

Quake jolts Islamabad, KP  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A 5.3-magnitude earthquake jolted Islamabad and parts of KP on Saturday where no damage has been reported so far. The NSMC reported that the epicenter of the earthquake was located approximately 230 km in the Hindukash region of Afghanistan. The earthquake tremors were also felt in various regions, including Islamabad, Swat, Swabi, Nowshera, Attock and other areas of KP.



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# Pakistan, India agree to ceasefire

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India on Saturday agreed to an immediate ceasefire, hours after Pakistan launched an operation to exercise its right of self-defence following the Indian missile attacks. The announcement to this effect was made by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, who took to X, saying, "Pakistan and India have agreed to a ceasefire with immediate effect." The deputy prime minister said that Pakistan had always strived for peace and security in the region, without compromising on its sovereignty and territorial integrity. President of the United States Donald Trump also took to X to announce that both countries had agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire.

"After a long night of talks mediated by the United States, I am pleased to announce that

India and Pakistan have agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire," he said. "Congratulations to both countries on using common sense and great intelligence," he added.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also said that he and the US Vice President JD Vance had engaged with senior Indian and Pakistani officials, including Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shehbaz Sharif, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir, and National Security Advisors Ajit Doval and Asim Malik. "I am pleased to announce the Governments of India and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire and to start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site," Rubio wrote on X.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Saturday received a phone call from Egypt's

Foreign Minister Dr. Badr Abdelatty who welcomed the ceasefire understanding between Pakistan and India. The DPM reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting regional peace and security. Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. Separately, the deputy prime minister/foreign minister spoke with Foreign Minister of Greece Giorgos Gerapetritis who also welcomed the ceasefire understanding between Pakistan and India.

The DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peace and security in the region and beyond. Both sides agreed to remain in close contact and to work together in multilateral fora as non-permanent members of the UNSC. While DPM/FM Dar spoke with European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) Kaja Kallas who wel-

comed the ceasefire understanding between Pakistan and India. "The DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fostering peace, stability, and dialogue in the region," the press release added.

Ishaq Dar also said that Pakistan's civil and military leadership launched the "Bunyan-um-Marsoos" operation after exhausting all patience, vowing that India would not be allowed to claim its hegemony in the region. "The civil-military leadership of Pakistan had no choice after last night's attacks at airbases. Our patience has run out... There is a threshold that we cannot go beyond, especially when it comes to hypocrisy and double standards... With the prayers of the nation, Allah will grant us victory. It is the government's foremost responsibility to protect the country's sovereignty," Dar said talking to a private television channel.

## It is a victory for truth: PM

— says Pakistan as responsible state gives positive response to a truce

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said, considering the regional peace and the lives of millions of people living in this region, that Pakistan as a responsible state gave a positive response to the ceasefire.

In a televised address to nation, the prime minister expressed the hope that all the outstanding issues including the water distribution, Jammu and Kashmir dispute and all other unresolved issues would now be settled by holding negotiations and by adopting a peaceful path. The prime minister congratulated the entire nation with the core of his heart that they proved to the



world their self-esteem and respect which were dearer to them than their lives, adding "If anyone challenges their sovereignty, they stand like an iron wall and overpower their enemies."

"What the enemy did was a cowardly and shameful act, a

naked aggression," but the brave and bold forces, with display of professionalism gave a very effective response which would always be remembered as a chapter in the modern warfare. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on the pretext of Pahalgam incident, India tried to drag Pakistan into a war despite the fact that without any delay, they had offered cooperation for an impartial and transparent global probe.

In the face of flurry of false allegations and accusations, Pakistan showed restraint and patience, he said, adding India tried to infiltrate territories with drones and missile attacks upon innocent people, mosques and civilians besides, tried their patience with botched

attacks on military installations and water resources. The prime minister said that after all the aggression, they decided to pay in the same coin which their enemy knew very well.

He said Pakistan made it clear that the negotiations which ought to take place at a table would now be held in the battlefield. He commended the armed forces of Pakistan whose Jawans were alien to the word of 'defeat'. Within few hours, he said their forces silenced enemy's guns and the world would remember as to how they turned enemy's air bases, installations and stockpiles into ashes. "Rafale also failed in the encounter."

(Continued on Back Page)



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos Pakistan destroys India's BrahMos stockpile, airbases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has initiated retaliatory action in response to the ongoing Indian aggression in the wee hours of Saturday, according to security sources. The operation has been officially named Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos.

As part of the operation, all bases identified as launch points for attacks on Pakistani civilians and mosques are being specifically targeted. Multiple strategic targets are being engaged simultaneously as the operation progresses, security sources confirmed. They stated that Pakistan launched its Al-Fatah missile as part of the ongoing retaliatory operation, naming it in honour of the Pakistani children who lost their lives in recent Indian aggression.

They added that Pakistan has neither forgotten nor will ever forget the sacrifice of these innocent children, who were martyred during cross-border attacks by Indian forces earlier this week. According to security sources, multiple Indian targets have been struck using Pakistan's Fatah-1 missile system, with new footage of one such strike now publicly released as part of the ongoing operation.

Meanwhile, Pakistani drones have been conducting surveillance flights over Delhi and Indian Prime Minister Modi's home state of Gujarat for the past three hours as part of ongoing operational activity. In a major development, a military intelligence training facility in Rajouri—used to coordinate and train operatives for terrorism inside Pakistan—has been destroyed in the ongoing operation, security sources said.

Moreover, India's Akhnoor Aviation Base and Bathinda Airfield have been destroyed, sources confirmed. India's Sirsa Airfield has also been destroyed, with Indian media itself confirming the damage sustained in the strike, they added. Additionally, an Indian artillery gun position in Dehrangyari was also destroyed as part of the ongoing operation. Security sources further confirmed that a BrahMos missile storage site in Nagrota was also successfully targeted, with reports indicating heavy losses on the Indian side.

Earlier, Pakistan destroyed a BrahMos missile storage site in the Beas area, which was reportedly used to launch missiles at Pakistan. In addition, the Udhampur Airbase has been destroyed, and the airfield in Pathankot has also been rendered non-operational, sources confirmed. In the ongoing operation, India's brigade headquarters at G-Top was also destroyed, security sources confirmed. Additionally, the supply depot in Uri was successfully targeted and destroyed, further disrupting Indian military logistics, sources added.

## President lauds armed forces

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday reaffirmed his faith in Pakistan's armed forces, lauding their befitting response to Indian aggression and defending the nation's sovereignty.

"I have always had faith in the armed forces of Pakistan—the army, navy, and air force. Their response to the aggressor India has been befitting, and we have severely denied their so-called military might," the president said on the ceasefire understanding between Pakistan and India.

President said the bravery and resolve demonstrated by Pakistan's armed forces was a testament to the strength derived from the Two Nation Theory and the country's unshakeable faith in Allah. "As an Islamic state, our belief gave us the courage and the strength to stand against a country five times our size," President Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

The president extended his heartfelt congratulations to COAS, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief, Chief of Naval Staff and all fighting arms of the military, whose restless efforts and bravery led to this victory. "The nation must jubilate, and also pray for those who embraced Shahadat," he said. Reiterating Pakistan's principled stance, the president emphasized that enduring peace in South Asia hinged upon the just and final resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, besides resolving other outstanding issues with India, particularly the Indus Waters Treaty.

## India attacks Pakistan's air bases

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Early Saturday morning missile attacks from India prompted a retaliatory response from Pakistan, which has termed its new operation against its neighbouring country as 'Bunyan-un- Marsoos'. At around 3:30am on Saturday, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has said that India has targeted the Pakistan Air Force's (PAF) Nur Khan (Chaklala, Rawalpindi), Murid (Chakwal) and Rafiqui (Shorkot in Jhang district) air bases, adding that all assets of the air force remained safe.

While speaking at a press conference, he said that India was "pushing the whole region towards a dangerous war with its madness, aggression and deceit". The DG ISPR also said that India had fired missiles at Afghanistan and used drones to conduct attacks as well. The military spokesperson said that "the majority" of Indian missiles fired at PAF's airbases were intercepted by air defence systems of the armed forces.

He noted that the few Indian missiles that were not intercepted and "sneaked in" have "not been able to cause any damage" to PAF's flying assets as per the initial damage assessment reports. The DG ISPR said that the air defence systems of the armed forces were able to "successfully prevent the desired objectives of India". He said the missiles and drone attacks by India on Afghanistan shortly after attacks on the territory of Indian Punjab were "part of a larger sinister plan to push the region and beyond into havoc". The DG ISPR said that the PAF has the electronic signatures of all Indian missiles, including "from where they were initiated and what was targeted".

The military's chief spokesperson assured the nation that the armed forces are "vigilant and thwarting all these cowardly acts of aggression by Indians". "These blatant acts of aggression by India actually reflect the paranoia within Indian mindset which continues to grow after failure of each of this act and the paranoia continues to also grow once it realises that they cannot break the resolve and will of the people of Pakistan which actually strengthens and further grows with each such cowardly act."

He further said that this "growing frustration and paranoia" of the Indians would be "further compounded". At 4:38am, state-run PTV News said that the Pakistani military had launched its counter-attack against Indian aggression. At 5:52am, PTV News and Radio Pakistan said that the Pakistani military has destroyed a storage site of the Brahmos missiles in India's Beas region as part of its retaliatory operation 'Bunyan-un-Marsoos'. In a statement, they reported that attacks were ongoing at more places in India. The statement added that an air base in Udhampur and an airfield in Pathankot were also destroyed.

## PM briefs President about Indian aggression

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday called on President Asif Ali Zardari here at Aiwan-e-Sadr and briefed the president about the Indian aggression and effective response being given to India by Pakistan in the form of Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos.

Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, and Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam

Nazeer Tarar, were also present during the meeting, a President' Office news release said.

The President lauded the exceptional professionalism and bravery of the Armed Forces of the country for giving a befitting response to Indian provoked aggression and missile attacks. The President reaffirmed that Pakistan, as a responsible and peace-loving nation, had demonstrated considerable restraint in the face of Indian provocations. He

regretted that continued Indian belligerence had left Pakistan with no option but to respond decisively in defence of its sovereignty and to protect its citizens.

President Zardari emphasised that the entire Pakistani nation stands united and resolutely supports its Armed Forces in the face of Indian aggression. He reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to safeguard the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity at all costs.

## India shaken by operation Bunyan un-marsoos: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that the Pakistan Air Force, under the successful operation Bunyan un-marsoos, targeted the enemy inside its own territory, causing a stir throughout India, avenging the attack on our beloved homeland.

In a statement issued from his office, the Information Advisor said that the enemy had cowardly targeted innocent civilians, including women and children, under the cover of darkness. However, the valiant "falcons" of the Pakistan Air Force responded swiftly and decisively, delivering a strong and effective

retaliation.

He further stated that the Indian armed forces lack the courage to face Pakistan head-on and rely on cowardly tactics and darkness. In contrast, the brave personnel of Pakistan's military and air force remain ever-vigilant and prepared to respond forcefully on every front. Barrister Saif emphasized that the entire Pakistani nation stands united like a rock wall against the enemy, shoulder to shoulder with its courageous armed forces. He warned India to think a thousand times before engaging in any further adventurism, as any hostile intention towards Pakistan will always receive a fierce and fitting reply.

He highlighted that the current situation demands national unity and solidarity.

ty. Barrister Saif asserted that the immediate release of Imran Khan is imperative, as he is the most popular leader in the country, with the full support of the people. The dismissal of false cases against all political prisoners and their release would be a significant step toward national reconciliation.

Commenting on Indian media, the Information Advisor said that it specializes in lies, propaganda, and misleading news. Mocking their coverage, he noted that although the Indian military failed to respond, their media left no stone unturned in creating the illusion of "victory" over Pakistan. He urged Indian media to report the facts of Operation Bunyan un-marsoos truthfully and accept reality.

## No compromise on Pakistan's sovereignty, integrity: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office Spokesperson Saturday said that all elements of the national power remained committed to ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan. "Our armed forces are obligated to take all measures for defending the motherland, its citizens, and in contributing to securing Pakistan's vital national interests. This obligation is a sacred trust of the proud, resilient, brave, and honourable people of Pakistan," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement after Pakistan and India agreed to immediate ceasefire.

For the sake of regional peace and stability, Pakistan mounted a very responsible, proportionate, and mature response. The spokesperson said Pakistan and India agreed to reach a ceasefire understanding. However, it is important to put the relevant developments in the right perspective. In response to the firing of Brahmos missiles over several locations across the international border, Pakistan was constrained to retaliate to the unprovoked and unlawful Indian aggression in exercise of its right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. Accordingly, Pakistan launched

"Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos" early Saturday. "Without a shred of evidence, and disregarding Pakistan's offer for a neutral, transparent and credible investigation by international investigators, India launched multiple strikes during the nights of 7-10 May 2025 which caused loss of innocent lives including women, children and the elderly. These indiscriminate attacks seriously injured dozens, in addition to causing damage to infrastructure, including places of worship," it was added.

As if the dastardly aggression during the intervening night of 6 and 7 May, breach of Pakistan's sovereign airspace through firing of missiles and killer drones, and consequent human and material losses were already not grave enough, India further endangered the regional peace and stability by sending additional waves of killer drones in large numbers across the length and breadth of Pakistan, including the Federal Capital.

These killer drones/loitering munitions and missiles struck multiple civilian and military assets inflicting further human and material losses and caused a great sense of insecurity among the Pakistani people, leading to heightened public demand for an immediate

response in self-defence. Multiple missiles were also fired, targeting our air bases, the spokesperson said.

Despite facing blatant Indian aggression and persistent provocations, he said, Pakistan exercised great restraint. However, it was constrained to respond to ensure the safety and security of its people. "Notwithstanding the incessant provocations, our response deliberately avoided civilian casualties and was precise, proportionate, minutely calibrated, and manifestly restrained. Only those entities and facilities were targeted which planned, coordinated, and executed blatant aggression against Pakistan and the cold-blooded killing of its innocent civilians," it was added.

These targets also included those Indian airbases from where Pakistani airbases were subjected to unprovoked missile attacks. Irrefutable evidence in this regard had already been shared with the international community. The spokesperson said this dangerous conflagration between two nuclear-armed states called for deeper introspection and a holistic appraisal by the international community.

Far from being a matter of deep-rooted historic differences between the two neighbouring states in the volatile region of South Asia, the conflict ought

to be seen in the broader context of the competing geopolitical interests. The negative impact of this competition had been a constant variable of the regional security paradigm. Hence, any casus belli of the conflict, contrived or actual, could not be lumped onto any country without due understanding of the genesis and root causes of the problems leading to frequent regional conflicts which the region and the world can ill afford.

"Strategic instability in South Asia is a result of the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute. This dispute has been aggravated by Indian suppression of the legitimate struggle of Kashmiris for the inalienable right to self-determination and falsely equating it with terrorism," it was stressed. The scourge of terrorism and extremism was not intrinsic to South Asia, the spokesperson said, adding however, the undesirable and abhorrent debris of Cold War dynamics transformed the socio-political landscape and shattered regional peace.

"Despite herculean challenges, Pakistan re-emerged from the ravages of the Cold War as a resilient state and society that became the bulwark against the spread of terrorism and extremist ideology, albeit at a monumental cost. Pakistan's sacrifices and contributions

to the global fight against terrorism, especially post-9/11, are unparalleled," the spokesperson said. India, probably sensing an opportunity in Pakistan's overwhelming commitment to the fight against terrorism along the Western borders, had repeatedly attempted to exploit this perceived vulnerability by waging an intense hybrid campaign against Pakistan and orchestrating terrorism through proxies to destabilise it. The spokesperson further said India's military provocations post-9/11 ought to be seen in the same light. Through such insidious manoeuvres, despite being a victim of terrorism, Pakistan was continuously being subjected to a two-front situation so that it remained mired in internal problems and not able to focus on its development as well as the re-transformation of its society. "Surprisingly, India's bogey of Pakistan as the 'epicentre' of terrorism quickly resurfaces whenever Pakistan is close to decisively eliminating the menace of terrorism."

This vicious cycle, going on for over two decades, must end now. Any distraction for Pakistan, at this critical juncture, from its monumental struggle against the scourge of terrorism and the creeping extremist ideology from its west would be to the great peril of

regional peace and global stability," it was emphasised. The spokesperson said Pakistan urged the international community to restrain India from using the sham narrative of the so-called terrorism from Pakistan in order to secure sustainable peace. A forward-looking Pakistan needed support, not indifference from the international community. India must also realize that its attempts to externalise an internal issue, i.e. organic resistance to state-sanctioned persecution of minorities, and internalise an external issue, i.e. Jammu and Kashmir dispute, were dangerous and destabilising. "India must not use the phenomenon of terrorism as a vehicle to secure policy goals such as the abrogation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's statehood and illegally holding the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance," it was added.

He further said that Pakistan could not be coerced by such antics. Pakistan is willing to engage in constructive diplomacy and comprehensive dialogue with India and seek resolution of all issues, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, through peaceful means. The international community must also play its role in preventing further escalation, it was stressed.

## Guterres hails ceasefire

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres has welcomed "all efforts to de-escalate the conflict", as India and Pakistan agreed to an immediate ceasefire. Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General talking to media said, "We are monitoring but we welcome all efforts to de-escalate the conflict." The US-brokered ceasefire came hours after India and Pakistan attacked each other's military facilities. — Agencies





**KARACHI:** Fishing boats seen anchored at Fisheries area as authorities imposed a temporary ban on fishing in the country's territorial waters due to escalating tensions with India. —APP Photo

## Indian aggression exposed: Hamza

LAHORE (APP): PML-N leader Hamza Shahbaz has said that Indian aggression is completely exposed in front of the world.

In his message issued related to operation 'Bunyan-al-Marsoos' here on Saturday, he said that each and every Pakistani was standing like a firm rock with Pakistan Armed Forces.

He said that Pakistan Armed Forces had proved that any ill intention against the country would be crushed. Hamza said, "Professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces has boosted the morale of Pakistanis." He highly appreciated Pakistan strong response to Indian aggression.

## SITE Association expresses concerns over tax ordinance



**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The SITE Association of Industry (SAI) has made an urgent appeal to the Prime Minister of Pakistan to withdraw the recently promulgated Income Tax Ordinance (Ordinance No. IV of 2025), citing serious concerns over its constitutionality and adverse impact on the formal business sector.

In an appeal to the Prime Minister on 9th May, 2025, SAI President Ahmed Azeem Alvi acknowledged the government's ongoing efforts to improve the business environment but warned that the proposed amendments risk derailing these efforts by imposing harsh and disproportionate measures on formal sector businesses.

"The new provisions undermine the documented economy, discourage compliance, and may reverse the progress made in broadening the tax base," SAI President stated. "These amendments are not only economically burdensome but also legally problematic. They appear to violate constitutional guarantees, the principles of natural justice, and the fundamental concept of 'no taxation without representation' enshrined in Article 77 of the Constitution."

SAI emphasized that bypassing parliamentary procedures to implement such sweeping changes sets a troubling precedent and damages investor confidence at a time when economic stability is desperately required.

The SITE Association has urged the government for immediate withdrawal of the controversial amendment.

## Marriyum lauds military leadership for exposing Indian lies

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb has lauded Pakistan's military leadership for their strategic brilliance and courageous response, stating that they have decisively exposed India's false propaganda and left it with no face-saving options.

In an interview with a private news channel on Saturday, the minister praised the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) for its precision and bravery. "We salute the bravery and precision of the PAF," she remarked, adding, "I congratulate the nation and our military leadership for their successful operation and strong response."

She issued a stern warning to India, cautioning that any continued aggression would result in severe consequences and significant damages.

Highlighting the role of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), she said that the previous day's press conference had presented irrefutable evidence of India's violations, including the deliberate targeting of civilians, mosques, and even women and children. "The truth has been laid bare for the world to see," she asserted.

The minister also expressed gratitude toward friendly nations including Azerbaijan, Turkey, China, and Saudi Arabia for

standing by Pakistan on crucial international matters. She appreciated their consistent and principled support.

Criticizing India's actions, Marriyum termed them "cowardly," and commended the Pakistan Armed Forces for their timely and responsible action. "Our forces responded with strength and clarity, reflecting their commitment to national security and peace," she added.

She concluded by stating that Pakistan had not only presented concrete evidence to the global community but also took the world into confidence — a move India failed to match.

## People of Lahore celebrate victory against India

LAHORE (APP): The public rejoiced over the Pakistan Army's full-scale counter-attack victory against India's dirty war intentions across the country on Saturday. The atmosphere of all major cities echoed with slogans of "What does Pakistan mean? La ilaha illallah"

The business community of Mall Road paid tribute to the Pakistan Army, saying that "The Pakistan Army has made India afraid by giving a brave response."

The traders also raised slogans in favour of Pakistan. The people of Lahore have announced that they will stand by the Pakistan Army on every front. Citizens say that the Pakistan Army is giving a befitting reply to the enemy's cowardly attack. "We salute the bravery of the Pakistan Army for the glory and pride of the country."

Meanwhile, citizens of Lahore took to the streets in a passionate display of solidarity with the Pakistan armed forces, holding rallies, corner meetings, and chanting patriotic slogans aimed at reinforcing national unity and defending the country's sovereignty.

From busy squares to local neighbourhoods, the city echoed with chants of 'Pakistan Zindabad' and 'Armed Forces Zindabad', as

people of all ages — children, women, and elders — expressed their resolve to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the military against external threats.

Among the participants was Muhammad Ali, an elderly resident, who vowed to appreciate Pak Armed Forces for "crushing India's aggression", congratulating that the people of Pakistan are always prepared to fight alongside the army. "Our brave sons, daughters, and the entire nation stand with the Pakistan Army," he declared.

Retired military officials also voiced their support. Major General (retd) Javed Aslam stressed the importance of national unity, saying, "We are a force of two million retired servicemen who stand ready to defend our homeland. Our bodies may have aged, but our spirits remain youthful and our resolve stronger than ever."

Meanwhile, MNA Sehar Kamran, in a statement, congratulated the whole nation and Armed Forces for remarkable domination over India affirming the nation's unwavering support for the Pakistan Army. "We have faced the challenge with courage and resilience," she said. Paying tribute to the Pakistan Air Force for its swift response to Indian aggression, she

lauded the downing of enemy aircraft and emphasised how India's false narrative had been exposed globally, bringing disrepute to its military leadership.

At Lahore's bustling Anarkali Bazaar, traders also raised slogans and chanted slogans in favour of Pakistan army. They pledged their full support, stating that "India must have been answered in its own language" following its violation of Pakistani sovereignty. "India will never dare to commit such acts of aggression next time one shopkeeper said.

Adding a historical perspective, retired government official Mohsin Ali recalled how Lahoris had actively donated blood during the 1965 Indo-Pak War, rushing to military hospitals to support wounded soldiers. "The same spirit still lives on in our people," he noted.

In academia, Vice Chancellor of Punjab University Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali praised the armed forces during a solidarity rally at the university campus. He called the Pakistan Army "the No. 1 Army in the world" and commended their "befitting response" to aggression.

As patriotic fervor surged through Lahore's streets, the city stood united—its people ready, its voices loud, and its spirit unshaken.

## Pakistan's defence is impregnable: PA Speaker

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan said on Saturday that country's defence was invincible and Pakistan Armed Forces had practically demonstrated professionalism and national spirit.

According to a press release issued here, he said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir and the Pakistan Armed Forces had raised the nation's head with pride through their foresight, leadership and courageous decision.

He said, "Pakistan has once again sent a clear message to the world that its defence is impregnable."

He affirmed that Pakistan is in safe, strong and patriotic hands led by those who not only protect national sovereignty but also strive to promote regional peace.

He said, "Professional competence and unwavering spirit demonstrated by the Pakistan Armed Forces is a source of great pride for the entire nation."

He said, "The country faces all challenges with unity and a decisive message has been delivered to opponents that whosoever will dare to look at Pakistan with ill intent will face dire consequences."

He reiterated that the nation places full trust in its leadership and armed forces and remained committed to the honor and prosperity of the motherland at every front.

## Punjab releases Rs2b for emergency preparations

LAHORE (APP): In a decisive move following recent cross-border tensions, the chief minister Punjab has approved a major security initiative, releasing Rs 2 billion to district administrations across the province.

The emergency funds, aimed at strengthening protective measures amid rising threats from India, mark a significant step in the government's rapid response to national security concerns.

According to an official spokesperson from the Home Department, the funds—approved during the 27th meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order—are designated to ensure the availability of essential supplies, including food, medicine, and fuel. The funds have been processed by the Home Department and transferred online by the Finance Department.

The spokesperson further confirmed that the Pakistan Armed Forces are giving a strong response to Indian hostilities and urged the public to remain calm, avoid spreading rumors, and rely only on verified sources for information.

## Arora condemns Indian attacks on religious sites

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Minority Affairs and Chairman of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (PSGPC) Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora has strongly condemned the Indian drone attack near the revered Sikh holy site of Nankana Sahib, calling it a blatant violation of international laws, religious freedom, and human rights.

Addressing a press conference along with Lahore Press Club (LPC) President Arshad Ansari and prominent Sikh personalities including Sardar Bishan Singh, Stwant Kaur, Sardar Jaskaran Singh, and Kalyan Singh Kalyan, here at LPC on Saturday, the minister decried recent missile attacks on mosques and drone strikes on minority worship places, declaring these actions as part of a wider Indian conspiracy to malign Pakistan's peaceful image and ignite religious tensions in the region.

Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora asserted that Pakistan could never even imagine

targeting Sikh religious sites, and emphasized that the country's bond with the Sikh community is founded on sincerity, reverence, and mutual respect. He highlighted the warmth shown by Pakistan during recent religious festivals, especially the Baisakhi celebrations, where Sikh pilgrims from around the world lauded the nation's hospitality and religious tolerance.

He categorically rejected India's claims regarding fabricated attacks in Pahalgaon, Amritsar, or near the Golden Temple, terming them baseless, pre-planned narratives aimed at misleading the global community and stirring interfaith discord. He warned that India is attempting to instigate hatred between Muslim and Sikh communities and wage psychological warfare against Pakistan.

"Pakistan's Sikh community is an integral part of our national fabric," he said. "We will not allow any foreign element to jeopardize the spirit of

brotherhood and interfaith harmony we have nurtured over the decades."

He urged the United Nations and international human rights organizations to take immediate notice of India's aggressive behavior and repeated violations against religious minorities.

LPC President Arshad Ansari denounced Indian media for spreading venomous propaganda and reaffirmed that the Pakistani media stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the nation and its armed forces. He added that the Lahore Press Club remains open and inclusive for all religious minorities and will continue to support their rights and freedoms.

The Sikh leaders present at the press conference echoed these sentiments, declaring Pakistan a peace-loving country committed to protecting its minorities and sovereignty. They expressed full confidence in Pakistan's armed forces and vowed to stand united against any form of aggression from India.



**LAHORE:** Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Ora addressing a press conference at the Press Club. —APP Photo

## Governor praises operation Bunyad-al-Marsous

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Governor of Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori, conveyed a message to the nation regarding Operation Bunyad-al-Marsous, stating that this operation symbolizes military superiority, national pride, and unity. He made it clear that while Pakistan seeks peace, it will provide an effective response to

enemy aggression.

Governor Sindh praised the successful counteraction of the armed forces, stating that the Pakistan Army has delivered a message to the enemy that Pakistan will not compromise on its sovereignty. He expressed concern over the increasing threats of Indian fanaticism and called on the United

Nations to take notice.

Governor Sindh stated that the people of Sindh would play a crucial role in the defense of the country and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Armed Forces. He described the Air Force's counteraction as a source of pride, showcasing excellent strategy.

## Minister lauds Rescue 1122's role in national emergencies

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Health and Emergency Services, Khawaja Salman Rafique, praised the relentless services of Rescue 1122 in light of the current national situation. He was presiding over a high-level meeting held at the Rescue Headquarters on Saturday.

Minister Khawaja Salman

Rafique acknowledged the dedication of Rescue 1122 personnel, stating, "Our rescuers are providing immediate relief without hesitation, putting their lives at risk to serve the people." He added that, as per the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, mock rescue drills are also being conducted regularly to

ensure preparedness.

Commending Pakistan's defense forces, the minister said, "Alhamdulillah, our professional forces have given a befitting reply to Indian aggression. The morale of the Pakistani nation is high, and our armed forces are standing like an iron wall in front of the enemy."

## Recitation of Quran and Fatiha 4th Death Anniversary of Mr. Ghalib Mansoor (Late)

Adarts Karachi Pvt. Ltd.



Sunday 11 May, 2025

All family, friends and admirers are requested to recite the Quran and Fatiha for the departed soul.

Nargis Mansoor, Hassaan Mansoor  
Salman Mansoor, Kanaan Mansoor and family



**LAHORE:** The Defence of Pakistan Rally led by Dr. Raghib Hussain Naeemi, Chairman of the Islamic Nazaryati Council, is passing through Rally to express solidarity with the Pakistan Armed Forces.





PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister on Population Planning, Malik Liaqat Ali Khan talking to Dir Welfare Organization members in his office.

# Kundi inaugurates free emergency ambulance service in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi formally inaugurated a free emergency ambulance service for the citizens of Peshawar on Saturday. The launch ceremony took place at the provincial headquarters of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in Dabgari Garden, Peshawar. The event was attended by Chairman of PRCS Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malik Habib Orakzai, Vice Chairman Farzand Wazir, PPP Provincial Deputy General Secretary Abrar Saeed, former Speaker of the Provincial Assembly K i r a m a t u l l a h Chagharmatti, Razaullah Khan Chamkani, members of the Red Crescent Society, and other relevant officials. Governor Kundi congratulated the entire PRCS team for launching the free ambulance service amidst the challenging national situation, calling it a valuable initiative in emergency healthcare. During a detailed briefing, the Governor was informed that the service will initially operate with three ambulances and cover key areas such as Qila Bala Hisar and Khyber Teaching Hospital, among others, to serve residents in Peshawar. Governor Kundi urged the Red Crescent to expand the ambulance service to the northern and southern districts of the province. He recommended reaching out to donors to increase the number of ambulances. He also emphasized the importance of public awareness and making the service a model for other provinces. Furthermore, the Governor directed the PRCS to initiate efforts for establishing a nursing college in the province and to engage donor countries with well-prepared proposals for support.

# KP Olympic Association holds solidarity walk in support of Pakistan Army

India signs its death warrant by challenging Pakistan: Syed Aqil Shah

**F.P. Report**  
PESHAWAR: To pay tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces and express solidarity in response to India's cowardly attacks, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association and athletes from Peshawar organized a solidarity walk from Peshawar Sports Complex to Saddar Stadium Chowk. The walk was led by former provincial sports minister Syed Aqil Shah and attended by KP Olympic Association President Haroon Zafar, squash legend Qamar Zaman, Assistant Director Sports Shah Faisal, Ilyas Afridi, Zulfiqar Butt, and a large number of athletes and sports personalities. Participants carried banners and placards with slogans in praise of the Pakistan Army and chanted slogans condemning Indian aggression while expressing unwavering support for the armed forces. Addressing the gathering Syed Aqil Shah stated that India has signed its own death warrant by challenging Pakistan. This is not 1965 or 1971, this is 2025. India will not be allowed to escape this time. We are proud of our forces who will not let us down and will confront India on all fronts to make Pakistan proud, he said. He termed the swift and strong retaliatory action by the Pakistan Army as a historic victory, stating that India's arrogance was shattered in a single day. Our armed forces are commendable in every sense and their response will be remembered for generations, he added. Other speakers also condemned Indian aggression and said that India was under the illusion that it could intimidate Pakistan. However our armed forces blew away that illusion in one night and now India will have to think not once but a thousand times before attempting any aggression, they said. The walk concluded with passionate chants of "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Long Live Pak Army and Navy," along with a solemn pledge to stand by the armed forces till the last breath. Prayers were also offered for their continued success.



# Rallies in KP erupt in support of Pakistan Armed Forces



PESHAWAR (APP): A wave of patriotic fervour swept across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday as citizens took to the streets in massive demonstrations to express unwavering support for the brave Pakistani Armed Forces. In a show of national solidarity, people from all walks of life gathered in public squares, neighborhood corners, and key urban centers in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, voicing their strong commitment and support to them for the country's sovereignty and security. Major cities, including Peshawar, Abbottabad, Swat, Mardan, Dir Khan, Charsadda, Dir, Bannu, Nowshera, Kohat and Mansehra echoed with thunderous chants of "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Armed Forces Zindabad", as hundreds of thousands waved flags, carried placards, and sang national songs. The demonstrations came in the wake of the military's ongoing operation Buneed um Marsoos, aimed at countering threats to Pakistan's stability. What began as small corner meetings in local communities on Saturday morning quickly trans-

formed into city-wide rallies, with families, students, professionals, and political workers marching in unison. In Peshawar, a vibrant crowd gathered near the historic Qissa Khwani Bazaar, creating a sea of green and white colours of Pakistani flags. "We are here to show that the entire people of KP stands firmly with the defenders of Pakistan," said Saira Khan, a university student participating in a rally at Qissa Khwani. "No matter the challenge, we are united for Pakistan," she said. Elders and veterans, too, joined in, many recounting stories from past conflicts and emphasizing the importance of unity during times of national trials. Ali Khan, a teacher said that Pakistan was forced to launch operation against India in self defense. He said that traders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were ready to provide all kinds of support to the defenders of Pakistan. Analysts view the public response of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including erstwhile Fata was a powerful message of resilience and civilian-military unity.



PESHAWAR: Coordinator to Prime Minister for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Iktiar Wali congratulated newly elected Peshawar High Court Bar Association cabinet and offered his services to establish a liaison between the Prime Minister and other federal stakeholders with Lawyers Community.

# State behind the gun: India's growing global terror allegations

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

INDIA'S involvement in covert operations and alleged terrorism-related activities beyond its borders has increasingly come under global scrutiny. Once considered a regional power primarily concerned with internal security challenges, India now finds itself accused of state-sponsored actions in foreign countries-actions that undermine international norms and threaten diplomatic relations. This growing narrative is no longer confined to adversarial states like Pakistan, but is now echoed by countries such as Canada and even the United States, raising legitimate concerns over the modus operandi of Indian intelligence services. One of the earliest and most consistent accusations against India comes from Pakistan, which has repeatedly highlighted Indian involvement in terrorist activities on its soil. The most striking case was the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian naval officer apprehended by Pakistan's security forces on 3 March 2016 in Balochistan. Jadhav confessed to being an agent of the Indian intelligence agency RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) and to orchestrating subversive activities in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan and Karachi. The Indian government initially denied his affiliation with RAW but later acknowledged his identity. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), while staying his execution, did not exonerate him, instead emphasizing the need for consular access and due process, confirming the legitimacy of Pakistan's concerns. Apart from Jadhav, Pakistan has on multiple occasions submitted dossiers to the United Nations and other international bodies, documenting India's alleged sponsorship of terrorism. In November 2020, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, alongside the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), presented a detailed dossier containing audio, video and documentary evidence implicating India in sponsoring banned terrorist outfits such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The dossier also linked Indian consulates in Afghanistan with financial and logistical support for these groups. What elevates these accusations to a global dimension is the revelation from Canada. On 18 September 2023, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an explosive statement in the House of Commons, alleging the involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen and Sikh separatist leader who was shot dead on 18 June 2023 outside a Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia. Trudeau stated that there were "credible allegations" linking Indian government agents to the murder, prompting Canada to expel a senior Indian diplomat. India responded by expelling a Canadian diplomat in retaliation, but the damage to bilateral relations was significant. This marked the first time a Western democracy directly accused India of extrajudicial killings on foreign soil-a practice typically associated with authoritarian regimes. The seriousness of the Canadian allegations was underlined when, on 29 November 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed an indictment against an Indian national named Nikhil Gupta for plotting the assassination of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Sikh separatist and U.S. citizen. According to the indictment, Gupta was allegedly recruited by an Indian government employee to arrange the murder-for-hire of Pannun in New York. The U.S. authorities arrested Gupta in the Czech Republic, and the case provided damning insight into India's alleged willingness to carry out extrajudicial killings overseas. The indictment cited encrypted communications, financial transactions, and other surveillance evidence indicating a direct link to Indian state actors. These developments have prompted concerns even within India's traditional allies. A report by The Washington Post on 1 December 2023 stated that multiple Western intelligence agencies were now reassessing India's covert capabilities and intentions. The Guardian and BBC also reported that Five Eyes intelligence-a cooperation alliance among the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand-had shared intelligence backing Canada's claims, further legitimizing the accusations. It is also important to highlight that India's extraterritorial activities have drawn criticism from human rights organizations. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have both raised alarms over India's pattern of targeting dissidents abroad, citing cases of digital surveillance, threats, and in some instances, mysterious disappearances or killings of expatriate critics of the Indian government. Such actions by a democratic state raise serious questions about India's adherence to international law and its role as a responsible global actor. They also have broader implications for the international order. If a state engages in the assassination of foreign citizens or dissidents in democratic countries, it sets a dangerous precedent and undermines global norms of sovereignty and the rule of law. In the context of South Asia, these actions fuel instability and erode trust. In Pakistan, Indian-sponsored terrorism has been a long-standing issue. The 13 December 2014 Army Public School attack in Peshawar, where 149 people including 132 children were brutally murdered, was linked by Pakistani officials to groups allegedly supported by India through Afghan territory. While India has denied such involvement, Pakistan has repeatedly sought international inquiry and oversight into these links, including presenting evidence to the UN Secretary-General and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The accumulation of such credible allegations from multiple countries, supported by intelligence sharing and legal indictments, reflects a troubling trend. A democratic state claiming to be the world's largest democracy cannot afford to be seen as a sponsor of terrorism or extrajudicial killings. These revelations must prompt an international call for accountability and transparency. If substantiated, India must be held to the same standard as any other state violating international laws and norms. The world cannot afford selective justice when it comes to state-sponsored violence.

# Governor welcomes Pakistan-India ceasefire

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Saturday welcomed the ceasefire between Pakistan and India, calling it a positive and timely step towards establishing lasting peace in South Asia. He urged the international community, especially the United Nations and global human rights organizations, to take immediate notice of the serious human rights violations occurring in Indian-occupied Kashmir. He called on them to put pressure on India to adopt the path of dialogue and justice. Governor Kundi also acknowledged the role of U.S. President Donald Trump in facilitating the ceasefire and praised the Pakistan Armed Forces for their response during the recent tensions. He lauded the military for confronting both internal traitors and external enemies, saying their actions have made the people of Pakistan proud on a global scale. He concluded by reiterating Pakistan's desire for a peaceful and prosperous region and expressed support for all initiatives that promote peace, stability, and mutual respect. He emphasized, how-





## In brief

### Rally held in Muzaffarabad F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Following Pakistan's strong and effective response to Indian aggression, people in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) held a massive rally to express their full support for the Pakistan Army. The rally was held in the capital, Muzaffarabad, from Gojra Bypass to Naluchi Chowk, where participants raised slogans in favour of the Pakistan Armed Forces and distributed sweets to celebrate the response. Addressing the rally, speakers said the people of Kashmir stand shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Army in this critical time. They reiterated that India had been warned before—war is no joke. The speakers further stated that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi must now answer for the atrocities committed in occupied Kashmir. They affirmed their unwavering resolve, declaring that Kashmiris will fight alongside the Pakistan Army in this struggle, every step of the way.

### Medical support to armed forces F.P. Report

MULTAN: The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) on Saturday expressed unwavering support and solidarity with the armed forces of Pakistan during these challenging times of war. In a statement issued by PMA, President Prof. Dr. Masood-ur-Rauf Hiraj and Secretary Dr. Imran Haider Qaisrani, the association highlighted the critical role of Nishtar Hospital and other healthcare units in the region. These include BHUs, RHUs, THQs and DHQs in the district, all standing prepared to serve the civilian population and the military in any emergency situation. The PMA reaffirmed its commitment to continue providing medical support and ensuring the health and well-being of all citizens and soldiers on the front lines. "We deeply value the courage, sacrifices and dedication of our armed forces," said the PMA leadership. "We assure you of our support in every step, and believe that together we will overcome all obstacles and emerge stronger," he concluded.

### PFA penalized beverage plant F.P. Report

LAYYAH: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Saturday imposed fines totaling over Rs.190,000 on a beverage plant, a cold storage unit and a bakery after conducting inspections at various locations. During the operation, approximately 1,300 mango fruit drinks, 1,500 defective frozen dairy products (kulfis) and 50 liters of sugary syrup were confiscated on the spot. The action was carried out in Mohalla Asghar Abad, Chowk Azam, and Fatehpur. According to a statement issued by Director General (DG) PFA Muhammad Asim Javed, the frozen dairy units were fined for producing products with reduced brick value. The bakery was penalized for the presence of lizards in the production area. He stated that strict monitoring was being conducted from the preparation to distribution stages of essential food items. He reiterated that ensuring the provision of pure and safe food to the public was the fundamental responsibility of the Punjab Food Authority.

# Pakistan army soldier laid to rest

**Haleem Asad**

LOWER DIR: A Pakistan Army soldier, Maaz S/O Said Raziq, embraced martyrdom during a militant attack in the Waziristan region and was laid to rest with full military honors in his ancestral graveyard in Nagri Payeen area of Talash on Saturday. According to relatives, the martyred soldier, Maaz, had joined the army recently.



Hundreds of locals, including former Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq and Lower Dir chief Maulana Asadullah, attended the funeral prayers. Addressing the gathering, Sirajul Haq paid tribute to the martyred soldier, stating, "Martyrs like Maaz are our pride. Their sacrifices will never go in vain."

Maulana Asadullah said that the death of a martyr was the life of the nation. He also offered condolences to the bereaved family and highlighted the significance of such sacrifices for the nation's security.

The attack occurred during a routine security patrol in the Waziristan region the other day, an area that has witnessed increased militant activity in recent times. Security forces have been

against Indian aggression:

Gujjar Qaumi Movement (GQM) chief Haji Zarin Khan Gujjar on Saturday pledged full support of the Gujjar community to the Pakistan Army in the face of what he described as increasing Indian aggression.

Speaking to local journalists in Chakdara, Mr. Zarin praised the Pakistan Army's "befitting response" to India the previous night, saying the entire Gujjar tribe stood ready to defend the country shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces.

"It is time to set aside all internal differences and unite against a cunning enemy," he said, urging the youth across Pakistan to play their role in defending the motherland. Mr. Zarin reaffirmed the GQM's long standing stance on Kashmir, stating that the region was an integral part of Pakistan and had been under Indian occupation for over 75 years. He called for renewed efforts to liberate Kashmir from "Indian clutches."

He further announced that the GQM would soon hold a large rally in Chakdara to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army and to oppose what he termed India's "nefarious designs."

## KP Assembly committee visits Al-Fihri school

**F.P. Report**

MARDAN: The Subcommittee of the Provincial Assembly Standing Committee for Elementary and Secondary Education, under the chairmanship of Ifitikhar Ali Mashwani, along with members of the committee Abdul Salam Afridi, and Subia Shahid visited Fatima Al-Fihri Model School, Mardan, to assess the institution's performance and ongoing educational initiatives.

Additional Secretary of the Provincial Assembly Naqem Durrani, Deputy Secretary Education Department Payo Khan, Deputy Secretary Assembly Israr Khan, and District Education Officers Male Zahid Muhammad and EDO Female, Mardan Samina Ghani also accompanied the sub-committee.

During the visit, Principal Huma Tabassum briefed the committee on the school's operations, stating that since its establishment in 2018, the school currently enrolls 302 students from Playgroup to First Year.

The Sub-committee expressed concern over the low student enrollment despite significant government investment and urged the school management to adopt proactive measures to increase admissions and enhance the institution's impact.

Additionally, the committee showed dissatisfaction with the current nomination process for non-official members of the school's Board of Governors, emphasizing the need for transparent and inclusive selection in consultation with relevant

stakeholders. Local public representatives should also be kept informed to support this process to ensure the school lives up to its designation as a model institution and plays a leading role in the province's educational landscape.

Following the school visit, the committee held a review meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's Office Mardan to evaluate the Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) funds and conditional grants allocated to girls' and boys' schools in the district over the past five years.

The committee directed officials from the Education Department to prioritize funding for schools that have been overlooked in previous allocations, ensuring equitable support and development across all institutions.



FAISALABAD: A view of sewerage water accumulated on Jamilaabad Chowk needs attention of authorities concerned.

## Admn at high alert

**F.P. Report**

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza while addressing the emergency called meeting of the all relevant officers has assured that district administration is fully prepared and high alert to combat with the changing situation arisen after the Indian aggression in Pakistan.

During the briefing he was told that all necessary arrangements have been finalized besides keeping vigilant eyes to avoid any untoward incidence. This important meeting was also attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Attock Waqas Aslam Marth, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Aneel Saeed, Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Nosheen Israr, Assistant Commissioner Anza Abbasi, all other Assistant Commissioners, CEO

Health Dr Asad Ismail, CEO Education Dr. Muhammad Ikhlaiq, District Emergency Officer Ali Hussain, Chief Officers and other relevant heads of the provincial departments.

DC directed all the officers to remain high alert to protect the lives, properties and facilitate the people during the crucial hours of war like circumstances. Meanwhile, in his advisory message to the public, Deputy Commissioner ATTOCK Rao Atif Raza has also appealed to the people to cooperate with the security forces, avoid any rumor and spreading any unauthentic news being a civilized and responsible citizen.

He also requested the people to contact the monitoring rooms established at district and tehsil levels in case of emergency. He advised the people to extend their cooperation during the movement of ambulances when the contingent of Pak Army is

engaged to retaliate the Indian forces with iron hands, he added.

### Mock emergency drill arranged F.P. Report

MULTAN: Children's Hospital Multan organized a comprehensive mock emergency drill in collaboration with Civil Defence & Rescue 1122.

The exercise was conducted as part of the government's contingency plan to train hospital staff, patients, and the public on responding effectively to war or emergency situations. During the drill, Rescue 1122 teams provided training on firefighting, first aid, evacuation procedures, and accessing emergency shelters. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other hospital staff actively participated in the session.



SARGODHA: A view of joint mock exercises conducted by Rescue 1122, Civil Defense, Police, and STD to enhance preparedness for emergency situations.

### Buner varsity makes ERP & SLCM online F.P. Report

BUNER: The Vice Chancellor (VC) University of Buner (UOB) Professor Dr. Saiful Islam announced that the Enterprise Resource Planning and Student Lifecycle Management systems are now officially online, on Saturday.

According to him, this marks a major milestone in the university's journey towards digital transformation to enhance academic administration and student services through an integrated and user-friendly platform. He further stated that the system will significantly improve efficiency, transparency and service delivery for students, faculty and staff, etc.

Appreciating this, the Vice Chancellor Dr. Saiful Islam said that the successful implementation of the Maktab ERP and SLCM systems reflects our dedication to embracing technology for academic excellence and operational efficiency. He appreciated the efforts of the IT team, teaching departments, examination coordinators, administrative departments and Maktab implementation partners to make this vision a reality.

Expressing his happiness over the system going live, he proudly stated that Buner University is now entering a new digital era, positioning itself among future-oriented institutions committed to innovation and student success.

### Citizens march in solidarity rally F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: As a nation, it is the responsibility of all of us to put aside personal differences and stand firm against the enemy. These views were expressed by Bhai Khan Welfare founder and secretary Haji Arain while addressing the participants of the rally on the occasion of a solidarity rally with the Pakistan Armed Forces organized in collaboration with Bhai Khan Welfare Taluka Latifabad and Jilani Baba Mohalla Committee Gujarati Muhalla.

The patron of the welfare organization was Haji Ashraf. Founder and General Secretary. Taluka Chairman. The participants in the rally carried banners and placards, on which slogans of Pak Army were raised. The rally passed through Gujrati Paro, Tando Yousaf, Gulshan Hamid. It reached Islamabad Chowk from Gulshan Raees.

### One killed F.P. Report

MUZAFFARGARH: A man was killed in the collision between a bus and a motorcycle near Grid Chowk in Tehsil Jatoti, here on Saturday. According to report, the accident occurred due to the negligence and over-speeding of the bus driver.

The victim was identified as Muhammad Arshad (42) r/o Basti Qaiser Ghazlani, Tehsil Jatoti died on the spot after being hit by the speeding bus.

## WAPDA workers union held solidarity rally

**F.P. Report**

BANNU: The workers of Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union held a rally to show unity with armed forces and protest against Indian aggression and attacks on innocent civilians in Pakistan.

The union chairman Pir Ashfaq Khan led the rally attended by zone secretary Shamsul Abideen, Sajjad Ali Shah, Abdul Ali Khan, other office bearers and employees in a large number. The participants raised slogans in favour of the Pakistan army and against the Indian Prime Minister Modi. Pir Ashfaq said on the occasion that the Wapda

employees stood by the government and armed forces of Pakistan to defend their motherland.

He condemned the Indian attacks and said that the nation was united to protect the ideological and geographical frontiers of the country. He also praised the armed forces of Pakistan for shooting down Indian warplanes and drones. Karak additional deputy commissioner Sahibzada Samiullah also led a rally from the deputy commissioner office which converged at Saddam Chowk.

The attendees included AC Headquarters Ahmad Mughees, AC Takht Nusrati Hazrat Bilal, government employees, political, social

and religious activists, traders and people from different walks of life. They denounced cowardly Indian attacks and expressed solidarity with the Pakistan armed forces.

The speakers said that Pakistan armed forces were fully capable of defending every inch of the motherland and giving a befitting response to the enemy. "The Pakistani army is the pride of the nation and this rally is a clear proof of the fact that the nation loves its soldiers", they maintained. They said that such events and rallies not only boosted the morale of the army but also awakened the spirit of patriotism in the new generation.

## GDA holds solidarity with armed forces

**F.P. Report**

LARKANA: Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) took out a rally from Shah Bukhari Road under the leadership of Barrister Kazim Ali Abbasi and Owais Abbasi to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army against Indian aggression.

It passed through various roads of the city and reached in front of the Press Club, wherein thousands of people participating in the rally carried Pakistani flags and raised slogans of "Pakistan Zindabad" against Indian aggression and in support of the Pakistan Army. Addressing the rally on this occasion, leaders Aamir Bhutto, Noor Ahmad Jatoti, Kazim Ali Abbasi and others said that India itself has created an atmosphere of war, but like the 1965 war, India will be defeated this time too.

The speakers added that we were united before and we are united now, so India will now have to kneel before the Pakistani army and nation because the Pakistan Army is the most powerful army in the world, this is because the air strikes carried out by India have failed our army in the air

itself, further they said that India has always been attacking from behind and at night, the entire nation of Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Army to defend the homeland, India will not gain anything from Modi's retaliatory attacks.

"Ghar Bachao Committee" protests possible demolition: Residents of different areas of the Larkana city, including Gaslet Depu and Rehmatpur Mohalla, took out a protest rally from the platform of the "Ghar Bachao Committee" against the possible demolition of houses by the railway administration on the court order. It turned into a protest demonstration in front of the Press Club after passing through various roads of the city.

Addressing the demonstration, residents Saddam Kalhoro, Advocate Aslam Abro, Ghulam Rasool Umrani and other media said that we have been residents on both sides of the Larkana-Jacobabad railway track for many years, while our elders have dug pits and wells near the railway track and made it possible for children to live.

Recently, the Sindh High Court issued orders ordering

the demolition of houses on both sides of the railway track, which has created great anxiety among the residents, while poverty is already increasing in the country. They further said that the railway administration. Instead of restoring the track, it is being demolished. They demanded that the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court review the court decision and prevent the demolition of houses located at a reasonable distance from the track.

### Criminals held F.P. Report

SARGODHA: District police arrested 13 criminals during a crackdown, here on Saturday.

A spokesman said that police teams from different police stations arrested Nadeem, Naseer, Nouman, Naveed, Nasrullah, Muhammad Ashfaq, Muhammad Aslam, Tariq, Waqas, Waleed and others. Police recovered 2kg hashish, 2kg opium, 131 litres of liquor, nine pistols, nine guns and 146 bullets. Further investigation was underway.

## Awareness campaign against plastic should be launched

**Allah Nawaz Khan**

**P**lastic seems to be a useful thing, but in reality, it is very dangerous for humans. The use of plastic has increased a lot in human life and it seems difficult to live without it. When shopping at a shop or store, the shopkeeper puts things in plastic bags and holds them. Whether it is vegetables or medicine, the use of plastic has become necessary.

Plastic is not only present in the form of bags, but utensils are also commonly found in plastic, rather it is right to say that plastic utensils have become part of our lives. Glasses, jugs, plates, spoons and many other utensils made of plastic are commonly used in daily life.

The use of utensils has increased because they are much cheaper than utensils made of other metals. Plastic is also used in many other things. Disposable

cups are also made of plastic, because tea or other food and drink are put in disposable cups and given to the customer, and the customer throws them away after using them once because disposable cups are cheap. Excessive use of plastic is increasing the risks to human life.

Environmental pollution has already increased and plastic is increasing the pollution further. Plastic is apparently cheap, but it is very dangerous and must be gotten rid of.

The most dangerous thing about plastic is that it neither decomposes nor is it wasted. It can only be recycled, but not all plastic waste can be recycled, because the costs increase. Plastic also blocks gutters and sewerage lines. The environment must be protected from plastic. Plastic cannot be gotten rid of immediately, but plastic can be abandoned after some time. If shopkeepers do not give vegetables or

other things in plastic bags, but in cloth bags or paper bags, in this way lives can be saved from plastic.

Instead of plastic, utensils made of other metals or atoms should be used to protect against the dangers of plastic. Plastic contains dangerous chemicals and its particles enter the stomach through inhalation and cause heart and respiratory diseases, etc. to humans. Plastic, if buried underground, remains intact even after hundreds of years. Plastic buried underground also contaminates groundwater.

Plastic is very dangerous not only for humans but also for aquatic life. Fish swallow plastic as food and thus plastic proves to be harmful to fish life. The use of plastic cannot be eliminated immediately but can be eliminated gradually. An awareness campaign against plastic should be launched so that its dangers can be avoided.





# Trump taking harder approach towards Russia

KYIV (Reuters): President Donald Trump is adopting a tougher approach towards Russia to secure the ceasefire he promised when he took office after becoming "really aligned" with Ukraine, the US leader's former special representative said. Kurt Volker, Trump's Ukraine adviser in his first term and former US Ambassador to the NATO military alliance, told Reuters the US leader had started his second term with a challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin to secure peace either "the easy way or the hard way". That for Trump, Volker said, was "politically important" because it allowed him to show his backers that Ukraine was paying its way rather than using US taxpayers' money.

While Ukraine hopes the deal, to be voted on in parliament, will unlock the delivery of new US weapons, at this stage, Trump is reluctant to talk about "the military side" while he tries to cajole Putin to end the fighting. But that does not mean military aid will not be forthcoming. "So what it does

do, from a security perspective, is it gives the US a stake in Ukraine's prosperity, economic development, security, its survival," said Volker. "It doesn't spell out what kind of obligations or commitments the US would make toward Ukraine's security. But that doesn't prevent anything either."

Meanwhile, Ukraine has discussed ways to pressure Russia into agreeing to a 30-day ceasefire with US, French, British and German senior officials, President Volodymyr Zelenskii's top aide said, part of a flurry of diplomacy to try to end the war. Andriy Yermak, Zelenskii's chief of staff, did not say when the online talks with US special envoys, Steve Witkoff and Keith Kellogg, France's top diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne, Britain's national security adviser Jonathan Powell and Guenter Sautter, a top adviser to the German leader, took place.

But he said all parties "emphasised that a complete and unconditional ceasefire should be the first step towards a just and sus-

tainable peace". "We also discussed instruments of pressure in case Russia refuses the initiative or violates the agreements," Yermak said on Telegram. Ukraine has expressed readiness to accept a US proposal to enact an immediate, interim 30-day ceasefire, which could be extended by mutual agreement of the parties, and has accused the Kremlin of ignoring the plan. Putin has proposed a ceasefire of only three days - from May 8-10. "The Kremlin's proposal for a three-day truce is not about peace, but about safely holding of the parade in Moscow. This is political manipulation," Yermak said.

Russia, which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, is preparing to stage a military parade on May 9 to mark the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in what President Vladimir Putin hopes will be a show of strength. After the declared ceasefire had come into effect, the skies over Ukraine's major cities were quiet, though there were reports of clashes in eastern Ukraine.

## US probing foreign donations at University of Pennsylvania

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US Department of Education said it opened an investigation into foreign donations at the University of Pennsylvania, alleging the Ivy League school made inaccurate and untimely foreign financial disclosures in the past.

The university did not immediately respond to a request for comment. US law requires universities to report donations from foreign sources exceeding \$250,000 in a year. Among information the Education Department is seeking within 30 days from the university were UPenn's tax records since 2017, details on any agreements with foreign governments and foreign entities, and information on university personnel affiliated with foreign governments.

President Donald Trump's administration has launched a widely condemned crackdown against top US universities over a range of issues like pro-Palestinian campus protests against Israel's war in Gaza, transgender rights, climate initiatives and diversity, equity and inclusion programs. The government has made federal funding threats against top schools. In March, the Trump administration suspended \$175 million in funding to the University of Pennsylvania over its transgender sports policies.

The US Education Department alleged late last month that the university's policy on transgender athletes violated federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in programs that receive federal funding. The university, which made national headlines in 2022 when a transgender swimmer competed on its women's team, has previously said it "has always followed NCAA and Ivy League policies regarding student participation on athletic teams," and has remained in full compliance with regulations.

Following Trump's executive order to ban transgender athletes from participating in female-only school sports, the NCAA - the governing body for US collegiate sports - updated its rules to limit competition in female-only competitions to athletes assigned female at birth. Last month, the Trump administration sought Harvard University's records on foreign funding going back a decade and on some foreign ties.

## Jailed Mayor's X account blocked

ISTANBUL (Reuters): Access to the X account of jailed Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, President Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival, has been blocked in Turkey in response to a legal demand, a message on his social media account said.

Police detained Imamoglu on March 19, triggering Turkey's largest protests in a decade. He was jailed four days later pending trial on corruption charges that he denies. Critics of Erdogan and his government have called the arrest politicised and anti-democratic. Imamoglu's Republican People's Party (CHP), Turkey's main opposition, has called it "a coup against our next president". Erdogan's government rejects the criticism and says the judiciary is independent.

Imamoglu's X account has nearly 10 million followers. The message "Account withheld" appeared, explaining that it was blocked in Turkey in response to a legal demand. X said it was complying with a Turkish court order to block Imamoglu's account, but had filed a legal challenge because it believes keeping the platform accessible in Turkey is vital to supporting freedom of expression and access to information.

"Lack of compliance with these orders can lead to severe sanctions, including throttling of the entire platform in Türkiye," its global government affairs division said on X. Istanbul prosecutors opened an investigation into an April 24 post on Imamoglu's account on the grounds that it may constitute incitement to commit a crime, the presidential communication's directorate said in a statement on X.



BEIRUT: A picture taken from the southern Lebanese area of Marjayoun shows smoke billowing from the site of Israeli air strikes on the hills of the southern Lebanese village of Nabatieh.

# Ukraine's parliament ratifies minerals deal with US

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine's parliament voted in favour of ratifying a minerals deal signed with the United States, an agreement Kyiv hopes will secure future military assistance from Washington in its fight to repel Russian troops. Despite misgivings by some Ukrainian lawmakers over whether the government had provided them with all the information on the deal and over some of its compromises, 338 voted in favour of ratifying the agreement, with none against.

"The Ukrainian Parliament has ratified the historic Economic Partnership Agreement between Ukraine and the United States," First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said in a post on X. "This document is not merely a legal construct - it is the foundation of a new model of interaction with a key strategic partner." Some lawmakers had raised concerns over the lack of detail of some of the deal's provisions, such as how an envisaged investment fund for Ukraine's reconstruction would be governed or how any contributions would be made. Svyrydenko called an press conference to answer some of those concerns, saying the investment fund would be operational in a few weeks, and its success would depend on the level of US engagement.

Two supplements would spell out the details and would be published at a later date, officials have said about the deal which might not see a payoff

for a decade or longer. Parliament's ratification comes a day before Russia - which launched a full-scale invasion into Ukraine in February 2022 - will try to show its strength at a military parade to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Those preparations have been overshadowed by Ukrainian drone strikes on Russia, and Kyiv will hope the ratification of the minerals deal will bolster its position in ceasefire talks, which so far have done little to close the gap between Moscow and Kyiv, to the frustration of US President Donald Trump. Russia's demands for Ukraine to cede all the land Russian President Vladimir Putin claims to have annexed and accept permanent neutrality have been rejected by Kyiv, which says that would amount to surrender and leave the nation undefended.

Ukraine has expressed readiness to accept a US proposal to enact an immediate, interim 30-day ceasefire, which could be extended by mutual agreement of the parties, and has accused the Kremlin of ignoring the plan. Putin has proposed a ceasefire of only three days - from May 8-10. The minerals deal, signed last month in Washington, hands the United States preferential access to new Ukrainian minerals deals and sets up the investment fund, which could be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine for the first 10 years. After months of fraught talks that almost

fell apart at a disastrous meeting between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskii in February, the deal also hands Kyiv some wins: no return of aid that Trump says Kyiv owes and a US acknowledgement of Kyiv's intention to join the European Union.

Ukraine also sees the deal as a route to unlock the delivery of new US weapons, especially additional Patriot air defence systems it badly needs to repel Russia's increasingly frequent missile attacks. The deal offered no clear guarantee of that. The agreement, which Zelenskii says offers Ukraine a better deal than previous drafts - which some in Kyiv had described as "colonial", - is central to Kyiv's efforts to mend ties with Trump after the Oval office meeting. Some Ukrainian lawmakers praised the government's efforts to influence Trump's position, which initially appeared to favour Russia. "Trump's initial position is changing by millimetres, but so far its movement is in the right direction," Inna Sovsun, a lawmaker from the Holos opposition party, said on Facebook, adding that while she might not like the deal's "mercantile" nature, it was important to show that Ukraine is a "constructive party". Some 47% of Ukrainians support the deal, while 22% say it might have negative consequences and 19% say it will have no impact, according to researchers at the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.

# Haiti gangs' US terrorism designation risks harming most vulnerable

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters): The designation of Haiti's major gangs as terrorists by Washington could risk further entrenching their power by limiting financial and humanitarian aid, NGOs focused on organized crime and human rights have warned.

The United States last week designated Viv Ansanm, the armed alliance that controls most of capital Port-au-Prince, and Gran Grif, which operates in the breadbasket Artibonite region, as terrorist groups, following similar measures made recently for Latin American drug cartels. The designation is intended to isolate the groups, denying them access to financing from US people or companies.

"Terrorist designations play a critical role in our fight against these vicious groups and are an effective

way to curtail support for their terrorist activities," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at the time. Analysts at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime said that the designation could, however, "inadvertently worsen the situation on the ground." It said the move could threaten the activities of some NGOs who engage with gangs to deliver aid to communities under gang control - potentially cutting off aid and making populations even more dependent on the armed groups. International businesses could also leave Haiti to avoid the risk of falling foul of US law, it added. Haiti's Center for Analysis and Research for Human Rights earlier this week raised similar doubts, saying the move could hurt NGOs working with Haiti's most vulnerable in gang-

controlled areas, already hit by frozen US aid funding.

"If drastic and appropriate measures are not taken to contain the root of the problem (such as) arms trafficking from the United States and across the Haitian-Dominican border, then gang members, most of whom are social victims, could become even more radicalized," it said in its report. An alliance of gangs has been using brutal tactics to grow its power since the 2021 assassination of Haiti's last president. Pierre Esperance, who heads Haiti's National Network for the Defense of Human Rights, said in an interview that his group had long considered the gangs as terrorists. "During 2024 they started setting people on fire while they were in their homes, they stopped them from running out and burnt them, rapes contin-

ued, kidnappings... These are terrorist acts," he said.

In a recent report, Haiti-focused security adviser Halo Solutions Firm said while nuanced enforcement could cripple gang financing, "a policy that does not distinguish between corrupt enablers and extorted survivors will risk collapsing the commercial backbone of the country." Haiti's central bank warned lenders, exchange bureaus and payment services to be vigilant for exposure to operations financing terrorist groups. More than 1,600 people were killed in violent clashes in the first three months of this year while over 1 million are internally displaced, according to UN estimates, with local security services backed by limited international support.

# Saudi Arabia sits on fence over BRICS with eye on vital ties with US

RIYADH/DUBAI (Reuters): Saudi Arabia has held off formally joining the BRICS bloc of nations despite attending a meeting in Brazil last week, two sources said, finessing an issue that could upset Washington as Riyadh seeks to seal deals with its US ally.

The issue of BRICS membership has been diplomatically sensitive for Saudi Arabia since it was first invited to join in 2023, and remains so with President Donald Trump due to visit next week and Riyadh negotiating nuclear and technology deals.

BRICS, founded as a grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa to counter Western dominance of the world order, has grown in recent years to include emerging economies such as the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Indonesia. But while the BRICS website shows Saudi Arabia - the world's largest oil exporter - as a member, it has yet to

join, according to the two sources, both with direct knowledge of Saudi policy. Saudi Arabia's government communications office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Brazil's foreign ministry referred Reuters to the Saudi government when asked about the kingdom's listed status as a member on the website. Brazil is currently presiding over BRICS. Riyadh does not want to risk US anger as negotiations are underway with Washington, one of the sources and a diplomat said. Saudi Arabia sent its deputy foreign minister to the April 29 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, where ministers from the fast-expanding bloc failed to agree a joint communique.

The kingdom's ambivalence about BRICS membership lays bare its high-stakes balancing act between China, its biggest oil export customer, and Washington, its indispensable security and technology partner - a tightrope walk made ever

more precarious by the deepening US-Chinese divide. "The Saudis still see tons of value in engaging with BRICS and its member states. They will keep double-dipping - or multi-dipping - with global partnerships as long as they can," said Robert Mogielnicki, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "I think the Saudi calculation is that what they may be able to get out of the US outweighs what they could get from BRICS membership, at least over the short term." In January, Trump demanded that BRICS commit to not creating a new currency or supporting another currency that would replace the US dollar, or face 100% tariffs against BRICS nations.

While the kingdom still favors its historic ally the United States, it is also seeking to nurture trade ties with China, the largest importer of Saudi crude. In February, Saudi Arabia exported goods worth 15.2 billion riyals

(\$4.05 billion) to China, marking a 20.6% increase from a year earlier, when trade amounted to 12.6 billion riyals, data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity show. Over the past five years, trade has grown at an annualised rate of 50.3%. Total Chinese investment and construction contracts in Saudi Arabia between 2005 and mid-2024 reached nearly \$71 billion, according to the China Global Investment Tracker, reflecting Beijing's growing role in the kingdom's economic transformation. The Saudi partnership with the United States remains central to its security, investment and technology ambitions, even as it expands relations with rival powers like China and Russia.

The US is poised to offer Saudi Arabia an arms package worth well over \$100 billion, sources told Reuters last month, saying the proposal was being lined up for announcement during Trump's visit.

# 'White House budget proposal too low'

WASHINGTON (Reuters): FBI Director Kash Patel told a US Senate panel that he supports a White House proposal to cut the bureau's budget, a day after telling lawmakers he had wanted \$1 billion more than the administration had requested. Patel's testimony to a House of Representatives panel had exposed a rare break with President Donald Trump's administration, which has pushed to slash spending across the federal government. Disagreements between agencies and the White House over funding requests to Congress are rarely made public.

Patel told the Senate appropriations committee that he would "make the mission work on whatever budget we're given." "My view is that we will make and agree with this budget as it stands, and make it work for the operational necessity of the FBI," Patel said. "As the head of the FBI, I was simply asking

for more funds because I can do more with more money." Trump's administration has called for a \$545 million cut to the FBI as part of a plan to shrink the federal budget by \$163 billion.

Patel told the House hearing that he was working to explain to both the White House and Congress "why we need more than what has been proposed in that budget." The proposed cuts to the FBI attracted bipartisan concern from senators, who said they feared cuts would impact the bureau's ability to counter violent crime and national security threats. "I'm concerned that the scale of the proposed reduction could force the FBI to eliminate vacant positions and leave positions unfilled," Republican US Senator Jerry Moran, of Kansas, said.

The budget proposal, released last week, includes few details about what would be cut at the FBI, but

cites diversity policies, "pet projects" of former Democratic President Joe Biden's administration and what it calls duplicative intelligence activities. The proposal repeats allegations that the FBI had been "weaponized" against Trump and his supporters. Trump and his allies, including Patel, have repeatedly made such claims over FBI probes of Russian election interference, the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol and other issues. Democratic senators scolded Patel for failing to submit a detailed budget proposal for the FBI. Senator Patty Murray of Washington called Patel's failure to offer a timeline for a blueprint "insufficient and deeply disturbing." Patel said he was working with the Justice Department and the White House budget office on the issue. "We are now having a budget hearing without a budget request," Murray said.

# Spy agency pauses 'extremist' classification for AfD party

BERLIN (Reuters): Germany's domestic spy agency BfV has paused its classification of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as an extremist organisation in what the AfD called a partial victory for its challenge against the decision.

The agency would not publicly refer to the AfD as a "confirmed right-wing extremist movement" until an administrative court in the western city of Cologne has ruled on an AfD bid for an injunction, a court statement said. The BfV's move last week to classify the far-right AfD as extremist produced sharp reactions along the fault lines of German politics, with some lawmakers calling for the AfD to be banned and the AfD casting it as an attack on democracy.

It also sparked strong criticism from US President Donald Trump's administration, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling on the

German authorities to reverse their decision. The extremist classification allows the Cologne-based spy agency to step up monitoring of the AfD, for example by recruiting informants and intercepting party communications.

"The measures associated with the classification will also be suspended," a court spokesperson said without elaborating. The agency's 1,100-page experts' report, which will not be released to the public, found the AfD to be a racist and anti-Muslim organisation. Founded in 2013, the AfD has surged to become Germany's second biggest party but other parties have shunned it as toxic. The AfD says its designation is a politically motivated attempt to discredit and criminalise it.

Its leadership welcomed the decision by the BfV, which the court said was not acknowledging any legal obligation. "This is a first important step towards

our actual exoneration and thus countering the accusation of right-wing extremism," party leaders Tino Chrupalla and Alice Weidel said in a joint statement. The BfV did not immediately comment. The agency's decision to pause the AfD's classification does not mean the BfV has revised its assessment of the party. The AfD has previously lost a legal challenge when its now-defunct youth organization was classified as right-wing extremist.

The Republican chairman of the US Senate intelligence committee called for American spy agencies to "pause" intelligence sharing with the BfV, whose mission includes counterterrorism. Senator Tom Cotton called for the pause until Germany's government "treats the AfD as a legitimate opposition party", according to a letter to Tulsi Gabbard, Trump's director of National Intelligence.

ed. Bazrouk's case appears to be the first time the DOJ has brought federal hate crime charges related to recent Columbia protests. A DOJ spokesperson could not confirm that information. The assaults allegedly all took place in Manhattan, at an April 2024 protest outside the New York Stock Exchange, a December 2024 protest outside Columbia University, and a January 2025 protest near Gramercy Park.

Bazrouk allegedly

punched two of the Jewish victims in the face and kicked another in the stomach, according to court documents filed. Bazrouk also stole an Israeli flag from pro-Israel protesters at the Columbia University protest, according to the Justice Department. The DOJ said that Bazrouk showed support for Hamas and called himself a "Jew hater" in text messages obtained from a search of his cell phone.

# US charges NY man with hate crimes over Columbia protests

NEW YORK (Reuters): The US Department of Justice charged a New York man with federal hate crimes in an indictment unsealed, accusing him of assaulting Jewish victims, including two Columbia University students, during three separate protests over the war in Gaza.

The DOJ said that Tarek Bazrouk, 20, "deliberately targeted and assaulted Jewish victims at protests relating to the Israel/Gaza war." Bazrouk was arrest-



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# Trump has just put a dagger

THE contrast could hardly have been more stark. While President Trump was flanked in the Oval Office by the British ambassador to Washington, Lord Mandelson, and chatting happily to Sir Keir Starmer over the phone, officials in Brussels were finalising \$100 billion of retaliatory tariffs against the US. The trade deal agreed today between the UK and the US may not prove as transformational for the UK as the British Government will claim. But one point is certain. It puts a dagger at the heart of the European project - because it's further proof to EU countries that they may well be economically better off outside the bloc.

The US-UK trade deal won't save the British economy, but it is still far better than anything EU countries currently enjoy. British cars will face lower tariffs, at least up to the first 100,000 vehicles, and steel and aluminium will be zero-rated, while the UK will allow more American beef to go on sale in British supermarkets. The optics may well prove even more significant. The UK is the first country to get a trade deal with President Trump after "liberation day". After the relentlessly negative coverage of Brexit, and Labour's punishing tax rises on business, global companies will notice that there is finally some good news about the UK.

The deal puts the EU in a very difficult position. Brussels is currently planning more than \$100 billion of levies on passenger planes, chemicals and steel, alongside bourbon and spirits. It is pushing on with a tit-for-tat trade war that will likely escalate over the next few weeks. Very soon Washington and Brussels may well be imposing 30 per cent, 40 per cent or even 50 per cent tariffs on each other's products. After all, if there is one thing we know for certain about President Trump, it is this. He never backs away from a fight.

The lesson will be obvious to everyone. It will be a lot easier to sell into the US from Britain than it will be from anywhere inside the EU. While tariffs are likely to escalate between America and Europe, they will be coming down for the UK. Even worse, if Brussels cosies up to Beijing as it tries to put more pressure on the US, the risk is that Europe will be turned into a dumping ground for Chinese goods that have been locked out of the American market. European companies will face huge barriers in the US and ferocious Chinese competition in their home market. It could well prove a lethal combination.

It may well become increasingly tempting to peel away. Almost a third of Ireland's exports go to the US, and that trade is worth £61 billion to its economy. In Portugal, 15 per cent of exporting companies are estimated to rely entirely on the US. In Denmark, about 17 per cent of exports head across the Atlantic for America. Is it really worth being part of the EU if it cripples your exporters in the world's largest economy? It is far from obvious. Over the last 50 years, the EU has sold itself to its members as an all-powerful trading bloc. It supposedly has the strength and negotiating power to make sure that every country is better off inside the fold than outside. That is no longer true, if it ever was. Brussels may now find it very difficult to keep the project together.

# Gazumped again!

IT had to be one of the strangest press calls ever. Keir Starmer was surrounded by a group of black tracksuit-clad goons. There was the slight air of the Heaven's Gate suicide cult. Round a phone, they gathered to tune into the disembodied voice of Donald Trump as he spoke about the weather. I say press call, actually most of the press were in taxis, having been sent to the wrong location by a Number 10 lunge. Presumably this was their own tribute to the Donald's own infamous Four Seasons Total Landscaping conference in the aftermath of the 2020 election.

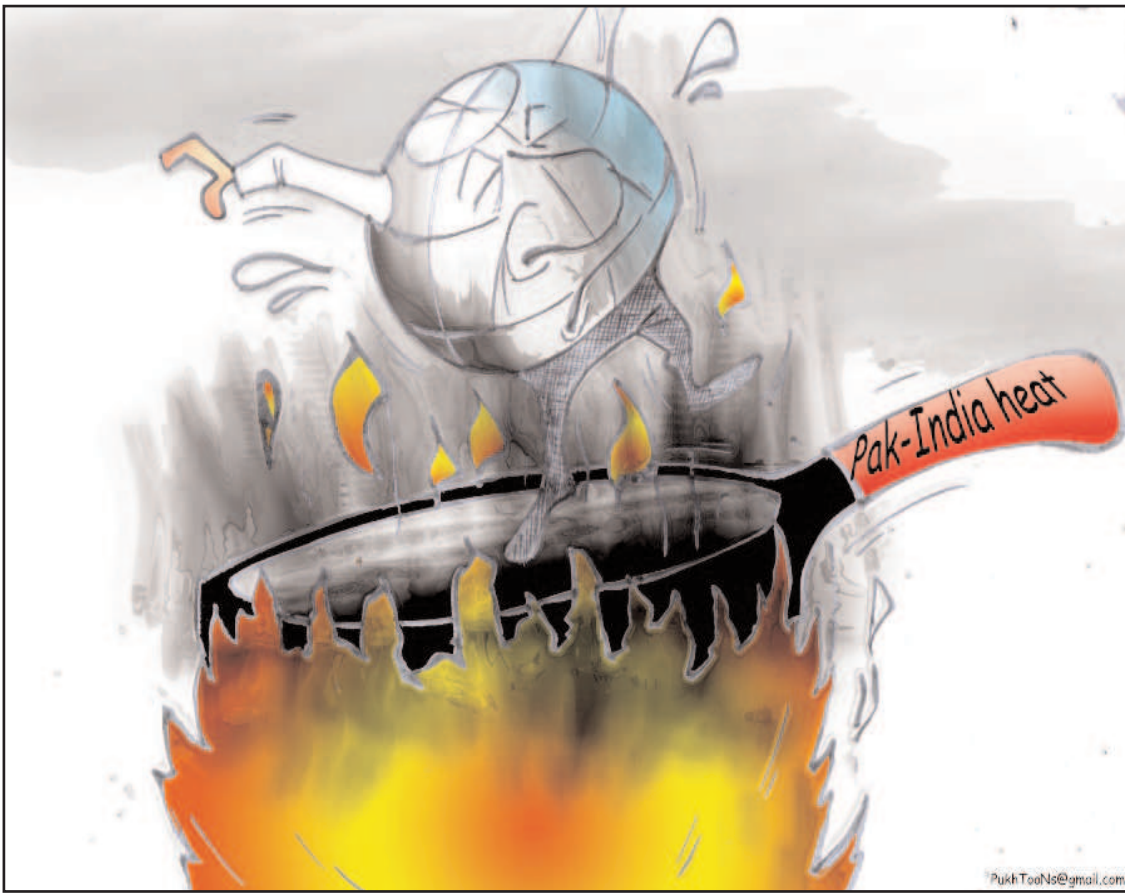
The cameras cut to the Oval Office. Behind the Donald lurked the always-malign presence of Lord Mandelson. Mandy swayed back and forth in a weirdly hypnotic motion. Presumably, he and Donald had spent the warm-up sharing memories of their mutual pal, Jeffrey Epstein. After his usual stream of consciousness, Donald finally handed over to Oink. "Mr Prime Minister, take it away," Mr Trump said as if he were introducing Liberace's grand finale, as opposed to someone who sounds like the pre-recorded customer service message on the complaints line for AnuSol.

Starmer wittered endlessly about how important it was that this was happening on the anniversary of VE Day; implicitly comparing himself to Churchill, with his usual sense of modesty and proportion. Churchill was, of course, booted out of office just weeks later. We can only hope that the similarities continue to run. The two main players handed over to the assorted flunkies. Mandy himself alluded to the Donald personally calling Oink late at night, which conjures the delicious image of a blinking Starmer answering the phone at 3am, still wearing his Spam face mask. "What a beautiful accent," Trump observed at the end of Mandy's extended malicious purr. "My mother would be proud," oiled the Dark Lord in return.

The spectre of chlorinated chicken loomed its feathered head once more. A reporter asked whether the trade deal would mean Britain accepting US meat products. Brooke Rawlins, Trump's agriculture secretary - who seems to have attended the same elocution and delivery classes as her boss - chimed in that "American beef is the safest, the best quality and the crown jewel of American agriculture for the world". Not to be outdone in the superlative stakes, the Donald added: "We have the best in the world, the best tractors, the best everything in the world." He concluded things in suitably bizarre fashion, by randomly grabbing Lord Mandelson's hand in the style of Gollum grasping for the One Ring. Next we returned to the actual No 10 press conference in Solihull. After a few more ham-fisted VE Day comparisons, and the now-obligatory mortifying football banter, Starmer fielded questions from the handful of journalists who hadn't been sent to the wrong venue. Were the new terms with the US better than before Trump came into office, asked one. "The question you should be asking is, is it better than where we were yesterday?" said Starmer. So perhaps more a case of damage limitation than the epoch-defining win Oink had billed it as. Then in a fittingly surreal end to proceedings, the cameras suddenly swivelled away to the Vatican - white smoke! Pity poor Keir Starmer; his India deal cruelly overshadowed by his co-signatory immediately bombing its neighbourhood, then his "Churchill" moment even more spectacularly gazumped by the arrival of a new Pope. Always the bridesmaid, never the bride.

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# One trade ‘deal’ done, 199 to go

David Goldman

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has finally gotten his first trade deal done. Well, not quite a "deal," per se. More like a concept of a plan: a framework for negotiations between the United States and the United Kingdom that will take place between the two countries over the next several months or years ... to hammer out a potential future trade agreement ... that may or may not ultimately prove more beneficial to the United States than the existing trade situation.

But a win's a win, and this is a big win for Trump. The agreement with the UK also gives other world leaders a reason to hope that other deals can rescue the global economy from the abyss, providing a framework for future negotiations.

Asked whether the deal is an improvement on the trading relationship of six months ago, before Trump took office, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer replied Thursday: "The question you should be asking is: Is it better than where we were yesterday?" Undeniably, the answer is yes. Even if the details of the framework are sparse, tariffs on some UK goods will go down, and it could open up the market for some more US goods to enter the UK.

Now, the dealmaker-in-chief just needs to get more than a hundred more of these done before the clock runs out on July 8 - when punishing reciprocal tariffs as high as 50% on dozens of nations are set to go back into effect. No biggie. Or, at least that's what Trump says. In a Time interview last month, he said he had made 200 trade deals already, later clarifying that they'll be done soon.

Even if that were somehow possible, these deals have been promised for months, and the slow-as-molasses pace of striking any kind of compromise on trade doesn't bode well for the ultimate prize: a détente with China. With tariffs of at least 145% on most Chinese imports, and a 125% retaliatory tariff by China on most US goods, trade has all but stopped with one of America's most important economic partners. US and Chinese offi-

cials are set to meet this weekend in Geneva to negotiate the trade situation, though US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said this week it was unlikely that they'd hammer out a deal - he's hoping for a "de-escalation." Trump, however, on Wednesday said he would not lower the high tariffs on China in advance of discussions, which Beijing has previously said was a precondition for talks.

In the meantime, America's aggressive trade war has put its effective tariff rate on imports at more than 22%, according to Fitch Ratings, the highest by far of any developed country. That has sent the US economy into reverse. Last week's report on gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the US economy, showed America's first contraction since early 2022, as an otherwise-healthy economy was dragged down by com-

mercial economic win for quite some time.

"The 90-day tariff pause, which is now roughly 25% over, provides little time for the typical back-and-forth trade discussions that require months if not years to craft a trade deal," said Jacob Jensen, trade policy analyst for the American Action Forum, a center-right policy institute. "There is a significant difference if these deals are official, written trade agreements rather than verbal commitments to buy more US products, as one has long-term economic implications and the other can be ignored down the line," he added.

And so far this is just a single announced agreement. The reciprocal tariffs that went into effect April 7 and were paused for 90 days on April 9 affect dozens of countries. A hundred or so more are subject to the 10% universal tariff. The administration can't

***"The 90-day tariff pause, which is now roughly 25% over, provides little time for the typical back-and-forth trade discussions that require months if not years to craft a trade deal," said Jacob Jensen, trade policy analyst for the American Action Forum, a center-right policy institute.***

panies stockpiling goods to get ahead of tariffs. And that was the first quarter - before the most aggressive trade policy had taken effect.

Despite the administration's rhetoric that it is in advanced trade negotiations with more than a dozen countries, actual trade deals take significant time - often years - to hash out. They typically involve incredibly complex agreements, delving into the minutiae of various goods and nontariff barriers. They often involve significant political considerations, as various parties seek to protect voters with special interests. Instead, the "deal" the Trump administration inked with the UK Thursday is more like a memorandum of understanding. That may result in lower tariffs in the near term, but they'll do little that amounts to a substan-

possibly get those all done by July 8. Trump said last week he would not extend the tariffs a second time - and, in fact, may act sooner to reinstate some tariffs with countries with whom his administration cannot reach an agreement, perhaps in a matter of a couple weeks.

"It will be difficult for the US trade representative to negotiate potentially 100 separate trade agreements within 90 days, meaning President Trump must soon determine whether tariffs will be reinstated or delayed further," Jensen said. And even if deals are ultimately completed with all countries, there's no guarantee Trump would keep them. For example, Trump, in his first term, was instrumental in negotiating the USMCA free trade agreement with Canada and Mexico, only to abandon it in his second

term, charging an on-again, off-again 25% tariff on some Mexican and Canadian goods. And by placing significant tariffs on virtually all goods coming into the United States, Trump also blew up a number of existing trade deals with allies.

The stock market cheered Thursday. Now the hard work begins. "The market was desperately waiting for a deal to get done," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B. Riley Wealth Management. "This was probably the easiest one to do."

Regardless of how many trading partners the United States reaches deals or even "deals" with, the one that really matters is China. A lot is riding on the success of US and Chinese officials' discussions in Geneva this weekend. The historically high tariff on China has effectively stopped all trade between the two countries, Trump has said repeatedly. Sailings from China to the United States fell 60% in April, according to Flexport, a logistics and freight forwarding broker. JPMorgan estimates Chinese imports into the United States will plunge by as much as 80% by the second half of the year.

As goods that were warehoused before tariffs took effect begin to run out over the next week or so, American consumers should expect pandemic-like disruptions, including higher prices, shortages and empty store shelves, port executives and supply chain experts tell CNN. Bessent has said repeatedly that the high tariff on China is "unsustainable," and Trump also said he expects the tariff to come down. But it would need to come down significantly - by more than half - for any real trade to recommence, trade experts say. Even then, the economic damage would be done - and it would be weeks or even months before American shelves would be replenished. Despite the increasingly dire warnings and economic turmoil, the countries seem not to be remotely close to a deal. Even with the talks set to kick off this weekend, Bessent said it could take two to three years for trade to normalize with China.

CNN

# Zelensky nails it

Paul Thornton

GOOD morning. It is Saturday, Feb. 22. Here's what we've been doing in Opinion. In August 1939, according to testimony at the Nuremberg trials, German forces arrested an ethnic Pole named Franciszek Honiok, murdered him and dressed his corpse in a Polish military uniform. They left Honiok's body with a gunshot wound to his head at a German radio tower as proof of a repelled attack by Polish saboteurs against the Nazi reich. Germany used it as justification to invade Poland.

No one believed the Nazis' ruse, but it didn't matter: World War II was underway. I thought about that watching President Trump stand in front of reporters Tuesday and say that Ukraine "should have never started" its war against Russia three years ago. This is nonsense, of course, as the entire world watched Russian forces start the largest war in Europe since World War II when they invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Before then, Vladimir Putin had stated his desire to rebuild the superpower lost at the end of the Cold War in 1991, so anyone who had been paying attention knew that taking over Ukraine - a former Soviet republic long coveted by Putin - was part of the plan to make Russia great again.

But oddly enough, Putin needed a pretext, not just rank imperialism. Before the invasion, he accused the Ukrainian government of committing genocide against Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Moscow-backed separatist forces in eastern Ukraine staged an evacuation of civilians to make it seem as if innocent lives were at risk because of Ukrainian aggression. Russia even said it killed Ukrainian saboteurs near the border (sound familiar?). Few believed any of this - but Trump might. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky appears to have been onto something when he said his American counterpart lives in a Russian "disinformation space." One would have to take Putin at his word to call Zelensky a dictator and accuse Ukraine of picking a suicidal fight with its much larger, nuclear-armed neighbor.

Does Trump believe the fake evacuation crisis in eastern Ukraine was real or that Kyiv wanted to kill or otherwise ethnically cleanse the Russian speakers within its borders? Would he have believed the Poles authored their own annihilation by attacking a German radio tower in 1939? Whatever motivated Trump's migration into Putin's "disinformation space," we now live in a world in which the United States shrugs off its role as guarantors of European security (fulfilled so successfully that nearly all Americans take peace on that historically war-ravaged continent for granted) and appeases an accused war criminal like Putin. In other words, we've become one of the world's bad guys within a month of Inauguration Day.

That has profound implications for the US and Europe, but the immediate crisis is in Ukraine. Writing on our op-ed page, Ukrainian author Sergey Maidukov lays out the grim reality for his country that the war's end portends: "A peace agreement perceived as a capitulation could fur-

ther erode national morale that is already at a low point, with falling troop levels and Russia's recent front-line gains in the fighting. History shows that in such moments often public disillusionment grows, weakening confidence in leadership. During these periods, extreme factions may emerge, stoking unrest and upending a fragile order.

"When Russia launched its full-on invasion in February 2022, Ukrainians united under symbols that had previously divided them. The slogan Slava Ukraini! (Glory to Ukraine), once associated with ultra-right-wing nationalist movements during World War II, was embraced nationwide, even in regions where nationalism had been controversial. "But in 2025, extreme nationalist fervor has waned. This could be a temporary lull before another eruption of unrest, provoked by post-war trauma, hardship and disillusionment. That, combined with an armed population and a generation of young men forged in war could threaten Ukraine as much as Russian aggression has."

The problem with JD Vance's theology of mass deportation. Father Gregory Boyle, the national treasure who founded L.A.'s Homeboy Industries, takes issue with using the doctrine of ordo amoris, cited by the Catholic vice president, to justify mass deportation: "I suspect we need to fire the god who thinks there isn't enough love to go around." The state lags on fire safety rules, but even common sense should limit combustibles near homes. Back in 2020, California passed a bill requiring property owners in fire-prone areas to create a zone of defensible space around their homes of five feet. There's just one problem, says The Times' editorial board: The state is two years past the deadline for writing and enacting rules. That's unacceptable, says the board: "Why the holdup? How long does it take to decide that homeowners really shouldn't have wooden fences or combustible shrubs within five feet of their homes?"

Extend Trump's 2017 tax cuts to promote growth but cut spending too. Researcher Veronique de Rugy calls for making the 2017 cut to individual tax rates and the expensing of businesses' capital investment permanent because those provisions result in the most economic growth. Political reality requires temporarily extending other tax breaks that are popular but may be less pro-growth, such as the Child Tax Credit expansion and larger standard deduction. De Rugy also says raising revenue to keep the deficit from ballooning is important, so Congress should eliminate other tax breaks. The reported costs of the Los Angeles fires are staggering. The hidden costs are worse. Augusto Gonzalez-Bonorino, an economics instructor at Pomona College, points out that the recent fires destroyed much more than homes and livelihoods: "As the ashes settle, the region faces an invisible threat beneath the charred remains: compromised soil structures, contaminated watersheds and ecosystems stripped of their natural defenses - wounds that will bleed for years to come."

The Los Angeles Times

# Millions of black and brown people who fought for Europe's freedom didn't get a VE Day

Gary Younge

ON 8 May 1945, as the allies rejoiced at Germany's unconditional surrender, some local people in the market town of Sétif in Algeria gathered not to celebrate their freedom but to demand it, carrying Algerian flags and placards calling for independence from France. The French police opened fire, unleashing a spiral of violence resulting in a notorious massacre. Algerian independence militants retaliated by killing about 100 settlers and wounding hundreds more over the next five days.

Similar disturbances erupted in the nearby village of Guelma. The colonisers responded with brutal disproportionality - bombing small villages, shelling the area from the coast and running amok, inflicting collective punishment. Official estimates for the number of Algerians killed vary widely, ranging from about 8,000 from some French historians

to 45,000 from the Algerian government.

This was no isolated incident. There were similar protests that month against French colonial rule in Syria and Lebanon; six weeks later came a general strike in British-ruled Nigeria; six weeks after that, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta declared Indonesia's independence from the Dutch, sparking a vicious four-year war; two weeks later, Ho Chi Minh announced Vietnam's independence, which would not be fully achieved for another three decades. VE Day might have marked the cessation of fighting and atrocities in Europe, but it did not signal the end of Europe fighting or committing atrocities.

Marinated in nostalgia and served up with patriotic fervor, the 80th anniversary of VE Day promises to commemorate the defeat of the Nazis with all due pomp and ceremony. Given that this was a historically and morally significant moment that is central to modern Europe's

founding myths and institutions, from Nato to the EU, that is to be expected. But at a moment when fascism is once again a mainstream ideology on the continent, it also offers a timely opportunity to reflect on what this victory meant for those who lived not in, but under Europe; how many of those who fought have been written out of the story; and why it matters now.

About 2.5 million personnel from the Indian subcontinent, more than 1 million African-Americans, 1 million people from Africa and tens of thousands of people from the Caribbean fought for the allies during the second world war. Among them were people of almost every religion. Two-thirds of the Free French forces were colonial troops. Racism denied most Black Americans the right to actually fight, but they played a crucial role in supply, delivering food and material, bury-

ing the dead, and fuelling and fixing transport. "[US combat forces] could only go as far as Black supply troops could take them," writes historian Matthew Delmont in Half American. "Almost everything the Allies transported to the front passed through the hands of at least one Black American."

So the fight against fascism was not just a multinational effort but a multiracial and multicultural one as well, though you wouldn't know it to look at our politics. Indeed, that's part of the problem. People don't know it. A poll by the thinktank British Future this week shows that only a quarter of Britons are aware that troops from Jamaica and Kenya fought for Britain, just a third know that Muslims fought and fewer than half are aware of Sikh involvement in the war. It is a constant source of amazement and frustration that a continent so dedicated to its own history (there is no

reason to believe that the Belgians, Dutch or French are any more aware) should also be so ignorant of it.

For while the second world war marked a welcome victory against nazism and its pathologies, it can in no way be celebrated as a victory for freedom or democracy. As the events in Sétif, Guelma and beyond illustrate, the freedom these Black and brown soldiers fought for did not apply to them. As controversial as this sounds now, it was openly stated back then. In 1941, Winston Churchill and US president Franklin Roosevelt produced the Atlantic charter, championing "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live". When questioned in the House of Commons whether he really meant "all peoples", Churchill replied: "We had in mind, primarily ... the states and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke ... So that is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-

governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown."

Western Europe was delivered from tyranny; many of those who fought for their freedom remained captive. "The democracy that I want to fight for, Hitler is not depriving me of," wrote Trinidadian activist and intellectual CLR James in a 1939 pamphlet, Why Negroes Should Oppose the War. Perhaps the starkest contradiction in this regard came from the United States, which practised rigid racial segregation among its troops even as it was charged with denazifying Germany. There is no contradiction between commemorating a historical event while reinterpreting its meaning to be more inclusive and accurate. But there would be something deeply perverse about celebrating the defeat of the extreme right on the battlefield while ignoring the fact that Europe is voting for its ideological descendants at the ballot box.



# EU, China can tap potential for value creation

EU-China relations could date back to the 1970s. At that time, China remained a highly autarkic state, conducting limited trade with the rest of the world. It was not on the cards that China would soon embark on its reform and opening-up journey, grow prosperous and emerge as the world's largest trading nation. The European landscape too looked vastly different in 1975: it would take another 18 years for the European Union to be established and supersede the European Community, the entity with which modern EU-China ties were first established.

In the period since, China has grown to be the world's manufacturing powerhouse - accounting for 30 percent of global manufacturing value added as of 2024(ranking first globally for 14 consecutive years) - and the lynchpin of global supply chains. In 2024, the total value of goods trade between China and the European Union reached \$785.8 billion, representing a year-on-year increase of 0.4 percent. Of this amount, China's exports to the EU totalled \$516.4 billion, up 3.0 percent from the previous year. Bilateral investment relations have also deepened substantially, with many European companies setting up shop in China, in part to service the country's huge consumer market, and in part to utilize the country's ever improving industry clusters to manufacture

Jens Eskelund

and export to the rest of the world. These developments have undoubtedly brought huge value to both sides. For consumers it has meant more choice at more competitive prices. For governments - local and national - it has meant job creation and higher fiscal revenue. To ensure that the EU-China relationship continues to create maximum value for both sides over the next half a century, it is now an opportune moment to reevaluate trade and investment ties and address the main challenges that have emerged in recent years. Longstanding concerns relating to a lack of reciprocal market access and level playing field for European companies operating in China, are increasingly viewed as unacceptable by many policymakers in both the European Commission and in member state capitals. The same is true of the bloc's trade imbalance with China, with the EU recording a deficit of 304.5 billion euros in 2024. For European observers, in volume terms, this imbalance is even larger - as deflation in China and the depreciation of the renminbi relative to the euro have resulted in China sending higher volumes of exports to Europe at lower cost. This imbalance has increased since the end of the pandemic, underscoring the need to support the demand side of the economy in China, so that the country's domes-

tic market is able to absorb a greater share of its manufacturing output, as well as growing imports. Though no one is expecting the two sides' bilateral trade in goods to achieve a balance, this will hopefully serve to ensure that trade imbalances do not grow further. New concerns also need to be carefully managed. In particular, the potential distortive impact that an anticipated reshuffling of trade flows could have on the EU single market, resulting from the US' levying of tariffs on Chinese imports. Addressing these challenges would help put the EU and China on course for a more sustainable relationship. The EU is currently the largest single market for Chinese exports, with continued access to the bloc of growing importance to Beijing, particularly now other major markets have begun taking measures to curtail Chinese imports. The EU has also been a key technology partner, and is perhaps even more so now that the US has put in place measures to stem the flow of a growing list of technologies to China. For Europe, China's unparalleled manufacturing clusters, vibrant innovation ecosystem and large consumer market mean it is vital that its firms maintain a stake here if they are to retain their global competitiveness. Fortunately, there is room to find a negotiated solution to the

challenges faced and even further strengthen the relationship. Increased institutional dialogue will be important in facilitating this. High-level engagements that have taken place in recent weeks - including the visit of European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security to Beijing, and the phone conversation between European Commission President von der Leyen and Chinese Premier Li Qiang - were welcome developments. However, while providing a good foundation, they need to be swiftly followed by concrete deliverables. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of EU-China diplomatic ties, now is a good time to take stock of the remarkable achievements that have been made by both sides. However, we must also recognize that our cooperation model is in need of a service check. There is significant potential for future value creation in the EU-China bilateral relationship, but this will only be achieved if both parties believe that the benefits of cooperation are divided in an equitable manner. Legitimate concerns about economic security and den- industrialization, in view of continuously high growth rates in imports, will need to be addressed, as will other matters related to security on the European continent, hereunder securing a just and lasting peace for Ukraine. Finding solutions to these questions will take trust, goodwill and hard work. Let's get started!

# Britain hasn't agreed a trade deal with US

Gaby Hinsliff

**H**ANG out the hunting and let the church bells ring. A VE Day trade deal with Donald Trump is done, and in the car plants of the West Midlands as much as in the backrooms of No 10, there will be understandable relief that, for now at least, America's phoney war on them is over.

It's true that the easing of arbitrary tariffs on cars, steel and aluminium that didn't even exist until eight weeks ago falls far short of being an actual trade deal, not least because the president could rip it up again tomorrow if he felt like it. But the terms agreed between London and Washington could save thousands of jobs, which isn't to be sniffed at, even if they're jobs that need never have been at risk in the first place had Trump not suddenly chosen to threaten them. More surprisingly, Rachel Reeves seems to have managed to hang on to her digital services tax on (mostly US) tech companies, while for all the president's bluster about "dramatic" new access for cattle ranchers to British markets it could have been infinitely worse for British farming: no chlorine-washed chicken, hormone-injected beef or flooding of the market with heavily subsidised US meat at prices British farmers just couldn't afford to match.

No wonder Keir Starmer laid on the Churchill comparisons with a generous trowel, pointing out the deal was being unveiled on the same day at almost the same hour as Victory in Europe - or just Victory, as Trump calls it, as if the Europe bit was irrelevant - was declared 80 years ago. Once again, Starmer insisted, Britain and the US were "standing side by side". Well, as side by side as it's possible to be when one of you is in the Oval Office graciously removing your foot from the neck of the other one, who is listening anxiously in via video link while the new ambassador, Peter Mandelson, hovers elegantly at the president's shoulder. Trump volunteered in return that previous governments had long coveted a deal and "it never quite got there. It did with this prime minister." If it all made you cringe, it's hard to blame Starmer for that: or no more than you would normally blame a person with some unfortunate part of their anatomy clamped in a vice. But

peace in our time? Not quite.

This has been less a trade deal between allies - a process of give and take that in the long run hopefully leaves both sides better off - than a hostage negotiation. Pay Trump what he feels he's due, and you get your economy back in roughly the state it was before, though missing a few fingers and probably traumatised. The 10% tariff on all British exports to the US, affecting everything from whisky to salmon as well as cars, stays with no word of when it might get lifted: that was "pretty well set", Trump said, indicating that for him that particular conversation is done. The threat of a tariff on foreign-made films, which could crucify the British film industry, still hovers, alongside possible future tariffs on pharmaceuticals (though No 10 insists they now have some protection on that). But why wouldn't Trump keep tariffing things? After all, as far as he's concerned it works brilliantly.

"We blew up the whole system," Trump crowed, at one point. "Because of that, this worked out so nicely." And if what he wants is a queue of publicly supplicant and privately seething world leaders at his door then he's not wrong, though for Americans the price of satisfying his vanity may yet be an avoidable recession at home. Other countries, with bigger trade imbalances with the US and fewer options, may have to swallow worse than Britain.

It will take time to unravel what this deal means for the May summit at which Britain is aiming for a bigger and more mutually beneficial "reset" deal with the EU, but getting something across the line now does at least mean the government doesn't have both US and European plates spinning madly at once. (On which note, a period of silence would be welcome from fans of a hard Brexit that they were repeatedly told would leave Britain isolated and at the mercy of Washington or Beijing: it's not this government, in Kemi Badenoch's words, that "shafted" Britain on trade).

While the deal potentially gives British firms exporting to the US a competitive edge over rivals based in countries still facing punitive tariffs, it doesn't help companies selling into any market depressed

by this trade war - which will be most of them, given the paralysing uncertainty caused by nobody in business quite knowing what he's going to do next.

The financial markets should rally, because Trump doing deals is at least better than Trump doling out arbitrary economic punishment: some will want to see in it a return to normal, after a burst of almost strategic craziness. But normal is a trade deal like the one Britain just did with India, a win-win exercise that doesn't leave everyone around the table seemingly terrified of not being seen to laugh hard enough at the president's jokes. If he finds the results of this first round of tariffs gratifying, then nothing about Trump suggests a man who knows when to stop.

The most alarming thing about his mooted levy on foreign-made movies - breaking the convention that tariffs are normally charged on goods moving physically across borders, not services - isn't the faintly-bonkers suggestion that shooting the likes of the Barbie movie in Hertfordshire represents a "National Security threat" to the world's foremost military superpower, but the sense of a president emboldened to push his trade war into new frontiers.

Diplomats are trained not to pay ransom to hostage takers, no matter how heart-rending the pleas from captives' families, for fear that if you give in they'll come back for more. With Trump, that rule will be broken because it will have to be; democratic governments around the world, especially those besieged by populist parties, fear they won't survive the consequences of telling an angry public that they'll just have to learn to live with tariff-induced economic hardship following hot on the heels of crippling post-pandemic inflation. (Even Canada's Mark Carney, having won his election on a explicitly anti-Trump platform, now faces the much harder task of leading Canadians through likely tough times ahead.) But if Trump's economic aggression is rewarded, just as Putin's territorial aggression is probably about to be rewarded in Ukraine, neither will be discouraged from trying it again. Eighty years on, we shouldn't need reminding where that leads.

The Guardian

# Democratic Party and Türkiye: Neocon rhetoric, self-imposed blinders

Adam McConnell

**T**HROUGH all of the Trumpian "sturm und drang" currently dominating US politics, another issue - only partially the result of the last election cycle - is also the subject of intense debate: What happened to the Democratic Party? [1] Obviously, no single reason for the Democratic Party's ruinous condition can be identified. From the party's sclerotic leadership to its festering internal divisions, the Democrats have a long road ahead of them to resurrecting the party's image and producing inspiring candidates for the national stage.

As an observer living abroad, the Democratic Party's foreign policies have always held my attention. Until 20 years ago, Türkiye was a topic that appeared in US media only when the political juncture placed it squarely front and center. For that reason, the discussion about Türkiye in the US center-left, where the Democratic Party resides, consisted mostly of bland generalities. Türkiye was simply a country that extremely few Americans had even indirect knowledge about. But during the Republican George W. Bush administrations, Türkiye's prominence on the world stage began to rise, partially a side effect of the US invasion of Iraq and Bush's desperate need for an ex post facto justification for that disastrous adventure. When no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, the Bush administration pivoted to the hastily improvised Greater Middle East Initiative, and to promoting Türkiye as the democratic model the US intended to gift to Iraq.

But not all Republicans provided backup for the Bush administration's political needs. Especially the so-called neocon-

servatives developed an animosity towards Türkiye and its elected politicians that gained in vehemence as the 2004-2008 era wore on. This hatred took the form of negative concepts and characterizations that neocon commentators concocted in order to label Türkiye, despite being a NATO member, as a threat. When Barack Obama was elected president in 2008, the rejoicing was global. In Türkiye, songs were written for him, and the joy was palpable. Obama then chose Türkiye's parliament as the forum for his speech announcing a "reset" for America's relations with the Muslim world [2].

Things went downhill from there. During Obama's first years as president, even US progressives began to echo the malevolent, aggressively anti-Türkiye rhetoric developed after 2003 by prominent neoconservative pundits. During Obama's second term, Washington's attitude became progressively more hostile, culminating in the defeated July 2016 coup attempt [3]. Infamously, Obama administration officials reacted with explicit lethargy to the sight of the democratically elected leadership of a NATO ally being threatened by a military coup. The last 15 years were excruciating to watch as not only Obama, but the entire Democratic Party proved completely incapable of comprehending events in Türkiye and its region. The New York Times functions as the Democratic Party's Pravda, through which the world is translated for the party's faithful. So when it comes to Türkiye, groupthink defines the party's "weltanschauung."

The Democratic Party's most recent display of its inability to fathom events in Türkiye occurred

during last month's Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing for Thomas Barrack [4], whom US President Donald Trump nominated as his ambassador to Türkiye [5]. The committee's chairperson is Republican Idaho Senator Jim Risch, who used the hearing to claim personal responsibility for delaying the delivery of F-35 fighter jets to Ankara. Foreign policy hawkishness, however, is the norm for Republicans. Instead, I want to focus on the comments provided by the committee's Democratic members. As the committee's ranking member, New Hampshire Democrat Jeanne Shaheen has a record of negative comments about Türkiye. Shaheen continued this tendency with an opening statement that referred directly to Türkiye's domestic politics, displaying an inaccurate understanding of recent events that almost certainly came from the pages of the Times [7].

In the case of Barrack, Shaheen does share a personal connection through her husband, as her married name makes clear and as she stated in the hearing [8]. That did not prevent her from trying to steer Barrack into stating that he would involve himself in Türkiye's domestic politics. To his credit, Barrack carefully avoided agreeing with Shaheen, which would have been a violation of diplomatic protocols and means that he is aware of Washington's recent problematic behavior towards Ankara. Later in the hearing, other Democratic Senators provided similarly biased or inaccurate comments. Nevada Democratic Senator Jacky Rosen took the now banal approach of denouncing Ankara's relations with Hamas while referring only

to the US' so-called "Kurdish allies" in Syria. The analogy is not just faulty; American officials have maintained a blatantly hypocritical stance on this issue since the second Obama administration [9].

Even more exasperating were the comments of Chris Van Hollen, Democratic senator from Maryland [10]. Van Hollen engaged in the same duplicity regarding the SDF that Rosen did, but most disturbing was Van Hollen's mischaracterization of recent political events in Türkiye. Yet the Democratic Party's groupthink concerning Turkey inspired Van Hollen to a state of indignant fervor, his voice even shaking with self-righteousness. Overall, Barrack appears to be the most positive US ambassador to Ankara in the past 25 years, particularly in terms of his attitude toward and knowledge of Türkiye. Despite the provocative questions aimed at him by the committee's Democratic members, Barrack maintained a calm demeanor and measured his responses carefully. Clearly, he spoke with a mind to how his comments would be received in Ankara.

In the end, we will have to wait and observe Barrack's performance, but it would be ironic indeed if it were Trump who chose the most competent US ambassador to Türkiye in decades, maybe since George McGhee (1952-1953). Meanwhile, the Democrats are left mindlessly repeating prejudiced and inaccurate clichés about Türkiye and its elected politicians, essentially variations on the same pejorative themes devised 20 years ago by neocon think tankers. That blinkered worldview prevents them from comprehending the socio-political reality in a vibrant, vitally important democratic ally.

# Can official Russian statistics be trusted?

Arnold Khachaturov

**A**CCUSATIONS of fudging figures have dogged the Russian government in recent years. It is true that researchers have ample reason to question the authenticity of statistics: a growing amount of data is being classified and many figures appear calculated to please the Kremlin. That does not mean, however, that Russian statistics have become as meaningless as their Soviet predecessors. They simply require more careful interpretation.

Much criticism of Russian statistics is justified: official figures contain various forms of demonstrable manipulation. Take the series of presidential decrees issued in May 2012, which seriously distorted mortality data. Eager to show the Kremlin some form of success, regional authorities reassigned mortality codes. Suicides became "injuries of undetermined intent" in official accounting and deaths from circulatory diseases were reclassified as "old age." According to various estimates, these junk mortality codes now apply to about 10 percent of deaths in Russia. Coronavirus data are similarly skewed due to deficiencies in regional data collection systems. Despite modest official figures, Russia was among the global leaders in excess mortality. During this period, the authorities also conducted a census so questionable that most experts distrust its results.

Accounting problems are not limited to demographics. Similar issues exist across all areas of

official statistics. Economists argue that Russia's record-low poverty rate stems more from a revised calculation methodology than from any real improvement in living standards. Sociologists point out that judicial data reflect the priorities of quota-obsessed security agencies, not actual criminality. Environmentalists argue that air pollution data are unreliable because they are based on self-reporting by enterprises. President Vladimir Putin, who often cites statistics that counter Western forecasts, further complicates matters. Combined with Soviet traditions of fraud, growing authoritarianism and the rapid expansion of secrecy into new domains, this raises legitimate doubts about the value of available figures.

Still, when researchers presume all Russian statistics are unreliable, they do themselves a disservice. The first question to ask is how we even know about these distortions. Few insiders are willing to speak candidly. Rather, evidence of falsification is embedded in the data itself. Pulling figures out of thin air is harder than it looks. Statistical indicators are interconnected, and interference leaves traces. Fabrication may be subtle or blatant, but it is almost always detectable.

There are many signs of distortions: sudden changes in methodology; abrupt shifts in dynamics or regional context; the use of a figure as a key performance indicator or basis for fund-

ing; the presence of conflicting sources and so on. None of these is definitive proof of falsification. But all demand greater scrutiny. Distortions also vary in nature. Intentional manipulation differs from human error or from the inherent difficulty of measuring complex realities. A simple typo, such as adding an extra zero, can warp national economic indicators without any underlying intent to deceive. Then there is misinterpretation. Russia's continued GDP growth may seem paradoxical amid sweeping Western sanctions. It is tempting to dismiss this as fabrication.

However, no serious evidence supports this claim. While indirect anomalies exist, they are likely the result of traditional measurement tools failing to capture the effects of structural transformation in the economy. A more plausible explanation is that both GDP growth and low unemployment reflect the nature of the crisis, not its absence. The constant production of weapons and acute labor shortages yield strong economic indicators - on paper - while simultaneously driving inflation and failing to enhance long-term prosperity. Denying this nuance is its own form of manipulation. Any official statistics should be treated cautiously, especially when they come from a country lacking independent institutions or checks on power. But Russia is not alone: China has long faced similar accusations and even the

United States has not escaped scrutiny.

Total distrust of Russian statistics is not healthy skepticism - it is intellectual laziness. It offers the illusion of certainty while bypassing actual analysis. And it fails to improve our understanding of Russian society and politics. Despite the rise of alternative data sources and digital tools, official Russian statistics remain indispensable. The state still has unique access to internal processes-access that no external actor can replicate. The good news is that flawed data can still yield insight, as long as its limitations are clearly understood. Researchers can still estimate the scale of election fraud or excess COVID-19 deaths using careful methods.

Working rigorously with imperfect data is the only way to remain grounded in reality. Although open data in Russia is becoming harder to find, the shrinking process is far from complete. Even as the regime grows more repressive, it retains some technocratic institutions and practices. Russia balances an unpredictable foreign policy with a largely conventional economic approach.

As long as this continues, its statistics will retain some value. If the government ever seeks to build a fully fictional parallel reality - one in which internal records and public messaging diverge completely - it will not happen overnight. When it does, it will be easy to detect. Until then, researchers must keep reading between the lines.

# Power, protectionism, and remaking of global trade

Dr Serhat S. Çubukçoulu & Dr Ayman Eldessouki

**T**HE contemporary global order is being reshaped by the intensification of trade wars, the resurgence of protectionist policies, and the expansionist policies of major powers. What began as tariff skirmishes has evolved into a broader contest over technological dominance, supply chain sovereignty, and geopolitical influence. This environment is increasingly defined by the imperial ambitions of great powers, the expansion of national security-driven economic strategies, and the increasing global rivalry between great powers.

The trade war between the United States (US) and China symbolises this transformation. The US initiated a sweeping array of tariffs targeting Chinese goods, citing unfair trade practices and national security risks. China responded with its own countermeasures, creating a tit-for-tat dynamic that destabilised global markets. These moves did not merely represent disputes over trade deficits; they embodied a strategic decoupling, especially in sectors such as semiconductors, aviation, and artificial intelligence (AI).

This form of economic nationalism is not exclusive to the US. Both China and the European Union have adopted protectionist tools to shield strategic industries. Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative and its aggressive regional trade pacts further underscore its imperial economic strategy, designed to enhance

dependency on Chinese markets and financial systems. Simultaneously, Southeast Asian states, such as Vietnam and Malaysia, find themselves in a precarious balancing act, navigating between US pressure and Chinese inducements - each wrapped in strategic calculations, not just commerce.

What underpins this global shift is the erosion of the post-Cold War liberal economic consensus. Globalisation, once presumed irreversible, now faces pushback from states reasserting control over cross-border capital, data, and resources. The Trump administration's approach redefined trade policy as an extension of national security, abandoning multilateralism in favour of coercive bilateralism. This "America First" and "Make America Great Again" model was less an aberration and more an early signal of an emerging global norm: trade tools are wielded for geopolitical gain and used as foreign policy tool.

These developments signal a broader trend toward expansionist and neo-imperial statecraft. The resurgence of great power rivalry is not just a reaction to immediate threats but a deliberate strategic posture. The global arena is increasingly marked by spheres of influence, contested economic corridors, and competitive infrastructure diplomacy. The overall outcome is that "the old world is dying, the new one struggles to be born. Now is the time of monsters," if we remember Antonio Gramsci's words few years

before World War II. The current world order is deeply fragmented and fractured, not just multipolar - driven by home-shoring/friend-shoring, transactional alliances, and tactical confrontations. In this emerging order, economic tools are inseparable from military and diplomatic strategies. Trade routes, technology standards, and currency zones are battlegrounds in their own right.

What is at stake for influential middle powers in the Middle East is not merely the architecture of global commerce, but the foundational principles of multilateralism, economic openness, and strategic neutrality that have long underpinned peace and cooperation since the mid-20th century. As the global order transitions into an era marked by protectionism, techno-nationalism, and strategic decoupling, our region faces both significant challenges and unique opportunities.

In this contested world, influence is no longer asserted solely through traditional diplomacy or military projection, but increasingly through supply chain access, digital infrastructure control, and the ability to shape global standards - domains where the Gulf states, with their sovereign wealth, forward-leaning governance, and neutral positioning, can play a convening and mediating role. In doing so, they not only protect their national interests but also position themselves as key architects of a more plural, yet stable, global order.

Gulf News









In brief

PSL likely to resume after Pak-India ceasefire

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Super League's (PSL) management was reportedly considering reviving the excitement of cricket through the resumption of the tenth edition of the domestic marquee tournament, following Pakistan's recent victory over India. Sources divulged that the PSL management has contacted franchise owners, and Chief Executive Officer Salman Naseer has instructed all franchisees to remain prepared. All foreign players have been asked to stay at their current locations until further notice. "The arrangements are being made — I will provide complete details shortly. PSL will go ahead," Salman Naseer told sources. The PSL was postponed yesterday and all foreign players and staff were affected. The players had previously departed for Dubai aboard Pakistan Armed Forces' aircraft.

Chopra postpones javelin meet amid tensions

BENGALURU (Reuters): India's Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra has postponed an eponymous javelin event in the southern Indian city of Bengaluru this month after his country and neighbor Pakistan extended their worst fighting in nearly three decades. The Neeraj Chopra Classic on May 24, a World Athletics Gold category meet, was set to feature a host of international names including Anderson Peters, Julius Yego, Thomas Roehler and Curtis Thompson. Chopra's move came after cricket-mad India and Pakistan suspended their elite Twenty20 leagues on Friday in the wake of the ongoing conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbors. "This decision has been made after careful thought and consultation, with the wellbeing of athletes, stakeholders, and the broader community as the top priority," Chopra's team announced on social media on Friday. "We believe in the unifying power of sport. But, in this critical moment, standing firm with the nation matters most. All our gratitude and thoughts at this point are only with our Armed Forces, who are at the forefront for our nation." Chopra said late last month it was "completely out of the question" that rival and Paris Olympics gold medalist Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan would attend the meet following a deadly Islamist militant attack in Indian Kashmir.

Vollering wins final stage

PARIS (Agencies): Demi Vollering defended her Vuelta Femenina title by winning the final stage of the race in style. The Dutch rider broke clear of her rivals in the final kilometre of stage seven to cross the line solo at the Alto de Cotobello summit finish in Asturias, Spain. Vollering, 28, held a 45-second advantage heading into the final day and her second stage win of the race ensured she claimed her second Vuelta title by one minute one second over Switzerland's Marlen Reusser. Vollering's compatriot and former team-mate Anna van der Breggen finished third overall, a further 15 seconds back. FDJ-Suez rider Vollering took the leader's red jersey with victory in the race's other mountain stage on Thursday. "I am very happy that I could win both mountain stages," said Vollering, who moved to FDJ from SD-Worx this season.

# Fatima Sana's blitzy 88 hands Conquerors second win



KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Conquerors skipper Fatima Sana struck a masterful 88 off 49 balls against Challengers to help her team register second win of the National Women's T20 tournament 2024-25 at the National Bank Stadium, Karachi on Saturday evening. Challengers were restricted to 137-7 in their pursuit of the 166-run target. Fatima, who walked in to bat at no.5 with 45 runs on the board, struck 14 fours and three sixes in her commanding knock, while also partnering for a mammoth 111-run stand with Najiha Alvi (25 not out, 25b, 2x4s). For Challengers, Rameen Shamim returned figures of 4-0-19-2, while Zaib-un-Nisa and Quratulain dismissed one batter each. In turn, Challengers' Aliya Riaz, who turned up at no.3, top-scored with 36 off 34 balls hitting three fours and two sixes, while

also stitching a 29-run stand with opening batter Sadaf Shamas (30, 30b, 5x4s, 1x6). With Challengers slipping to 80-5 after being 72-2, skipper Rameen (27 not out, 15b, 3x4s, 1x6) and Gull Rukh (17, 12b, 1x6) waged a fightback but in vain as they fell 28 runs short. For Conquerors Mahnoor Aftab picked up two wickets. At the Oval Academy Ground, Stars' skipper Sidra Amin continued her brilliant form with the bat as she struck a 44-ball 59 inclusive of seven fours and one six in her team's 69-run win over Invincibles. After the departure of opening batter Samiya Afsar (18, 12b, 4x4s) with 28 runs on the board, no.3 batter Sidra partnered with Sana Urooj (45, 41b, 4x4s, 2x6s) for a 75-run stand. Huraina Sajjad (18, 10b, 3x4s) and Tuba Hassan (17, 14b, 1x6) also chipped in with valuable contributions with the bat as Stars posted

172-5 in their 20 overs. For Invincibles, Omaima Sohail dismissed two batters for 27 runs in her four overs. With the ball, Stars' Waheeda Akhtar ran riot with figures of 4-1-16-4, while Anosha Nasir and Tuba Hassan dismissed two batters each as Invincibles folded for a mere 103-9 in 20 overs. No batters except Muneeba Ali (40, 28b, 7x4s) and Omaima (30, 29b, 4x4s) entered the double figures for Invincibles, who have now lost three matches on the trot. Scores in brief: Match 5: Conquerors beat Challengers by 28 runs at the National Bank Stadium. Conquerors 165-5, 20 overs (Fatima Sana 88, Najiha Alvi 25 not out; Rameen Shamim 2-19). Challengers 137-7, 20 overs (Aliya Riaz 36, Sadaf Shamas 30, Rameen Shamim 27 not out; Mahnoor Aftab 2-9). Player of the match — Fatima Sana (Challengers). Match 6: Stars beat Invincibles by 69 runs at the Oval Academy Ground. Stars 172-5, 20 overs (Sidra Amin 59, Sana Urooj 45; Omaima Sohail 2-27). Invincibles 103-9, 20 overs (Muneeba Ali 40, Omaima Sohail 30; Waheeda Akhtar 4-16, Tuba Hassan 2-14, Anosha Nasir 2-38). Player of the match — Sidra Amin (Stars). 4th round fixtures, Sunday, 11 May: (both matches to begin at 3pm PKT). Match 7: Challengers v Invincibles at National Bank Stadium. Match 8: Conquerors v Strikers at Oval Academy Ground.

# Collins ends Swiatek's Italian Open defence



ROME (Agencies): American Danielle Collins completed a comprehensive straight-set victory over defending champion Iga Swiatek in the third round of the Italian Open. Collins capitalised on a poor serving display from world number two Swiatek to cruise to the opening set before battling back from a break down in the second to clinch a 6-1 7-5 victory. It was just her second win in nine matches against the five-time Grand Slam champion and first on clay—the 23-year-old Pole's preferred surface. Collins, 31, will face Ukrainian Elina Svitolina in the fourth round, while Swiatek must now regroup before the French Open, which begins on 25 May. The five-time Grand Slam champion had won the Italian Open in three of the past four seasons but struggled for her best form in the run-up to this year's

event in Rome. Swiatek has not won a WTA tournament since claiming her fourth French Open women's singles title in five years at Roland Garros 12 months ago. She started poorly, serving double faults when facing break point in her first two service games, and lost her third to love as 29th seed Collins raced into a 5-0 lead. Swiatek finally got on the board in the sixth game, but was promptly broken for a fourth time to lose the opening set in just 24 minutes. She broke Collins in the opening game of the second set, but was again unable to cement the break. Collins battled hard to keep on level terms for the remainder of the second set before pouncing in the 12th game, claiming a sixth break of serve in the match to seal victory with her second match point as Swiatek

flashed a backhand wide. Collins' next opponent, 16th seed Svitolina, came through a three-set battle with 23-year-old American Hailey Baptiste, beating the world number 90 6-4 3-6 6-4. Elsewhere, Italian number one Jasmine Paolini — the sixth seed — got past an out-of-sorts Ons Jabeur 6-4 6-3 to seal a place in the last 16, where she will meet 17th seed Jelena Ostapenko, of Latvia. Australian Open champion Madison Keys is out as the fifth seed was downed by fellow American Peyton Stearns in three sets. Stearns will play either Marie Bouzkova or Naomi Osaka next. Russian Diana Shnaider beat Jacqueline Cristian and awaits the winner of Saturday's last match due on centre court between Belgium's Elise Mertens and American third seed Jessica Pegula.

# Mohid, Sherhan reach DHA Lahore Tennis quarterfinals

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The DHA Lahore Punjab Juniors/Seniors Tennis Championship 2025 witnessed a thrilling day of action-packed matches as top contenders in the men's singles, junior, and senior doubles categories fought hard to secure their spots in the next rounds at DHA Sports Complex Sector G Phase 5, DHA Lahore. In the men's singles pre-quarterfinals, several standout performances lit up the courts. Hadi Hussain dominated Hamza Arshad with a flawless 6-0 victory, while Mohid Saddam upset top seed Haroon Zahid with an impressive 6-3 win. Taha also advanced by defeating Abdullah Haroon 6-3, and Sherhan Salim bat-

ted through a close encounter to edge past Talha Saleem 7-5 in one of the day's most competitive matches. Rai Asim Zafar overcame Asad Farooq 6-4 in a contest marked by long rallies and tactical play. Musa Haroon eased past Waleed Nasir 6-2, while Ahmad Bin Aamir continued his fine form with a commanding 6-0 victory over Hadi Babar. The round concluded with Ashar Khan securing a dominant 6-0 win against M DDean, sealing the quarterfinal lineup. In the boys' U-18 quarterfinal, rising star Asad Zaman displayed superior shot-making to defeat M Ayan Khan 6-2. The boys' U-14 category saw Ohad-e-Mustafa breeze past Daniyal Afzal Malik 6-0, while

Muhammad Muaz mirrored that result against Zayd Mansoor. Muaz also featured in the U-12 quarterfinals, where he triumphed over Zahran Zeeshan 6-0. Mustafa Uzair Rana posted an identical 6-0 scoreline over Dainyal Afzal Malik, and Muhammad Ayan dispatched Daniyal Abdullah 6-1. The girls' U-12 quarterfinals were equally competitive, with Khadija Khalil overpowering Shahreen Umer 6-0. Shahnoor Umer won a hard-fought match against Wajeeha Fatima 6-3, while Aimen Rehan advanced with a convincing 6-0 win over Elisa Zaighum. In the boys/girls U-10 division, Dainyal Abdullah blanked Shahnoor Umer 6-0, and M Ehsan Bari cruised past Wajeeha Fatima 6-1.



SOUTHAMPTON: Erling Haaland of Manchester City is challenged by Jack Stephens and Jan Bednarek of Southampton during the Premier League match.

# Man City held by Southampton as Brentford, Brighton win

LONDON (AFP): Manchester City were held to a shock goalless draw by Premier League basement club Southampton on Saturday, denting their chances of a top-five finish as Brentford and Brighton kept up their push for European qualification. Pep Guardiola's men were expected to waltz to three points on England's south coast and pull level with second-placed Arsenal on 67 points. But although they dominated possession, they could not break the deadlock, despite the return to action of top-scorer Erling Haaland, who had been out since late March. The away side dominated possession at St Mary's Stadium and had 26 shots but managed just five on target during a frustrating afternoon. ("Southampton were) playing to defend and defend and defend and waste time," Guardiola told the BBC. "We take that point still, it's in our hands. "Didn't expect them to defend so deep. Defensive we were so good but unfortunately we missed the last

actions." There was an explosion of joy among the home fans at the final whistle even though Southampton's relegation fate was sealed long ago. The point for manager-less Saints takes them to 12 for the season, meaning they have avoided the tag of being the joint-worst team in Premier League history. They are now one point clear of Derby's tally of 11 in the 2007/08 campaign. "We're under no illusions that it's not a great points tally," said Southampton goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale. "The fans are happy in the sun smiling. "Everyone knows it's been a difficult season for us. That one was for the fans and also the lads who have given everything. A lot of Mondays coming in after heavy defeats. Today is a relief." Despite the draw, third-placed City remain well-placed to finish in the top five, which would secure qualification for the Champions League next season. With two games to play they are four points clear of sixth-placed

Nottingham Forest, though their rivals all have a game in hand. City's title defence came off the rails in November and December during a season that Guardiola has admitted has been the toughest of his 16-year managerial career. Brentford winning run. Brentford beat already relegated Ipswich 1-0 for their fourth straight win, climbing to eighth in the table, which may be enough for European football next season. Kevin Schade headed home from Bryan Mbeumo's corner in the 18th minute for his 11th Premier League goal of the season. "Europe is possible, we are focused," said Germany international Schade. "The team is like family and we want to win the next two games." Brighton, also chasing European football, beat Wolves 2-0 at Molineux and are behind Brentford only on goal difference. Danny Welbeck scored a first-half penalty and Brajan Gruda added a second in the 85th minute to

secure the three points. Brighton boss Fabian Hurlzeler said he was "not thinking about Europe", instead focusing on the next game. Everton went into their match on a poor run of form following a sharp uptick when David Moyes returned to manage the club but they long ago reached safety in the top flight. Raul Jimenez put mid-table Fulham ahead at Craven Cottage but Vitalii Mykolenko levelled on the stroke of half-time. Two second-half goals in three minutes from Michael Keane and Beto made it 3-1. Seventh-placed Aston Villa travel to Bournemouth in the Saturday evening kick-off, still dreaming of securing a Champions League spot for next season. Fourth-placed Newcastle host Chelsea, a place below them, on Sunday, with Forest in action against relegated Leicester. Champions Liverpool play Arsenal, who are not yet certain of finishing in the top five despite being the closest challengers to Arne Slot's men this season.

# Daryl Mitchell calls for peace amid Pakistan-India tensions

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): New Zealand cricketer Daryl Mitchell has shared a heartfelt message of peace in response to the recent tensions between Pakistan and India, two nations he holds close to his heart. "It's been tough to watch two countries that are so close to my heart in conflict over the past few days. My thoughts are with those affected on both sides," Mitchell said. The all-rounder acknowledged the significant impact of both the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and the Indian Premier League (IPL) on his career, expressing gratitude for the opportunities and memories they have provided. "Both the PSL and IPL have played major roles in my career, and I've always cherished my time in both tournaments. I hope peace prevails and we can get back to playing the game we love, continuing to give back to the amazing people who support us." Mitchell, who is currently at home with his family, concluded by saying he is looking forward to returning to both countries in the future. "They're places I truly love spending time in—close to my heart."

# Mitchell magic as Cavs down Pacers, Nuggets silence Thunder in overtime



LOS ANGELES (AFP): Donovan Mitchell scored 43 points to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to a crucial 126-104 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Friday, as the Denver Nuggets beat Oklahoma City in an overtime thriller. Cleveland, the top seeds in the East after racking up 64 regular-season wins, had their backs against the wall after dropping the first two games at home -- the fact that no NBA team has rallied from 3-0 down to win a series making Friday's game a must-win. Mitchell, whose 48 points in game two weren't enough to ward off a furious Pacers comeback, was magnificent again, adding nine rebounds, five assists and a steal. He had plenty of support with the return from injury of All-Star guard Darius Garland. Defensive Player of the Year Evan Mobley and key reserve De'Andre Hunter as the Cavs clawed back to 2-1 in the best-of-seven conference semi-final. Garland, who missed the last four games with a sprained toe, scored 10 points and Mobley, who missed one game with an ankle sprain, had 18 points, 13 rebounds, three steals and three blocked shots as the Cavaliers defense limited game-two hero Tyrese Haliburton to four points. Benedict Mathurin led the Pacers scoring with 23 points off the bench, but the

Cavaliers couldn't muster the kind of magic that saw them erase a seven-point deficit in the final minute to win on Tuesday. Cleveland jumped to an 11-0 lead and never trailed. They led by as many as 15 in the first period before the Pacers tied it at 32-32 heading into the second quarter. But Cleveland seized the initiative again, holding Haliburton scoreless on the way to a 66-45 halftime lead. Indiana had cut a 24-point deficit to 11 with 7:49 left in the fourth, but Mitchell drilled one of his five three-pointers then fed Max Strus for another and the Cavaliers pulled away again. Mitchell said it was about responding in a physical game that turned testy at times. "It's hard to blow a team out by 20 in their place -- we saw that last game even in our place, it's hard to keep a lead -- it's just hard in this league," he said. "They're not a team that's going to fold easily. We let one slip away at home in a similar fashion, so for me, couldn't let it happen again. But for me, just trying to be the aggressor. "And it wasn't just me," he added. "I know I scored, but we got stops, made plays." Cleveland will try to level the series when the Pacers host game four on Sunday. Denver dominate OT. In Denver, Jamal Murray scored 27 points and Aaron Gordon added 22 -- including a three-pointer to send it

to overtime, where the Nuggets dominated for a 113-104 triumph and a 2-1 series lead over the Thunder. Routed in game two, the Nuggets had to battle throughout a game that featured 15 lead changes. That included six in the fourth quarter, when neither team led by more than three. Denver's reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic connected on just eight of 15 shots from the field on the way to 20 points with 16 rebounds. Oklahoma City star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, tipped to topple Jokic in this season's MVP voting, struggled as well, making just seven of his 22 attempts for 18 points. Jalen Williams led the Thunder with 32 points and Chet Holmgren added 18 points and 16 rebounds for Oklahoma City, the Western Conference top seeds after leading the league with 68 regular-season victories. But Jokic drove for the first basket of overtime and Michael Porter Jr. added a three-pointer to give the Nuggets their biggest lead of the game -- 107-102 -- and the Thunder never really threatened from there. "It was everybody," Murray said. "They're a great team. They tested us all night and we were able to stick with it and get the win. So it was a good team win." The Nuggets will try to stretch their advantage when they host game four on Sunday.





## In brief

### Nine held with illegal weapon

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested nine illegal arm holders during crackdown here on Saturday. According to a police spokesperson, the arrests were made in various parts of the city, and arms and ammunition were recovered from the suspects. Police have registered separate cases against each individual. Divisional Superintendents of Police (SPs) praised the efforts of the teams involved and said that operations against illegal arms would be continued. Meanwhile, Gujjar Khan Police have also arrested a person wanted in murder and drug cases while recovered illegal weapons, a 12-bore rifle, an SMG rifle and other weapons from his possession.

### Man arrested for killing uncle

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a man for killing his uncle during a violent dispute over land, here on Saturday. According to police spokesman, the suspect, along with his wife and son, allegedly beat his uncle to death. The case was registered two days ago after the brutal incident came to light. Gujjar Khan Police acted quickly and arrested the accused. The other accomplices would be arrested soon. SP Sadder Muhammad Nabil Khokhar said the suspect will be presented in court with solid evidence. He added that the accused will be dealt according to law.

### 11 outlaws nabbed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Golra, Sangjani, Phulgran, Khanna and Noon police teams arrested six suspects involved in various criminal activities. An official told APP that the teams recovered 1081 grams of heroin, 32 grams of ice and a pistol along with ammunition from their possession. He said that during a special campaign to apprehend proclaimed offenders and absconders, different police teams also arrested five criminals. He said cases have been registered against the arrested individuals and further investigations are underway. He said that under the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police continues its effective crackdown against crime and criminal elements to maintain peace in the federal capital. He said the Islamabad Police is committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens and will not allow any elements to disturb public order.

### Farah pays tribute to armed forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Farah Naz Akbar and traders of the federal capital here on Saturday said that Pakistan armed forces have delivered such a crushing blow to the enemy that the 'deceitful Hindus' will remember it forever. Addressing a "Pak Army Zindabad Rally" organized by Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Farah Naz Akbar and traders of the federal capital city at F-9 Fatima Jinnah Park here, Farah Naz stated that the brave and courageous pilots of the Pakistan Air Force destroyed the Indian Rafale jet, maintaining their skills. Victory and success are the destiny of the Pakistan Army because the entire nation stands with them in prayer, she added. A large number of volunteers from the social and welfare organizations, students and traders led by leaders also joined the rally. The rally marched from F-9 Park main gate and concluded at Mehran Gate of the Park.

# Pakistan triumphs over India's aggression: Azam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazir Tarar Saturday criticized India's aggressive actions, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to regional stability, asserting Pakistan's stance on peace has been justified, exposing India's true motives and proclaiming Pakistan's triumph as a major breakthrough.

In an interview with a Private news channel, Azam Nazir Tarar credited Allah for Pakistan's success, asserting that the country's victory is a clear response to India's aggression, as Pakistan had firmly

ly sought.

He declared that Pakistan will employ every available means and utilize its legal rights to respond to India's provocations.

Azam Nazir Tarar said Pakistan had conveyed a clear message to the world that it desires peace, but India's continued provocations and attacks have now received a befitting response.

Tarar recalled that Prime Minister of Pakistan had offered a transparent, independent inquiry into the Pulwama incident and invited the global community to

investigate, but India ignored Pakistan's offer.

Minister further stated that Pakistan was even willing to establish a permanent commission to resolve issues, but unfortunately that effort was also not successful.

He warned that if the world fails to stop India's aggressive actions, Pakistan will be forced to respond more aggressively.

Tarar emphasized that despite Pakistan's 40-year struggle against terrorism with numerous sacrifices made India persists in spreading falsehoods and maligning the country.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people participating in rally to express solidarity with the Pakistan Armed Forces in the federal capital. —APP Photo

## Pindites hail Pakistan's retaliatory strikes on enemy

RAWALPINDI (APP): The citizens of Rawalpindi poured into the streets the earliest morning of Saturday hearing the news of Pakistan's successful retaliatory strikes. Raising the slogans of solidarity and pride for armed forces, they put the fear aside and rallied in unwavering support of the nation's defenders.

In garrison areas especially, the residents displayed extraordinary spirit, flooding main roads and public spaces. Dozens were gathered near Nur Khan

Base and chanted slogans in support of Pakistan Air Force. Similarly, people crowded fearlessly at Cantonment areas turning a moment of tension into a powerful display of national unity, reminding that the entire nation stands firmly behind the armed forces in the defence of the motherland.

The citizens, particularly the youth, hailed Operation Bunyan Marsoos for destroying India's arrogance. They celebrated the precision strikes that destroyed India's Pathankot

Airbase, Brahmos missile depots, Adampur Airbase and Uri supply depot, the key military facilities used against Pakistan a few hours before the response by Pakistani forces.

In jubilant cheers, they also lauded the successful neutralization of India's advanced S-400 air defense system, underscoring Pakistan's military superiority over the enemy.

"We salute the bravery of our armed forces" they roared. "Long live Pakistan! Long live the Pakistan Army!"



RAWALPINDI: Security personnel high alert at PAF area for emergency response in the city. —APP Photo

## Pak-India ceasefire bring peace in region: Dr Joseph

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad-Rawalpindi Diocese Archbishop, Dr Joseph Arshad on Saturday said that the announcement of a ceasefire between India and Pakistan has brought tidings of peace and hope in the region.

In a statement issued here, he said that this moment should be used an opportunity for continuous stability in the region.

He emphasized that the ceasefire also served as a

reminder to the power of diplomacy over conflict. "It is crucial that both nations continue to engage in meaningful conversations to address long-standing issues and seek lasting solutions that prioritize the well-being and security of their people. A peaceful future for the South Asian region begins with cooperation, dialogue, mutual respect, and a commitment to peace," he added.

He said that it is his fervent prayer that may this ceasefire be a foundation upon which both India and Pakistan can build stronger, trust worthy, and more peaceful relations, ensuring a better future for all.

Dr Joseph said that the spirit of justice, peace, solidarity, and brotherhood prevail in this region, adding that the world and Pakistani nation should continue to build bridges of hope, love, and peace among nations.

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## Pakistan gave befitting reply to India: Abbasi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi on Saturday said that Pakistan demonstrated maturity and responsibility in the face of Indian aggression following the Pahalgam incident.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that wars never solve problems and Pakistan had offered a fair and transparent international investigation into the incident.

However, instead of accepting the offer, he said India opted for military provocation and violated Pakistan's airspace.

He said that despite of repeated provocations, Pakistan initially showed restraint and urged de-escalation. We wanted peace and a sensible resolution, but India launched attacks in the dark of night, expecting no resistance, he added.

"When Pakistan responded, we did so with full strength and gave India a crushing reply, asserting our dominance in the air," he emphasized. He stressed that Pakistan remained committed to peace, but would not allow any compromise on its sovereignty and security.

## Police expresses solidarity with Army

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have expressed complete solidarity with the Pakistan Army here on Saturday.

To show this solidarity, the national flag was hoisted at all police stations, offices, mobile vehicles, police lines and official residences. According to police spokesman, the purpose of hoisting the national flag to show a firm commitment to defend the country and to honour the sacrifices made by the armed forces.

The police department fully prepared to face any challenge during the current situation. Rawalpindi Police also reaffirmed its resolve to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Army and vowed not to hesitate in making any sacrifice for the protection of the motherland.

## Hajj flights resume on schedule: Religious Affairs Ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Saturday confirmed full restoration of Pakistan's airspace for all types of flights, enabling the resumption of Hajj operations according to schedule.

In an exclusive talk with APP, the Ministry's spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt informed that all Hajj flights will now depart for Saudi Arabia as per their original itinerary, following the temporary suspension of flight operations due to

recent security concerns.

"Due to intermittent flight suspensions, a total of 10 Hajj flights were canceled," the spokesperson stated. These included three flights from Lahore, two from Islamabad, and one each from Karachi and Multan, he added.

As a result of these cancellations, he said 2,290 pilgrims were affected, however, 1,277 pilgrims have already been accommodated and dispatched via special flights.

Umar Butt said efforts

are currently underway to ensure that the remaining 1,013 pilgrims are also flown to Saudi Arabia at the earliest through additional special flight arrangements.

He further shared that a total of 19,669 Pakistani pilgrims have successfully arrived in Saudi Arabia so far under the Hajj Operation 2025.

The spokesperson advised all pilgrims to remain in contact with their respective Hajj Camps for the latest updates and flight information.

## Don't underestimate Pakistan or face dire consequences

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Health Syed Mustafa Kamal warned India on Saturday that underestimating Pakistan would invite dire consequences thus emphasized the country's unshakable commitment to defending its sovereignty.

During a recent interview with a private news channel, the minister asserted that Pakistan stands firm in its determination to protect its sovereignty, highlighting the stark difference between Pakistan and Gaza. He condemned India's

alleged cowardly aggression against civilians and its role in turning the region into a breeding ground for terrorism.

The minister asserted that Pakistan has responded robustly to India's aggression and will continue to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. He stressed that Pakistan's status as a nuclear power means that India should not challenge its sovereignty or territorial integrity, lest it faces severe consequences.

"Pakistan stands proud with unwavering faith in its armed forces, a symbol

of national strength and resilience". "Our brave men and women in uniform safeguard our sovereignty, protect our citizens and uphold the nation's honor", he added.

He emphasized the need for Pakistan to be mentally prepared for any eventuality, saying that if war comes, we will take it head-on and respond with full force.

"Our faith is Islam and it guides us in every aspect of life. We draw strength from our beliefs and values and they inspire us to stand tall and proud as a nation," he mentioned.

## Exemplary services ensured for Pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Makkah Coordinator Zulfiqar Khan assured on Saturday that comprehensive measures are being taken to provide exemplary services, facilitating a profoundly meaningful Hajj pilgrimage.

Coordinator Zulfiqar Khan shared his perspectives with Radio Pakistan guaranteed all-encompassing amenities for prospective pilgrims, encompassing wholesome meals, quality medical care and streamlined navigation to

Arafat, Muzdalifah and Jamarat.

Pilgrims' comfort is a top priority, he stressed, with camps featuring full air-conditioning and versatile sofas-beds that cater to both sitting and sleeping needs. Elevated storage racks have also been installed to accommodate luggage securely.

To improve wayfinding, Zulfiqar Khan recommended introducing street numbering in the camps and incorporating route guidance features into the existing QR code system.

Building on past practices, the Coordinator emphasized that the new Mashair management strategy has led to a more elaborate and detailed training program for welfare staff.

This program includes scenario-based orientation on key areas such as Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifah, Jamarat, and transportation management, he added. Pilgrims can expect a truly ideal experience, he affirmed, with their physical needs met and their spiritual aspirations fulfilled.



ISLAMABAD: IESCO workers are busy in installing electricity line on poles near IJP Road in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## Chairman CDA led meeting reviews national emergency preparedness

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A high-level meeting was held here on Saturday under the chairmanship of Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, who also serves as Director General Civil Defence, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, to review the country's emergency preparedness in light of the prevailing national situation.

The meeting was attended by CDA Board members, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, officials from the Ministry of Education, and Civil Defence officers from Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, who joined via Zoom. Officials from provincial Home Departments were also present.

The Chairman CDA and Director General Civil Defence emphasized the need to strengthen inter-provincial coordination and communication and directed for the increased mobilization of volunteers in the current scenario. Officials from all provinces, including Islamabad, AJK, and Gilgit-Baltistan, briefed the forum on their preparedness to handle any emergency situation. It was informed that control rooms have been established in

Islamabad, provincial capitals, AJK, and Gilgit-Baltistan, and focal persons have been designated accordingly.

Briefings revealed that in light of the current circumstances, public and private hospitals have allocated emergency beds and wards. Ambulances and firefighting units across the country remain on 24/7 alert.

Volunteers across the nation have been mobilized, and efforts are underway to increase their numbers and enhance emergency response readiness. Volunteers have been trained in evacuation, fire response, and emergency handling, with additional training sessions ongoing.

Safe City control rooms, in coordination with district administration and police, are fully functional and monitoring the situation in real-time. Sirens have been installed at various key locations across the country, including Islamabad, to ensure timely public alerts in case of emergencies.

Mock drills have been conducted in high-rise buildings in Islamabad and other cities. Further drills have been instructed to continue. Emergency announcement systems in mosques are also ready for deployment. Fire brigade vehicles, firefighters, and related personnel have been

put on high alert for prompt response. Provinces have been directed to further expand the number of volunteers and ensure their active participation.

Lists of blood donors are being prepared across provinces. Emergency advisories have been issued to officials in all districts to stay prepared. Muhammad Ali Randhawa stressed the need for effective coordination among control rooms, home departments, rescue services, and other agencies. He also emphasized implementing a comprehensive plan to counter misinformation and fake news, ensuring the public receives timely and verified updates.

The Chairman CDA further instructed that students from schools, colleges, and universities be trained in Civil Defence emergency preparedness exercises across the country. All relevant departments have been directed to submit daily progress reports. Concluding the meeting, Chairman CDA and Director General Civil Defence reiterated their commitment: "Protection of citizens' lives and property is our top priority. We are one team and will utilize all available resources to respond to and overcome any emergency situation."



### Turkey arrests four Afghan Refugees

KABUL (Khaama Press): Turkish authorities arrested four Afghan refugees, including two children, in Sakarya. They were transferred to a deportation center. Turkish police in the city of Sakarya have arrested four Afghan migrants, including two children, according to reports published by Turkish media on Friday. The migrants were detained during a routine operation and were later transferred to a repatriation center after completing administrative procedures.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Zulqaidah 12, 1446 — Sunday, May 11, 2025

### Tirinkot-Dehrawud bus service launched

TIRINKOT (Pajhwok): A private company has launched an affordable bus service between Tirinkot and Dehrawud district in central Uruzgan province, an official announced on Thursday. Transport and Civil Aviation Director Hafiz Zalmi told Pajhwok Afghan News a private transport company had initiated the service between the provincial capital and Dehrawud, using two buses.

## Flights to Saudi Arabia carrying Hajj pilgrims begin in Herat

HERAT (TOLONews): Local officials in Herat say that the transfer of Hajj pilgrims from the province's airport to Saudi Arabia began on Friday.

On the first day, 1,000 pilgrims were flown from Herat to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on three separate flights.

According to the officials, around 5,000 pilgrims from Afghanistan's western region are expected to be transported to Saudi Arabia through 19 flights.

Saifuddin Azizi, head of Herat's Directorate of Hajj and Religious Affairs, said: "786 of these pilgrims are

those who had been postponed since the COVID period, 300 were selected through this year's lottery, and some were allocated to Mujahideen based on quotas set by the leadership of the Islamic Emirate. Altogether, 1,315 pilgrims are departing from Herat."

Many of these pilgrims have waited years for this opportunity and are calling for better services during the Hajj journey.

One pilgrim, Noor Ahmad, told TOLONews: "It would be good if the instructors paid more attention to serving the pilgrims. They should properly teach

us how to perform the Hajj rituals correctly."

According to local officials, the transfer process will continue for 16 days.

Mohammad Yaqoob Agha Zakari, head of the civilian section at Herat International Airport, said: "This year, the western zone has been given a quota of 4,593 pilgrims, to be transported in 19 flights."

Authorities in Herat stated that all necessary facilities have been arranged for the pilgrims in both Herat and Saudi Arabia.

This year, Afghanistan has been allocated a total of 30,000 Hajj slots.

## Taliban arrest 14 for playing music

KABUL (AFP): Taliban authorities have arrested 14 people in northern Afghanistan for playing musical instruments and singing, activities they restricted since taking power, provincial police said on Saturday.

The Taliban government has steadily imposed laws and regulations that reflect their austere vision of Islamic law since seizing power in 2021. This includes cracking down on music in public, from live performances to playing at gatherings, in restaurants, in cars or on radio and TV.

The police said in a statement that on Thursday night in the capital of northern Takhar province "fourteen individuals... took advantage of the nighttime to gather in a residential house where they were playing musical instruments and singing songs, which caused disturbance to the public."

Those detained were under investigation, it added. After their takeover, Taliban authorities shuttered music schools and smashed or burned musical instruments and sound systems, saying music caused "moral corruption" and public disturbance.

Wedding halls are no longer allowed to play music, though segregated women's sections often do so secretly. Many Afghan musicians fled the Taliban takeover out of fear or in need of work after losing their livelihoods in one of the world's poorest countries.

The Taliban authorities have encouraged former musicians to turn their talents to Islamic poetry and unaccompanied vocal chants — the only forms of music allowed under their previous rule from 1996-2001.

## IE welcomes China-Russia stance on Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): Following a joint statement by the presidents of China and Russia regarding Afghanistan, the caretaker government said the efforts of Beijing and Moscow to address Afghanistan's issues as beneficial for the region.

Hamudullah Fitrat, deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, said that the caretaker government supports friendly relations with all countries of the world, including China and Russia. He stated: "We consider these efforts important in the areas of economy, regional connectivity, and stability. Given the good relations with both countries, we support constructive progress in this regard."

Yesterday, during his visit to Moscow, the President of China, along with his Russian counterpart, emphasized that both nations seek a stable Afghanistan—free from terrorism and at peace with its neighbors. Vladimir Putin also stressed the vital role of regional summits and countries in resolving Afghanistan's issues, stating that China and Russia share common positions on the matter. Gul Mohammad Din Mohammadi, a political analyst, said: "Russia's relations with Afghanistan—especially with the Islamic Emirate—are based on necessity, as they do not want the United States to regain influence in the region. Therefore, they act as if they are supporting the Islamic Emirate."

## Afghanistan, Pakistan and China agree to hold sixth round of FMs' talks in Kabul

KABUL (Ariana News): The special representatives of Pakistan and China for Afghanistan, along with Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting foreign minister of Afghanistan, agreed in a trilateral meeting held on Saturday that the sixth round of foreign ministers' talks among the three countries will be held in Kabul.

Zia Ahmad Takal, Head of Public Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a statement that Muttaqi, Yue Xiaoyong, and Mohammad Sadiq also agreed to begin preparations for the upcoming meeting of the foreign ministers of Kabul, Islamabad, and Beijing.

Today's trilateral meeting addressed follow-up issues related to the fifth round of foreign ministers' dialogue among Afghanistan, China, and Pakistan, as well as discus-



sions on political and economic cooperation among the three countries.

During this meeting, Muttaqi emphasized the importance of political and economic relations between Afghanistan and the two countries and

expressed hope for "significant progress" in these areas in the future.

The special envoys from China and Pakistan reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening relations with Afghanistan based on good neighborliness and

mutual respect.

Pakistan's envoy Sadiq also said in a post on X page that today's trilateral meeting provided an opportunity to align views on economic and security cooperation, as well as regional stability.

## Baradar meets Mes Aynak project director, urges quick construction start

KABUL (Ariana News): Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, on Saturday in Kabul met with Wang Zhicheng, the Director General of the contracting company for the Mes Aynak copper mine in Logar province.

During the meeting, Baradar described Mes Aynak as one of Afghanistan's key economic projects and emphasized that the Islamic Emirate has provided all necessary facilities to support the contracting company in advancing the project, according to a statement from his office.

Baradar urged the company to begin the construction phase of the project as soon as possible and to address any issues causing delays. Wang Zhicheng, Director General of MCC, praised the cooperation of the Islamic Emirate in fur-



thering the project.

He mentioned that significant progress has been made in several aspects of the Mes Aynak project and expressed readiness to proceed with the next steps in coordi-

nation with the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. The Aynak copper mine contains millions of tons of copper and is believed to have the second-largest copper reserve in the world. The contract for the Aynak

copper mine was signed in 1999 with the Chinese company MCC for 30 years, but due to security issues and prolonged excavations of ancient relics in the area, the extraction of copper was delayed.

## Regional countries show interest in Agriculture investment

KABUL (TOLONews): Interest from various countries around the world in investing in Afghanistan's agriculture and livestock sector has increased.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, countries such as Turkey, Iran, China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan have so far expressed interest in investing in this area.

Ghulam Mohammad Kazem Shahamat, spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, said: "Investors from various countries, including Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, China, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and others, have expressed interest in investing in Afghanistan. The ministry is committed to providing all necessary facilities for both domestic and foreign investors in accordance with the principles of the Islamic Emirate."

Meanwhile, some experts view foreign investment in the agriculture and livestock sectors as crucial for mecha-



nizing these industries and increasing employment opportunities for citizens.

Abdul Nasir Reshtia, an economic affairs expert, said: "What seems most important is Afghanistan's agriculture sector. This sector has great potential to attract investment and create jobs. Around 80% of the Afghan population is engaged in agriculture, and

60% depend on it for their livelihood.

The more effort is made to boost agriculture and livestock, the more poverty and unemployment can be reduced."

Qutbuddin Yaqubi, another economic expert, said: "Investment in horticulture, the modernization of agricultural technology, and the development of agricultural infra-

structure can significantly improve this sector and ultimately enhance the economic well-being of the people and the country."

Previously, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock of Afghanistan announced that the country is nearing self-sufficiency in the production of legumes, wheat, and in the poultry sector.

## Afghan migrants urge Iran to end forced deportations

KABUL (TOLONews): Afghan migrants in Iran are calling for an end to the forced deportation process being carried out by the host country.

They urged the Afghanistan caretaker government and the host state to address their concerns.

Safar Barez, an Afghan migrant in Iran, said: "Afghan migrants are facing mass and indiscriminate deportations from Iran, and so far, no effective action has been taken to halt these forced removals."

Enayat Alokozai, an Afghan migrant in Iran, said: "Most migrants who have lived in Iran for many years and possess Hamayesh cards and other residency documents have been given only one to two years to leave the country."

Meanwhile, following Pakistan's announcement of a deadline for the voluntary return of Afghan migrants holding temporary residence cards (PoR) by the end of June, some Afghan migrants have

expressed concern over the start of this process and are urging the Pakistani government to extend the deadline.

Atiqullah Mansoor, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan, said: "PoR cardholders are also facing the same fate as previously deported migrants and are living in fear and anxiety, as there are only about fifty days left until the end of June, and none of the relevant immigration departments have yet provided a positive response."

Malik Shinwari, an Afghan migrant in Pakistan, said: "Our request of the Islamic Emirate is to strengthen its relations with the Pakistani government so that more time can be granted for Afghan migrants to remain in that country."

Some migrant rights activists said the caretaker government should enter into negotiations with host countries—especially Iran and Pakistan—through cooperation with interna-

tional institutions to address the ongoing challenges.

Jumakhan Poya, a migrant rights activist, said: "Authorities in Afghanistan are obligated to engage in dialogue with host governments, particularly those of Iran and Pakistan, in coordination with international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM, to defend the lives, property, and dignity of Afghan migrants."

Khan Talebi Mohammadzai, an activist, said: "Host governments must cooperate with Afghanistan so that these deportations can be postponed and, with the coordination of the current government and support of international organizations, a voluntary return process can be arranged."

Earlier, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that over 231,000 undocumented migrants had returned from Iran and Pakistan in the past 34 days.

## Malala denounces Taliban's restrictions on women as 'gender apartheid'



LONDON (Amu tv): Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai said on Saturday that Afghan women are paying the price for demanding their most basic rights, describing the Taliban's policies as a form of "gender apartheid."

Speaking at a panel titled "Afghan Media vs. the Taliban" organized by Rukhshana Media in London to mark World Press Freedom Day, Yousafzai warned that the repression of women and girls in Afghanistan must be recognized globally and addressed with urgency.

"What is happening in Afghanistan is not just gender discrimination — it is gender apartheid," Yousafzai said. "More than 100 decrees have been issued by the Taliban, most of them targeting women. This is an extreme form of systemic oppression."

Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist and the

youngest Nobel laureate, said Afghan women have been silenced, yet many continue to resist through journalism, education initiatives, and quiet acts of defiance. She highlighted the courage of Afghan women journalists who, despite threats and censorship, continue to report on the realities faced by women under Taliban rule.

"Women are being punished simply for asking for their rights," she said. "They are denied education, banned from working, and cut off from public life — and when they resist, they are threatened and punished."

Yousafzai called on international human rights organizations, legal scholars, and governments to formally recognize the Taliban's treatment of women as a form of gender apartheid — a term that would carry weight under international law and mobilize greater accountability.

"Terms like 'gender discrimination' or 'gender-based violence' are not sufficient to describe the scale of this injustice," she said. "This must be treated as a global issue — one that demands legal, political, and moral response."

She also urged global support for Afghan women journalists, saying they play a vital role in amplifying the voices of women and documenting abuses. "They are not just telling stories — they are preserving truth under a regime that seeks to erase it," she said.

Through the Malala Fund, Yousafzai said she has helped provide alternative learning opportunities for girls in Afghanistan and will continue to support women's education and activism. "I stand with the women of Afghanistan — with their courage, their resistance, and their demand to be seen and heard."



# Tarar: Pak only responded to unprovoked Indian aggression in self defence

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Saturday that Pakistan was neither aggressor nor provocator, it only responded to unprovoked Indian aggression in self-defence under the United Nations Charter.

He said Pakistan was a responsible country which had shown great restraint in the wake of Indian unprovoked attacks for past four days. India targeted the civilian population in Pakistan and killed innocent people, including women and children who had nothing to do with anything, Attaullah Tarar maintained.

Pakistan, he added, retaliated in accordance with the UN charter, and it did not target any civilian population in India. "We completely deny, we refute the Indian allegations of targeting the civilian population. We have not attacked any civilian population", Tarar said.

He said Pakistan took action while exercising its right to defend itself, and it only targeted Indian military installations. He said India itself targeted Sikhs holy city Amritsar to give impression that Pakistan had attacked that city. "We in Pakistan protest and serve their religious site in Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Kartarpur", he stated.

To a question, he said that Pahalgam was located more than two hundred kilometers from the Line of

## Pakistan ready for next steps: Asif

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defense Minister Khawaja Asif Saturday issued a stern warning to India, stating that Pakistan will take robust action in response to provocation and will not hesitate to take further steps to defend its interests. Khawaja Asif announced in a media statement that Pakistan stands ready to take additional measures against India, underscoring the nation's unwavering commitment to protecting its interests. He reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, warning India that any attempt to undermine it would be met with resolute action. "Allahu Akbar, today's achievement has paid off the debt we owed with our existence," he quoted. "The Defense Minister claimed that Pakistan took decisive action and successfully targeted Indian airfields, yielding substantial gains." "Pakistan is fighting a survival war against India, which is the need of the hour," he added. "Pakistan delivered a fitting response, showcasing the capability of our armed forces," he further highlighted.

Control (LoC) and there was no evidence of Pakistan's involvement in the April 22 incident. Pakistan, he said, had offered cooperation in a fair and transparent investigation into the Pahalgam incident. India made the Pahalgam incident suspicious by registering an FIR just ten minutes after the attack, Tarar maintained.

He said Pahalgam attack was a security and intelligence failure as more than 700,000 Indian troops have been deployed in Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). Local Muslim population has been subjugated by the Indian occupation forces, he said. Tarar said India had attacked Pakistan to which it had responded, though

Islamabad showed all possible restraint during past few days. India continued attacking civilian population and tried to target Pakistan's defense installations and Pakistan had to respond in self-defence.

To a question about steps for de-escalation, he said it was India which started aggression and now India will have to take a step back. "India stated the aggression and now it is upto India to take a step back and deescalate the situation because they are the aggressors", he categorically said. To a question, he said that the leadership of many friendly countries like the United States, Saudi Arabia, China, etc were in contact with Pakistan and had discussed the current situation.



RAWALPINDI: Security personnel standing alert at Nur Khan air base following an Indian missile strike.

## Hamas releases video of two Israeli hostages alive in Gaza

JERUSALEM (AFP): Hamas's armed wing released a video on Saturday showing two Israeli hostages alive in the Gaza Strip, with one of the two men calling to end the 19-month-long war.

Israeli media identified the pair in the undated video as Elkana Bohbot and Yosef Haim Ohana, who were kidnapped during Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that triggered the war. The three-minute video released by Hamas's Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades shows one of the hostages, identified by media as 36-year-old Bohbot, visibly weak and lying on the floor wrapped in a blanket.

Bohbot, a Colombian-Israeli, was seen bound and injured in the face in video footage from the day of the Hamas attack. After a video of him was released last month, his family said they were "extremely concerned" about his health. The second hostage, said to be Ohana, 24, speaks in Hebrew in the video, urging the Israeli government to end the war in Gaza and secure the release of all remaining captives — a similar message to statements made by other hostages, likely under duress, in previous videos released by Hamas.

Bohbot and Ohana, both abducted by Palestinian militants from the site of a music festival, are among 58 hostages held in Gaza since the 2023 attack, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead. Hamas also holds the remains of an Israeli soldier killed in a 2014 war.

## 33 killed in Sudan strikes

PORT SUDAN (AFP): At least 33 people have been killed in Sudan in attacks blamed on the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, at war with the army since April 2023, first responders said Saturday. The attacks came after six straight days of RSF drone strikes on the army-led government's wartime capital Port Sudan damaged key infrastructure including the power grid.

At least 14 members of the same family were killed in an air strike on a displacement camp in the vast western region of Darfur, a rescue group said, blaming the paramilitaries. The Abu Shouk camp "was the target of intense bombardment by the Rapid Support Forces on Friday evening," said the group of volunteer aid workers, which also reported wounded.

"Fourteen Sudanese, members of the same family, were killed" and several people wounded, it said in a statement. The camp near El-Fasher, the last state capital in Darfur still out of the RSF's control, is plagued by famine, according to the United Nations. It is home to tens of thousands of people who fled the violence of successive conflicts in Darfur and the conflict that has been tearing Africa's third largest country apart since 2023.

The RSF has shelled the camp several times in recent weeks. Abu Shouk is located near the Zamzam camp, which the RSF seized in April after a devastating offensive that virtually emptied it. The United Nations says nearly one million people had been sheltering at the site.

# PM thanks Bilawal for support

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday held a telephonic conversation with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, expressing gratitude for his support of Pakistan's retaliatory action, Operation Bunyan-al-Marsoos, in response to recent Indian aggression.

The Prime Minister thanked Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for standing firmly with the government and the nation during this critical time, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. "Your support for the country's principled and powerful response to India's hostile actions is deeply appreciated," PM Sharif said.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in turn, praised the Prime Minister for his leadership during a period of heightened tensions, calling it "exemplary." He also lauded the professionalism and determination of the

Pakistan Armed Forces in delivering a strong response to Indian provocations.

"We salute the armed forces for their courage and professional excellence in responding to Indian aggression," Bilawal said. "The entire nation stands united with our military in the defense of Pakistan's sovereignty." Both leaders during the conversation underscored the importance of political unity and national resolve in the face of external threats.

The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also held separate telephone conversations with Aimal Wali Khan, Chief of the Awami National Party (ANP) and Abdul Aleem Khan, leader of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and Federal Minister, to discuss the current regional situation.

The prime minister briefed both the leaders on the recent developments and took them into confidence regarding Pakistan's

stance and actions in response to rising tensions with India, the Prime Minister's Office news release said.

Aimal Wali Khan and Abdul Aleem Khan expressed gratitude for being consulted and extended full support to the government's retaliatory measures under "Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos" against Indian aggression. The political leaders lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership during the recent crisis, calling it "exemplary" amid rising regional tensions.

They also praised the professional excellence and unwavering resolve of the Pakistan Armed Forces, commending the military's strong and timely response to external threats. "The entire nation stands united with our brave armed forces in the defense of our beloved homeland," both leaders affirmed during their discussions with the prime minister.

# Iran's FM visits S Arabia

JEDDAH: Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has visited Saudi Arabia and Qatar for consultations in the run-up to the fourth round of indirect nuclear talks with the United States, which will take place in Oman on Sunday. The future direction of Iran's nuclear programme, its enrichment of uranium, and sanctions relief remain the key issues.

Speaking later Saturday in Doha, Araghchi said that if the US's goal is to deprive Iran of its nuclear rights, Tehran will not back down from "any of our rights". Iran insists its programme is for civilian purposes and it has no intention to pursue a nuclear weapon.

In an interview with Breitbart News on Friday, President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, who will attend the talks in Oman, said the US would "take [Iran] at their word" that they do not want nuclear weapons, but set out specific conditions for verifying such a position. "If that's how they feel, then their enrichment facilities have to be dis-

mantled. They cannot have centrifuges. They have to downblend all of their fuel that they have there and send it to a faraway place — and they have to convert to a civil programme if they want to run a civil programme," he said.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has raised the possibility of Iran importing enriched uranium for any civilian energy. Araghchi's Gulf tour on Saturday came after Tehran confirmed the latest round Friday: "The negotiations are moving forward, and naturally, the further we go, the more consultations and reviews are needed," Araghchi said in remarks carried by Iranian state media.

Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi said on Friday that, after "coordination with both Iran and the US", the delayed talks would go ahead in Muscat. The fourth round, initially scheduled for May 3 in Rome, was postponed for what Oman described as "logistical reasons." The talks come against the backdrop of a

long-running dispute over Iran's nuclear ambitions. The meeting is the latest effort to revive diplomacy after years of rising tensions.

Successful US administrations have sought to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. A sustained effort by world powers during the Barack Obama administration culminated with a 2015 agreement called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The multilateral agreement created a framework for Iran to receive much-needed relief from international sanctions, in exchange for reducing its uranium enrichment and submitting to inspections of its nuclear facilities.

But when Trump succeeded Obama as US president, he unilaterally withdrew the US from the nuclear agreement in 2018, causing the deal to crumble. Some Western countries argue that Iran's programme, accelerated after the US walkout from the 2015 accord, is aimed at developing weapons. — Aljazeera

# Children among 21 killed in Israel's attacks on Gaza

GAZA: At least 21 people, including several children, have been killed in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip since dawn amid a months-long Israeli blockade that has deepened the humanitarian crisis in the war-torn coastal enclave. Four Palestinians were killed and others were wounded Saturday evening after an Israeli airstrike targeted a tent sheltering displaced families in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip.

Earlier, Palestinian news agency Wafa said Israeli warplanes bombed a tent in the Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City on Saturday morning, killing five members of the Tlaib family. "Three children, their mother and her husband were sleeping inside a tent and were bombed by an [Israeli] occupation aircraft," family member Omar Abu al-Kass told the AFP news agency.

The strikes came "without warning and without having done anything wrong", added Abu al-Kass, who said he was the children's maternal grandfather. In parallel, a drone attack on Gaza City's Tuffah neighbourhood left six people dead and one more in the Sheikh Radwan area of the city where Israel bombed an apartment belonging to the Zaquot family. Further south, Wafa said Israeli gunboats opened "heavy fire" on the shores of Rafah, killing a man identified as Mohammed Saeed al-Bardawil. Two more civilians were injured in an attack on the al-Mawasi humanitarian zone, west of Rafah.

In the past 24 hours, at least 23 Palestinians have been killed and 124 others injured in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, according to the enclave's Health Ministry. The attacks came amid Israel's continuing refusal to allow vital supplies into Gaza since March 2, leaving the enclave's 2.3 million residents dependent on a dwindling number of charity kitchens, which have been shutting down in recent days as food runs out.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary said: "There's barely food ... We're talking about bakeries not operating, we're talking about zero distribution points and we're talking about only a few hot meal kitchens still operating." Khoudary said people queueing for hours would often leave empty-handed, with remaining kitchens stretching out food that would previously have fed 100 to serve up to 2,000 people. "We're seeing more people dying, we're seeing more children dying due to malnu-

trition and the lack of food. But it's not only the lack of food, it's also the lack of medical supplies, it's the lack of fuel, cooking gas and it's the lack of everything," she said.

Among the charities shuttering operations, the United States-based World Central Kitchen said on Wednesday that it had been forced to close down because it no longer had supplies to bake bread or cook meals. The United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs appealed for the blockade to be lifted.

"Children are starving, and dying. Community kitchens are shutting down. Clean water is running out," it said on Friday in a post on X. The blockade is also having a devastating effect on people with chronic illnesses, depriving Palestinians who suffer from diabetes, cancer and rare conditions, of life-saving medication.

Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said: "Doctors here say the tragedy is not in what's happening, but in what is preventable." "These diseases have a treatment, but people of Gaza no longer have access to them, and they say that this is not just a failure of logistics, but of humanity," he added. Mahmoud spoke to the father of a 10-year-old boy suffering from diabetes, who said insulin was not available across northern Gaza.

"I spend entire days searching pharmacies, hoping to find it. Sometimes we hear that individuals might have it, so I go to their homes to barter," he said. Said al-Soudy, head of emergency in the oncology department of Gaza City's Al Helou International Hospital, told Al Jazeera: "A large part of patients are struggling to find their essential medications. Without them, their health conditions deteriorate and may become life-threatening."

Pharmacist Rana Alsamak told Al Jazeera that Palestinians were unable to obtain medication for "multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, hepatitis, chronic illnesses and ... immune-related diseases". "These conditions now go largely untreated," she said. On Friday, the United States said it was establishing the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation to coordinate aid deliveries into Gaza, with Israel providing military security for operations. The United Nations rejected the move, saying it would weaponise aid, violate principles of neutrality and cause mass displacement. — Aljazeera

# European leaders pressure Russia over truce

KYIV (BBC): European leaders have urged Russia to agree to an unconditional 30-day ceasefire with Ukraine starting on Monday. The call was issued at a meeting of the "coalition of the willing" in Kyiv. The leaders of France, Germany, the UK and Poland were hosted by Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky, while others joined remotely.

They made the announcement after discussing the plan by phone with US President Donald Trump - who initially mooted an unconditional ceasefire. The leaders threatened Russia with "massive" sanctions if it does not comply. UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said the aim of the coalition of the willing was to show "that aggression will never prevail on our continent".

"Once a ceasefire is achieved, it will take time, but this will be a huge moment in reconnecting Ukraine's economy, boosting investor confidence, and helping to reunite families separated by this war," Starmer told reporters. He

was speaking alongside Zelensky, French President Emmanuel Macron, Polish PM Donald Tusk and the new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Zelensky said: "Thank you all for standing with us. Today we will focus on how to build and guarantee real and lasting security."

Russia has so far insisted that before considering a ceasefire, the West must first halt its military aid to Ukraine.

However, Zelensky said that the ceasefire should be unconditional. "Attempts to put forward any conditions would be evidence of an intention to prolong the war and undermine diplomacy," he added. Macron said the planned truce would be monitored mainly by the US, with help from European countries. He said in the event of violation, "massive sanctions would be prepared and coordinated between Europeans and Americans".

Merz said the war - which began with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 - was "solely a war of aggression by Russia, in violation of inter-

national law". The Kyiv meeting was a symbolic response to the more than 20 leaders who joined Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow a day earlier. Other leaders who joined the Kyiv meeting remotely included Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Canadian PM Mark Carney, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, and Mark Rutte, the secretary-general of Nato.

A 30-hour ceasefire, called on Friday by Putin to mark Russia's Victory Day, is due to end later on Saturday. It has seen a decrease in fighting but both sides have accused the other of breaches. The coalition of the willing was formed to reinforce any eventual peace agreement with security guarantees, including the possibility of placing troops in Ukraine.

Trump earlier reiterated the call for an unconditional 30-day ceasefire after a phone call with Zelensky. "If the ceasefire is not respected, the US and its partners will impose further sanctions," he wrote on social media.

(Continued from Page 1)

The prime minister said that their fight was against that old mind frame and old idea based upon anti humanity, hatred, aggression and religious bigotry. "It is a victory for truth and our principles," he said, adding that they did to an enemy what deemed fit by a respected nation. The 240 million people of the country showered their love and affection upon their valiant armed forces and stood side by side with them during the conflict.

He also thanked the nation for their prayers for the success of their armed forces and said as a result Allah Almighty had bestowed upon them a tremendous victory. On this historic victory, he paid tribute to Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of Army STAFF General Syed Asim Munir, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf and every officer and personnel of the armed forces.

The prime minister expressed gratitude to General Syed Asim Munir, on his behalf and on behalf of the entire nation, for his sagacious and bold leadership that led to victory, besides appreciating the Air Chief and his eagles who had made them proud. The prime minister thanked US President Trump for his sincere role in the ceasefire. He also thanked Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkiye, Qatar, the UK, UN Secretary General etc that played their due role in the ceasefire.

The prime minister especially mentioned Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Mohamed bin Zayed, Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad and President Tayyip Erdogan who stood with Pakistan like brothers. The prime minister expressed gratitude to the Chinese leadership including President Xi Jinping and the Chinese people, for their unprecedented and historic support.

The prime minister also remembered Irtaza Abbas Shaheed who embraced

shahadat during the Indian aggression and expressed sympathies with the bereaved families who lost their members. The prime minister thanked all the allied and opposition parties and the entire political leadership and parliament for their unprecedented unity and solidarity and also mentioned his leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for his wise leadership and experience, besides President Asif Ali Zardari for his valuable consultations.

The prime minister appreciated the mediapersons and social media users who had countered Indian fake news with responsible reporting and display of professional integrity and hoped that the set precedent would be a guiding path in the future. Expressing his firm belief, he said after overcoming this crisis, all the governments and institutions would focus their energies on the progress and prosperity of Pakistan and would not rest till the country carves a niche among the comity of nations.