indian acts of international laws' violation in the strongest terms, urging the international community to take notice of this.

"The entire nation, including all religious minorities, is united against

Indian aggression", he said adding that the valour defence forces of Pakistan are giving a befitting response to the enemy.

In a brief interaction with APP, Pastor Javed said that India was once again mistaken and underestimated Pakistani nation.

"Modi should know that we are one nation, everyone of us is Army Chief, and everyone of us is ready to fight with you along with our brave soldiers", he said.

The Pastor Javed further said that the minorities, particularly the Christian community are ready to sacrifice their blood for the safety and stability of Pakistan.

ANF recovers over 1266 kg of drugs worth Rs 237.8m

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting seven operations across the country, recovered as many as 1266.600 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 237.8 million and arrested eight suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday.

He informed that ANF, in a joint operation with Pakistan Navy in the Arabian Sea, recovered 1100 kg of Hashish, 100 kg of Heroin and 50 kg of Ice.

In another operation, 14.400 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Chachian Interchange, Haripur and two more suspects were detained on the information of the arrested accused.

Similarly, 2 kg of Ice was recovered from a UPS placed in a vehicle near Chenab Tower plaza, Gujrat. As much as 200 grams of Weed was recovered from two accused near Nagan Chowrangi, Karachi. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

4 members of 'sharp shooter' gang arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police team from Lohibher Police Station arrested four members of an organized criminal gang involved in looting shops and citizens at gunpoint, recovering stolen items worth over Rs1.65 million, along with weapons and a motorcycle used in crimes.

An official told APP that the crackdown was carried out as part of ongoing operations against criminal elements in the federal capital. Acting on technical and human intelligence, the Lohibher Police successfully traced and arrested four suspects affiliated with the notorious 'sharp shooter' gang.

He said the arrested accused were identified as Muhammad Hasnain alias Shelo, Ehtesham alias Aati, Zeeshan alias Shaan, and Umair alias Rooky. During the operation, the police recovered snatched cash, mobile phones, wristwatches, a DVR, and other valuables. Weapons with ammunition and a motorcycle used in various robberies were also seized.

He said during preliminary investigations, the suspects confessed to multiple armed robberies in the Lohibher area. Several FIRs have already been registered against them, and further investigations are underway to trace more incidents and possible accomplices.

DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq reiterated that those attacking the lives and property of citizens will not escape the grip of the law. "Islamabad Police is taking all necessary measures to ensure public safety and will not allow criminal elements to disrupt peace in the city," he said.

Indian aggression unites nation: Anwarul Haq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Anwarul Haq Chaudhry on Friday said that Indian aggression in Pakistan has united nation. He said whenever India attacked Pakistan, the first targets are always the Shakargarh and Zafarwal regions.

Speaking in the National Assembly, he expressed pride that these areas, including others in his constituency, serve as the front line in Pakistan's defense. "These areas are a thorn in Modi's eyes," he added.

Anwarul Haq praised the swift response of Pakistan armed forces and air force during recent tensions, saying, Pakistan took revenge within two to three hours and taught the Modi government a lesson. "Pakistan army made it clear to Modi that his actions were wrong and to be answered brave-

ly," he said. He also expressed solidarity with the people affected by the Indian attacks and promised continued support to them. "We are united to crush Modi's evil intentions," he added.

While introducing his constituency NA-75, which includes Tehsils Shakargarh and Zafarwal, he shared some historical background. He explained that before the partition, Shakargarh was part of Gurdaspur District.

According to the partition plan, Muslim-majority areas were supposed to go to Pakistan, but due to a conspiracy by Nehru, Lord Mountbatten and Radcliffe, Muslim-majority tehsils were given to India, and only Shakargarh was awarded to Pakistan, he said.

He said that the aim of this plan was to give India access to Kashmir through

the Pathankot area, cutting Kashmir off from Pakistan. "This unfair division allowed India to send troops into Kashmir in 1948 and occupy it, leaving the Pakistan movement's agenda incomplete," he said.

Anwarul Haq said that the time has come to complete that unfinished agenda. "It is a blessing in disguise that Modi's foolish moves have united the nation," he said, urging the civilian and military leadership to take bold steps.

He urged the Pakistani leadership to "move forward" and assured them of the full support of the Pakistani nation.

"This is the time to correct the injustice done to us during partition," he said, even suggesting that if necessary, the international border should be crossed to free Kashmir and fulfill the mission of the Pakistan movement.

Four lane motorway from Masehra to Naran soon: Aleem

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Friday has approved the construction of a four-lane Motorway from Mansehra to Kaghan, Naran, Jhal Kund and onwards to Chilas.

The federal minister directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to declare an emergency and immediately commence the work on this project. He stated that a 235 kilometer Highway from Mansehra to Naran and Chilas will be constructed in line with international standards and special consideration be

given to the needs of tourists on this Motorway, said a press release.

The minister instructed that the Project should be expedited with continuous day and night work to ensure early completion. Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized the strategic importance of this Motorway from Mansehra to Naran, Kaghan, Jhal Kund and Chilas calling it a high-priority initiative that must not face more delays. He further directed that rest areas be constructed along the N-15 route, allowing tourists to take short breaks as per their requirements while traveling to hilly areas.

Federal Minister

Communications Abdul Aleem Khan also instructed that toll collection on the Mansehra-Kaghan-Naran Motorway should also be split into two portions to facilitate travelers.

He pointed out that if tolls are to be collected, the NHA must also ensure the provision of world-class services on these roads. Special tasks have been assigned to NHA officers regarding the N-15 Mansehra-Naran Motorway by the Federal Minister.

The meeting was briefed on key matters by the Federal Secretary for Communications and the Chairman of the National Highway Authority.



ISLAMABAD: People evacuate from Centaurus Mall as rescue teams conduct a mock drill as part of emergency response training. —APP Photo

WB praises HEDP's progress as project nears completion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and the World Bank (WB) have successfully concluded their final joint review of the Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP) project. The review highlighted strong progress and mutual satisfaction.

Launched in 2019 and supported by the WB with USD 400 million, the HEDP is set to conclude in June 2025, said a press release on Friday. The five-year project has focused on strengthening research, enhancing quality education, improving access to modern technology, and building faculty and staff capacity through the

National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE).

The 12th and final World Bank Mission, led by Ms. Inga Afanasieva, Task Team Leader and Senior Economist, and the HEC team led by Adviser Awais Ahmad held a detailed wrap-up session with Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed and Executive Director HEC Dr. Zia-Ul-Qayyum. The session reviewed implementation progress of all six components of the project and accomplishments against the targets.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed called the project a milestone for Pakistan's higher education sector. He emphasized ongoing efforts to promote excellence in

academic research and governance of universities, and translating them into better student outcomes and professional success. The Chairman expressed interest in future collaborations with the WB. "HEC is looking forward to having similar partnerships with the World Bank in the future," he said.

Ms. Afanasieva praised HEC and the HEDP team for significant progress. "There's been notable achievement of targets. We see great potential for future collaboration and need to connect the dots for stronger impact," she said.

Awais Ahmad also acknowledged the team's hard work and affirmed that final targets will be met.

Digital Expert urges citizens to trust official sources amid misinformation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Digital rights expert Nighat Dad advised citizens to be cautious of misinformation and rely on verified statements from government officials, encouraging people not to share unverified messages in groups as authorities closely monitor online activity. Talking to a private news channel expert stresses public awareness for the importance of responsible online behaviour, encouraging citizens to think critically about the content they consume and share.

By adopting a cautious approach, individuals can play a crucial role in mitigating the spread of false information, she added. Nighat Dad pointed out that misinformation often spreads rapidly at night, when fact-checking and verification mechanisms may be less active. She emphasized the need for citizens to remain vigilant and cautious, even in the evening hours to avoid spreading false information.

Dad recommends cross-checking information with trusted sources before passing it on to others, refraining from sharing suspicious or unverified content and being mindful of the potential impact of online actions. Digital rights expert asked to rely on official statements and verified platforms of government institutions and government officials to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

ICT admin conducts emergency drills across capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): In response to the current security situation between Pakistan and India, the district administration of Islamabad on Friday conducted emergency drills following the emergency preparations across the Federal Capital.

According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, sirens, drills, and public safety awareness campaigns are being carried out to prepare for any possible crisis.

He said that the high-rise buildings throughout the capital have been equipped with emergency sirens. These sirens are meant to alert residents in case of any serious threat. Major commercial and residential buildings, including Centaurus Mall, Zarghoon Plaza, and Khudadad Heights, have been selected for emergency drills.

The drills included the activation of sirens and supervised evacuation

exercises. Similar activities were also held at Safa Gold Mall, where building management and residents took part in the evacuation process.

When the sirens sounded, a large number of people came out of buildings, responding as they would in a real emergency. These drills were conducted to familiarize the public with the emergency response procedures and to assess how well prepared different buildings are for a crisis.

The district administration said that the drills are part of efforts to prepare for any conflict-related situation. Officials guided the public on the standard steps to take during emergencies, including how to evacuate safely and where to gather once outside the buildings.

The Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad confirmed that emergency sirens have now been installed on all major buildings in the

city. He emphasized that these measures are precautionary and meant to ensure public safety in case of conflict or any untoward incident.

District officials added that the purpose of these exercises is to test readiness and improve coordination among emergency responders, building managements, and the general public.

The administration has encouraged citizens to take these drills seriously and follow instructions issued during such exercises. Awareness messages are also being shared to educate people on how to stay safe in case of an emergency.

Security and emergency response teams monitored the drills closely and reviewed how quickly and effectively people responded.

Through these preparations, Islamabad aims to stay ready and reduce risks during any potential crisis.

Judge among three killed

PARON (Pajhwok): Three people, including a judge, were killed in a traffic accident in Nuristan, an official said on Friday. Ghulam Rahman Haidari, a spokesman for Nuristan police, told Pajhwok that the incident occurred when a Toyota Fielder vehicle veered off the road along the Nuristan–Kunar highway and plunged into a river. He confirmed that Sheikh Rahimullah, a civil court judge in Nuristan, was among the victims, along with two of his friends.

Badghis tribes end old feud

KABUL (Pajhwok): Two tribes have reconciled, ending 30 years of enmity in the capital of Badghis, Qala-i-Naw on Friday. The conflict between the Sadaat and Serkhabi tribes began nearly 30 years ago in Qala-i-Naw. During a reconciliation meeting, both sides agreed, with full consent, not only to avoid future conflicts and disputes but also to foster an atmosphere of lasting peace, unity, and mutual understanding, choosing a peaceful life going forward.

IE grants five-year tax exemption to investors

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Administrative Deputy of the Prime Minister’s Office has announced that the Islamic Emirate, under a special policy, will not collect taxes from returning investors and industrialists for the next five years.

Abdul Salam Hanafi made these remarks during a land distribution ceremony for returnees in Ghazni province.

He said: “Those migrants who own large businesses in Pakistan—such as factories or commercial operations—will be supported by a dedicated committee and provided with various facilities. They will be given free land in industrial parks, and free housing will be allocated near these parks. Moreover, they will be exempt from all taxes

for five years.”

Meanwhile, the Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing announced that the plan to construct 35 townships for returnees across 25 provinces has been completed.

Hamidullah Nomani stated: “Within the past nine months, plans have been prepared for all areas where living conditions for returnees can be established. In 25 provinces, blueprints for 35 townships have been finalized, and in some areas, the distribution of residential plots has already begun.”

Additionally, the foundation stone for a market in the Andar district of Ghazni province was laid by officials of Islamic Emirate.

“The detailed plan for the first phase of this town-

ship has been finalized. Based on family size, land plots ranging from five to fifteen biswa (approximately 625 to 1,875 square meters) have been allocated. All essential public services will be available in this township.”

Hamidurrahman Shahidkhel, Engineering Head of Ghazni’s Urban Development Directorate, said: “The detailed plan for the Miri market in Andar district includes 192 residential plots, 12 commercial blocks, and up to 7 commercial caravanserais.”

To ensure permanent resettlement for returnees, around 4,000 acres of land have been allocated in Ghazni’s Township No. 2, of which nearly 2,000 acres will be distributed to eligible returnees in the first phase.

Climate change force families to flee Maiwand

K A N D A H A R (TOLOnews): Although the UN OCHA announced on May 1 of this year the allocation of over \$16 million to help mitigate the effects of drought in Afghanistan, climate change continues to threaten people’s lives.

Maiwand district in Kandahar is one of the areas where, due to the impacts of climate change and drought, several families have been forced to abandon their homes.

Hayatullah, a resident of Maiwand district, said: “People will be forced to leave this area because there is no water, and they cannot meet their basic needs. The only option is for them to abandon their villages and migrate to the cities.”

Khayrullah, another resident of the district, said: “When we first came here, the underground water level was at 60 meters. Later, it dropped to 100, and now it has reached 200 meters. Life has become more difficult, and people are compelled to leave these areas.”

Hazratullah, also from Maiwand district, said: “If dams are built on the rivers in Maiwand, people will be relieved of these problems, the groundwater level will rise, and the availability of clean drinking water will improve.”

Meanwhile, local officials are stressing the implementation of fundamental plans to manage the drought crisis.

Bismillah, the deputy governor of Maiwand district, stated: “It is a fact that Maiwand district is facing a shortage of drinking water. However, we have established five major water supply networks for public use. We also call on organizations to support us in building dams, as this district has been severely affected.”

Afghanistan has faced increasingly severe droughts. Alongside poverty and unemployment, drought and natural disasters have become a serious threat to the livelihoods of the people.

Cooperation in telecom and AI discussed



KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan’s acting communications minister and MCC Chinese officials to discuss cooperation in telecommunications, technology, and AI, aiming to support development and improve services at the Mes Aynak copper mine.

In a statement, the MoCI said that acting minister Maulvi Najibullah Hayat Haqqani met Wang Ji Shen, the Director General of the Chinese MCC company, along with his delegation.

During the meeting the two sides discussed bilateral cooperation in the areas of telecommunications, technology, and artificial intelligence.

Haqqani said that efforts are being made to accelerate technological progress in Afghanistan through cooperation with regional and neighboring countries.

He added that, currently, artificial intelligence is rapidly advancing around the world and, if used properly,

can significantly facilitate operations and services.

Meanwhile, the head of the Chinese MCC company said that since the company currently holds the contract for the Mes Aynak copper mine — one of the world’s largest mining projects — located in Mohammad Agha district of Logar province, they hope to improve telecommunications services in the area.

He added that, to better manage the mine’s opera-

tions, Afghan personnel have been sent to China for training in technology. Once they complete their studies in artificial intelligence, it will help accelerate the management and development of the mining project.

The ministry added that, at the end of the meeting, Chinese representatives were assured that their company’s telecommunications issues at the Mes Aynak site would be addressed.

Jalalabad storm leaves one dead and 32 injured



JALALABAD (Pajhwok): One individual has been killed and 32 others were injured as a result of heavy rainfall, flash floods, and strong winds in Jalalabad city, the capital of eastern Nangarhar province, local officials said.

In a statement, the Nangarhar Department of Public Health confirmed that one body and 32

injured individuals were brought to Jalalabad Regional Hospital following Thursday night’s storm and downpour.

According to Maulvi Saifullah Khalid, head of disaster preparedness, 28 of the injured have been discharged after receiving treatment, while four others remain under medical care.

He added that the storm

toppled dozens of large and small trees, as well as two telecommunication towers. Solar panels and various other properties were also damaged or destroyed.

Floodwaters had overflowed onto main roads in several parts of the city, but municipal teams managed to clear them in a timely manner.

Turkmenistan expands trade, transit cooperation with Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): Turkmenistan’s Foreign Minister has stated that his country will enhance cooperation with Afghanistan in the sectors of railways, trade, and transit.

Rashid Meredov held talks with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate, discussing political and economic relations and the strengthening of diplomatic ties between Kabul and Ashgabat.

Zia Ahmad Takal, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: “The Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan assessed the progress of the TAPI project positively and pledged to expand practical cooperation in rail, trade, and transit.”

Meanwhile, the Governor of Herat, who has traveled to Turkmenistan, met with the Governor of Mary Province to discuss the importance of cooperation

in the areas of energy, transport, and marble exports, emphasizing the need to strengthen these partnerships.

Some economic experts consider enhancing relations with Central Asian countries to be in Afghanistan’s strategic interest, given its regional positioning.

Mohammad Nabi Afghan, an economic analyst, said: “We must seize the opportunities available in

Turkmenistan. We should utilize Turkmenistan’s experiences and resources for the benefit of our country.”

Turkmenistan, a Central Asian nation with existing trade ties with Afghanistan, is also executing the major TAPI gas pipeline project, which aims to transport gas from Central Asia to South Asia.

So far, the project has advanced more than 14 kilometers within Afghan territory.

KABUL (Amu TV): Afghanistan is facing mounting food security challenges amid significantly below-average rainfall, warming temperatures, and deteriorating crop conditions, according to a new climate report by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWS NET, a US-funded initiative that monitors global food insecurity risks.

The report, produced in collaboration with the US Geological Survey, NOAA, and other agencies, shows that from October 2024 through April 2025, national precipitation levels were 40 percent below the 40-year average, with major deficits in the north and west threatening both subsistence agriculture and broader food supply chains.

From October 2024 through April 2025, national precipitation levels were 40 percent below the 40-year average, with many regions experiencing cumulative rainfall deficits of more than 50 percent, especially in the northern and western provinces. The report warns that these deficits have severely

affected winter wheat crops, which are in their flowering and grain-filling stages, and pose a threat to spring planting.

“Low precipitation has delayed planting, reduced germination, and increased moisture stress across rainfed areas,” the report stated. “Most winter wheat crops in the northwest are currently under moderate to severe stress.”

The snowpack across the country is also critically low. The snow water equivalent (SWE) — a key indicator for future irrigation and hydropower — is 40 to 60 percent below normal in major basins. These conditions threaten summer irrigation supplies, particularly in provinces dependent on glacial runoff.

Temperature anomalies are compounding the situation. April temperatures were 2 to 4 degrees Celsius above average, accelerating evapotranspiration and reducing already strained soil moisture. Forecasts for May and June predict continued above-average temperatures and below-average rainfall, raising further alarms for agricultural productivity and pasture condi-

tions.

Vegetation health, as tracked by satellite NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index), shows a sharp decline in rangeland quality across much of the country. Grazing areas in provinces such as Badghis, Ghor, and Faryab are significantly below the 5-year average, suggesting poor prospects for livestock feed availability through the summer.

Food prices remain volatile. While national prices of wheat flour and rice have held steady, the cost of essential goods has risen.

According to the report, as of April 2025, cooking oil prices rose by 18 percent year-on-year, salt prices increased by 22 percent and animal feed prices climbed by 12 percent.

At the same time, the Afghani appreciated by 2.5 percent against the US dollar in March and April, which may offer some short-term relief for import-dependent markets. However, this has done little to offset the broader inflationary pressure on rural households.

The humanitarian impli-

cations are stark. The United Nations estimates that 23.7 million people — over half the population — are in need of assistance, with 3.4 million children under age five suffering from acute malnutrition.

The report also emphasized that Afghanistan’s climatic instability is consistent with broader regional trends, likely exacerbated by climate change. While ENSO (El Niño–Southern Oscillation) conditions are expected to remain neutral through mid-2025, historical data links La Niña phases — expected to return later this year — to heightened drought risk in South and Central Asia.

“Sustained dryness, high temperatures, and low snowpack have converged to place Afghanistan’s food and water systems under severe strain,” the report concluded. “Without immediate mitigation, both crop and livestock sectors are likely to suffer significant losses.”

The monitoring initiative is supported by FEWS NET, the US Geological Survey (USGS), NOAA, and the Climate Hazards Center.

A royal resting place & rich cultural heritage

KABUL (Pajhwok): Babur Garden, known as Bagh-i-Babur, is not merely a recreational space in Kabul; it represents a fusion of Afghanistan’s rich history and cultural identity.

This scenic and idyllic setting has welcomed over 11 million visitors in recent years and continues to thrive, connecting the past and the present.

Once a royal palace and exclusive recreational retreat for kings and high-ranking dignitaries, Babur Garden is located in Kabul’s Guzargah area, spread over approximately 11.5 hectares.

Chehel Sateon and Darul Aman roads lie to the west, Sher Darwaza Mountain to the east and the Chehel Sateon locality to the south.

In addition to the Queen’s Palace, caravanserai, mosque and swimming pools, the garden features greenery and towering ornamental and fruit-bearing trees that enhance its natural beauty. The refreshing air adds to the garden’s serene atmosphere.

A garden built centuries ago

Ziauddin Karimi, the administrative manager of Babur Garden, told Pajhwok Afghan News it was considered one of

Afghanistan’s most valuable cultural heritage sites.

It was established in the early 16th century by Zaeheeruddin Muhammad Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire in India.

He explained Babur had a deep love for creating gardens and orchards. In Afghanistan, he established seven gardens, one of which is Babur Garden, located in Kabul. The garden covers a total area of 11.5 hectares.

Karimi said Babur was born in 1483 in Andijan — today’s Fergana Valley, Uzbekistan. Following the death of his father Umar Sheikh, Babur was chosen by the as ruler of Fergana at just 12.

Driven from his homeland in 1504, Babur settled in northern Afghanistan and later conquered Kabul. During his 22-year rule, he carried out extensive development work in the city.

Karimi recollected in 1526, Babur launched a military campaign in India, where he remained until his death in 1530 in the city of Agra, aged 47. Nine years later, in accordance with his will, Babur’s remains were transferred to this garden, which has since been known as “Babur Garden.”

Tomb of Emperor Babur

The tomb of Babur, situated at the highest point of the garden, is marked by simple white stonework that reflects his humble and unpretentious character.

Its location in the garden demonstrates Babur’s deep personal connection to the site — and to Afghanistan at that. Surrounded by cypress and plane trees, the tomb is also adorned with historical inscriptions and poetry, narrating the life of the poet-emperor and warrior.

Caravanserai

Near the entrance to the garden stands a striking structure known as caravanserai. With traditional architecture and compact chambers, it has been repurposed into a space for selling handicrafts, housing a tea house and offering tourist services.

Several shops, particularly those run by women, sell handmade goods that showcase Afghanistan’s deep-rooted cultural traditions.

According to Karimi, the caravanserai hosts shops offering antiques, handmade crafts, and wooden artefacts.

Shah Mahmood, a shopkeeper who has sold gemstones and decorative items in the garden for 18 years, said his products represented the country’s rich cultural

heritage.

Mohammad Asif Azizi, a visitor looking for rings, said: “Babur Garden has many beautiful things that lift the spirit. We came here to shop and relax — it is truly a fascinating place.”

The Queen’s palace

In the north-eastern section of the garden stands the Queen’s Palace. This structure, damaged during the civil conflicts of the 1990s, was restored in 2008.

It has since been transformed into a cultural exhibition centre and a multipurpose venue, now hosting art exhibitions, galleries, and cultural events.

Karimi explained that Babur Garden has served various functions throughout history. In the late 19th century, during the reign of Amir AbdurRahman Khan, the Queen’s Palace served as a royal residence. At another time, it hosted the German embassy.

The palace has also housed the Kabul Department of Education and Khushal High School.

Today, it is used for official ceremonies and generates significant revenue.

Swimming pools

The garden’s swimming pools, once reserved for royal use, now draw the

attention of visitors.

Surrounded by fruit trees, seasonal flowers, and orderly greenery, they reflect the meticulous design principles of Mughal garden architecture.

Karimi noted that until the reign of Mohammad Nader Shah, Babur Garden remained an exclusive royal property. Only the royal family, high officials, and foreign guests were permitted to enter.

However, in 1930, after the end of Nader Shah’s reign, the garden was opened to the public, and since then people have visited on Fridays and public holidays for leisure.

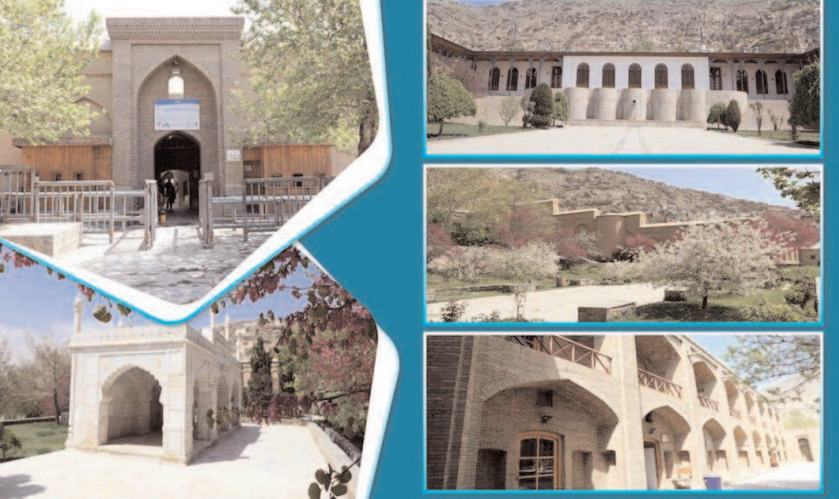
Restoration, public access

According to Karimi, many of the garden’s structures, particularly the Queen’s Palace, had been partially destroyed during the civil wars in the 1990s.

The garden’s restoration began in 2002 with funding from the Aga Khan Foundation and was completed in 2007.

More than 11 million people — including locals, tourists and foreign guests — have visited Babur Garden in the last 18 years.

Karimi said during the COVID-19 pandemic, the garden attracted no visitors,



and currently, women were not allowed to enter the place.

Although specific figures on income from ticket sales, shop rentals, or event hosting were not disclosed, Karimi outlined the current entrance fees:

- 10 afs for children
- 30 afs for adults
- 350 afs for foreign visitors
- 100 afs for visitors bringing cameras

He revealed the garden had 47 staff members across various departments, including horticulture, administration, maintenance, operations and palace management.

Visitors’ perspectives

Haji Wahid Totakhel, who returned to Afghanistan after spending 35 years in Scotland, noted the changes he observed and praised the restoration of historical buildings.

He recalled: “When I was a student at the military academy, we came here one day to swim. In those days, families used to come here. The atmosphere remains the same. The garden and trees are spiritually uplifting, but now the place looks empty.”

Ahmad Saleem Habibi from Baghlan province, who visited the site with his children, described the garden as an excellent recre-

ational area with fresh air and historical importance. He urged visitors to maintain the garden’s cleanliness.

Abdul Bari Ahmadi from Parwan province, who came with friends, said Babur Garden stood out from other parks due to its royal past.

He added: “Babur Garden is a historical place. It makes one feel responsible to serve the nation and preserve such heritage for future generations.”

He also called on the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to allow women to visit the garden, provided Islamic dress codes were respected.



DUBAI: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, held a meeting on Friday in Dubai with Dr. Tariq Humaid Al Tayer, First Deputy Speaker of the Federal National Council (FNC) of the United Arab Emirates. During the meeting, both dignitaries discussed strengthening parliamentary cooperation, regional developments, and enhancing bilateral relations between Pakistan and UAE. The interaction took place in a cordial atmosphere, reflecting the deep-rooted ties between the two nations.

Religious harmony a pressing need of hour: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor on Information to the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was called on in Peshawar by a delegation comprising Maulana Rashidul Haq Haqqani, Naib Muhtamim of Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak; Maulana Yousaf Shah, Central General Secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (S); and Mufti Zafar Zaman, Coordinator of the Muttahida Ulema Board.

The meeting focused on issues including religious harmony, challenges faced by madrassas, the role of religious scholars in national unity, and developments in the investigation of the murder case of Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani.

During the discussion, Barrister Dr. Saif emphasized that religious harmony is a pressing need of the hour and that the provincial government is taking serious steps to promote unity among various schools of thought. He acknowledged the pivotal role that religious scholars have historically played in fostering social stability and inter-faith tolerance, stressing that their guidance is even more essential in today's environment.

Dr. Saif reassured the attendees that relevant agencies are actively working to identify and apprehend the perpetrators of Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani's murder, and the government is committed to ensuring that justice is served. Challenges faced by Darul Uloom Haqqania were also discussed in detail. Dr. Saif assured that the provincial government is taking practical and effective measures to resolve the issues faced by such religious and educational institutions so they can continue fulfilling their educational and religious responsibilities without hindrance. He further stated that religious scholars are a source of intellectual and moral guidance for society, and the creation of a peaceful, stable, and unified society is not possible without their involvement.

Flood suspends pedestrian crossing at Torkham

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Last evening a heavy flash flood damaged equipment in the pedestrian terminal that suspended exit and entry of passengers at Torkham border, official and locals informed on Friday.

The Immigration official in Torkham said that the previous day heavy downpour flooded the newly established pedestrian terminal that brought to halt all exit and entry process. The rain water entered into the pedestrian terminal and damaged equipment in the terminal besides suspended net and power supply in the area.

Efforts had been underway to refunctioning the process, he added. Unexpected shutting of the border multiplied miseries of the passengers on the sides of the crossing and hundreds of them were witnessed waiting outside the immigration office and on the border to cross –in or out. They asked for instant resuming of the immigration process so that they could reach their destinations.

Nation stands firmly with brave soldiers: Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) from South Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa called on PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Zardari House Islamabad on Friday evening and conveyed to him the public sentiments regarding Indian aggression.

Bilawal stated that the people of Pakistan, rising above political, social, and provincial differences are united to confront Indian aggression. He said that the nation stands firmly with the brave soldiers of the army, navy, and air force defending the country on the front lines.

He emphasized that this is the time to set aside all differences and send a message of unity to the world.

He condemned the Indian government's move to ban Pakistan's social media accounts and media houses in an attempt to hide the truth saying that blocking all possible means to prevent Indian citizens from accessing the truth is a desperate and cowardly act that reflects the Indian government's panic.

The PPP Chairman urged Pakistani youth to use social media to counter Indian media disinformation and bring the truth to the world. He said that it is the time for every citizen to contribute to the defense of Pakistan according to their abilities.

Bilawal instructed the PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter to organize a rally in Peshawar on May 26 against Indian aggression. He met with PPP Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa General Secretary Shazi Khan, Deputy General Secretary Abrar Saeed, and President Hazara Division, Malik Farooq. Others who met him included District President Abbottabad, Syed Saleem Shah, District President Haripur Jehanzaib Khan, and District President Rawalpindi Iftikhar Shehzada.

National Assembly member Qasim Gilani, former National Assembly member Raza Rabbani Khar, PPP ticket holder from PP-215 Shakeel Labar, Moosa Labar, and Mian Khalid Hameed also held meetings with the Chairman. Secretary General PPP, Humayun Khan and Secretary General, PPP Parliamentarians Nayyar Hussain Bukhari were also present on the occasion.

Rally in BD seeking ban on former PM's party

DHAKA (AFP): Thousands of people rallied on Friday outside the residence of Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus, demanding that he ban the political party of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Yunus, 84, has led an interim government since Hasina was overthrown by student-led mass protests in August 2024 and fled into exile as crowds stormed her palace. Friday's rally came after the sudden departure of Abdul Hamid, a former leader of Hasina's Awami League party, from Bangladesh early on Thursday. A crowd, mainly made up of young people, had started gathering outside Yunus' residence on Thursday night.

Hasnat Abdullah, the chief organizer of the newly formed National Citizen's

Party, said the demonstration would continue until their demands were met. "Sheikh Hasina robbed the people of Bangladesh of their democratic rights. She manipulated the system to prevent any real opposition from participating in the election," Kamrul said.

"We saw Abdul Hamid leave the country safely. The actions of certain advisers are highly suspicious. The delay in justice appears to be part of a broader plan to bring back the fallen dictator and her party," he added. Hasina remains in self-imposed exile in India and has defied an arrest warrant from Dhaka over charges of crimes against humanity.

According to the United Nations, up to 1,400 protesters died in July when Hasina's government launched a brutal crack-

down on the opposition, for which she and Hamid are being investigated. At least three police officers responsible for overseeing airport arrivals and departures have been dismissed for negligence, according to officials, after Hamid's departure.

While citizens are generally barred from assembling outside the chief adviser's residence, the student demonstrators were allowed through. The government said on Friday it was seriously considering the demand raised by various quarters to ban the Awami League. "The government has begun communicating with different political parties to reach a final decision on the matter. It has reviewed UN-documented evidence of atrocities committed by the Awami League and its affiliates," the statement said.

KP CM directs timely completion of projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As part of the ongoing consultative sessions with elected public representatives to prepare the development program for the new fiscal year at the divisional level, an important meeting was held here on Friday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur in the chair to finalize the Annual Development Program (ADP) of Kohat Division for the upcoming fiscal year.

Members of the National and Provincial Assemblies from all five districts of Kohat Division, the Chief Minister's Advisor on Finance, senior officials from the Planning & Development Department and Kohat divisional administration participated in the meeting. The progress on ongoing development projects in Kohat Division and the status of fund allocation were reviewed in the meeting. Relevant officials on this occasion, gave sector-wise briefings on the progress of ongoing development projects in Kohat division.

Furthermore, the meeting was briefed in detail about the proposed projects to be included in the next Annual Development Program. The Chief Minister directed the concerned officials to allocate



100% funds in the next budget for projects nearing completion, making it clear that the timely completion of ongoing projects would be the top priority in the upcoming budget.

He stated that 80% of the development funds for the next fiscal year will be allocated to ongoing projects; however, new projects based on urgent public needs will also be included in the development program. "The new projects are being finalized in consultation with the relevant elected public representatives", he remarked.

He instructed the officials to prepare the feasibility studies and PC-Is for the new projects in a timely manner, emphasizing that drinking water supply schemes in the southern districts should be given priority in the new development program. Likewise, he directed that all tube well solarization projects be fully funded in the upcoming budget.

Ali Amin Gandapur also

directed the elected representatives to submit timely proposals for the establishment of schools and colleges in rented buildings in their respective constituencies and to pay special attention to healthcare projects in remote areas. He stressed that no district should be without a District Headquarter Hospital, and no tehsil should be without a Tehsil Headquarter Hospital.

Moreover, he directed improvement in service delivery in the existing hospitals. The meeting also discussed matters related to the use of royalty funds for the oil and gas-producing districts of Kohat Division. On this occasion, the Chief Minister stated that in the next budget, Kohat Division will receive 100% of its royalty share, while special packages will be included in the development program for the tribes and areas in Kurram that have cooperated with the government in restoring peace.

Iran, US to resume nuclear talks tomorrow

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran has agreed to hold a fourth round of nuclear talks with the United States on Sunday in Oman, Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi said on Friday, adding that the negotiations were advancing.

US President Donald Trump, who withdrew Washington from a 2015 deal between Tehran and world powers meant to curb its nuclear activity, has threatened to bomb Iran if no new deal is reached to resolve the long unresolved dispute. Western countries say Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran accelerated after the US walkout from the now moribund 2015 accord, is geared toward producing weapons, whereas Iran insists it is purely for civilian purposes.

"The negotiations are moving forward, and naturally, the further we go, the more consultations and reviews are needed," Aragchi said in remarks carried by Iranian state media. "The delegations require more time to examine the issues that are raised. But what is important is that we are on a forward-moving path and gradually entering into the details."

The fourth round of indirect negotiations, initially scheduled for May 3 in Rome, was postponed, with mediator Oman citing "logistical reasons." Aragchi said a planned visit to Qatar and Saudi Arabia on Saturday was in line with "continuous consultations" with neighboring countries to "address their concerns and mutual interests" about the nuclear issue.

EU ministers back Ukrainian tribunal

KYIV (Reuters): Kyiv's European allies have endorsed the creation of a special tribunal to hold top Russian leaders, including President Vladimir Putin, to account for the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. European Union foreign ministers, who met in the Ukrainian city of Lviv on Friday, signed off on the tribunal, named the "Lviv statement", to mark the conclusion of the technical work to draft the legal body.

The EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, told reporters there was no space for "impunity." "Russia's aggression cannot go unpunished and therefore establishing this tribunal is extremely important," Kallas said. "This tribunal will ensure that those most responsible for the aggression against Ukraine are held accountable," she added.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also said the tribunal was part of the continent's moral duty to hold Russia accountable for the war. "A strong tribunal for the crime of aggression can – and must – make any potential aggressor think twice," he said in a video address to the meeting.

Meanwhile, Russia declined to respond to news of the tribunal. "We are not reacting to this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday, according to the TASS state news agency. An EU official told the Reuters news agency that the tribunal would have to respect Putin and his officials' immunity while in office, but a prosecutor could investigate and propose an indictment ready for when the immunity is dropped.

Dutch Justice Minister David van Weel welcomed the move and told Reuters that the tribunal was a good step because it "fills a void that currently exists." "Which is how can you prosecute the leadership for the crime of aggression against another country," he said. While the tribunal could start operating this year, it is not the only legal instrument being used against Russia for its war on Ukraine.

In 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Putin and other Russian officials for the forced deportation of children and attacks on Ukrainian energy sites. Elsewhere on Friday, France announced that it would begin tapping into income from frozen Russian assets to help maintain about 60 French-made Caesar howitzers delivered to Ukraine.

Relief to common man in budget govt's priority: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that providing relief to the common man in the upcoming budget was the government's priority, and all-out resources will be utilized to reduce the financial difficulties of the poor and middle class.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting on the preparation of the federal budget 2025-26, directed that the upcoming budget should be prepared with a focus on sustainable export-driven growth and considering the projects to promote industries and increase production. The budget should also focus extensively on the creation of jobs, agriculture, information technology, small and medium enterprises, and the housing sector, he added. He said that the government and private sector

must work together for national development and prosperity.

Calling the public-private partnerships and youth vocational training among the government's priorities, Prime Minister Shehbaz noted that positive results were emerging from the government's power sector reforms as the reduction in electricity prices for industries would help promote industry and production. He said that automation and digitization were being promoted to bring transparency in the government system and facilitate the business community and investors.

He said that the government would continue the process of rightsizing to reduce the size of the federal government in the next fiscal year. During the briefing, it was informed that consultations with the private sector on budget preparation was in process

for the past three months, besides consultative sessions with stakeholders from various sectors.

It was informed that five-year Trade Policy Framework for 2025-30 and the E-Commerce 2.0 Framework would complete soon, and a plan for tariff rationalization was also being prepared. The delegation of businessmen and experts expressed confidence in the government's economic policies and presented their suggestions which the prime minister welcomed and directed the inclusion of feasible proposals in the budget.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Jam Kamal Khan, Shaza Fatima, Sardar Awais Ahmad Leghari, and Ali Pervaiz Malik, Special Assistant to PM Haroon Akhtar, and relevant senior government officials.

IHC moved to order release of Imran on parole

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A petition was filed in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday seeking the release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former Prime Minister Imran Khan on parole.

The plea filed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur through senior lawyer Latif Khosa argues that due to ongoing Indian aggression and drone attacks in various Pakistani cities, Imran Khan's life is at risk while he remains incarcerated.

It specifically highlights that India may consider Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail a potential target, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced global embarrassment during Imran Khan's tenure as Prime Minister.

The petitioner also cited concerns about the deteriorating health of the PTI founder due to prolonged imprisonment. It was noted that despite submitting a request to the Punjab Home Department, no action had been taken. The plea emphasizes that Imran Khan has not violated any prison rules during his detention and argues that his prolonged incarceration in politically motivated cases is infringing upon his fundamental rights.

The petition asserts that the Constitution provides a remedy for such circumstances in the form of parole. It further states that Imran Khan assures full compliance with any conditions imposed upon his release. The plea comes a day after Chief

Minister Gandapur attempted to meet Imran Khan at Adiala Jail but was stopped by Punjab Police at the checkpoint.

A heated exchange reportedly occurred between the Chief Minister and the police officers. Speaking to the media afterward, Gandapur expressed frustration, stating, "I am a Chief Minister; show me the way if there's any. The Punjab Police prevented me from meeting my leader." He further warned the federal government and Prime Minister, saying, "No MNA of yours should dare to enter my province now." Referring to the current volatile regional situation, he said, "This is my message during these wartime conditions—take it or leave it."

Progress of Red Line BRT project reviewed

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A high-level meeting was held in Karachi, chaired by the Senior Minister of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, to review the progress of the Red Line BRT project. The session was graced by Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, CEO of Trans Karachi Fawad Ghaffar Soomro, representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) mission, the contractors of the project, the engineers, and the senior officers of Trans Karachi.

The meeting reviewed the current status of the Red Line BRT project in detail and thoroughly discussed the challenges faced by the project. Topics such as Lot Three, depot designs, the biogas plant, and other related matters were also discussed. The meeting was briefed that among the major issues



presently afflicting the project include the augmentation of the K-4 water scheme and the realignment of utility structures by some of the firms.

Addressing the session, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister of Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon mentioned that the Red Line BRT is a step in history for creating a modern, green, and sustainable transport system. He urged all relevant stakeholders to accelerate the

pace of work, deploy maximum resources, and complete the project as soon as possible. He said that the Red Line is not just a transport project but a promise to the people of Karachi for a better, cleaner, and more accessible urban future. He added that steps have been taken to address various issues, including the relocation of utilities. Representatives of the Asian Development Bank also assured their full support during the meeting.

Israel won't be involved in new Gaza aid plan: US

JERUSALEM (Reuters): A US-backed mechanism for distributing aid into Gaza should take effect soon, Washington's ambassador to Israel said on Friday ahead of President Donald Trump's visit to the Middle East, but he gave few details.

Gaza's residents are facing a growing humanitarian crisis with Israel enforcing a months-long blockade on aid supplies to the small Palestinian enclave in the third year of its war against militant group Hamas. Ambassador Mike Huckabee said several partners had already committed to taking part in the aid arrangement but declined to name them, saying details would be released in the coming days.

"There has been a good initial response," the former Republican governor told reporters at the embassy in Jerusalem. "There are nonprofit organizations that will be a part of the leadership," he said, adding that other organizations and governments would also need to be involved, though not Israel. Tikva Forum, a hawkish

Israeli group representing some relatives of hostages held in Gaza, criticized the announcement, saying aid deliveries should be conditional on Hamas releasing the 59 captives in Gaza.

Trump, who wants to broker a deal that would see Israel and Saudi Arabia establish diplomatic relations, will visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates next week. Trump had teased a major announcement ahead of the trip. It was unclear if that was what Huckabee announced on Friday.

Anticipation has been building about a new aid plan for Gaza, laid waste by 19 months of an Israeli military campaign against Hamas that has destroyed much of the infrastructure and displaced most of its 2.3 million population several times. "It will not be perfect, especially in the early days," Huckabee said. "It is a logistical challenge to make this work."

European leaders and aid groups have criticized a plan by Israel, which has prevented aid from entering Gaza since breaking a ceasefire with Hamas in

March, for private companies to take over humanitarian distributions in the enclave. Israel has accused agencies including the United Nations of allowing aid to fall into the hands of Hamas, which it has said is seizing supplies intended for civilians and given them to its own forces or selling them to raise funds.

"The Israelis are going to be involved in providing necessary military security because it is a war zone, but they will not be involved in the distribution of the food or even bringing the food into Gaza," Huckabee told a press conference. Asked whether the supply of aid hinged on a ceasefire being restored, Huckabee said: "The humanitarian aid will not depend on anything other than our ability to get the food into Gaza."

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on Friday criticized emerging plans to take over distribution of aid in Gaza floated by both Israel and the United States, saying this would increase suffering for children and families.