

Gilani in Moscow

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani arrived in Moscow today on an official bilateral visit aimed at strengthening parliamentary ties and enhancing cooperation between Pakistan and the Russian Federation. During his visit, the Chairman Senate is scheduled to meet Speaker of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, Ms. Valentina Matviyenko.

PM lauds President Trump’s ‘greater role’ in bringing peace to South Asia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday lauded U.S. President Donald Trump for his "most valuable offer to play a greater role" in bringing lasting peace to South Asia.

"I am extremely grateful to President Trump for his pathbreaking leadership and commitment to global peace," he said in a post on the social media platform, X.

PM Sharif said for decades, Pakistan and the U.S. had been partners who worked together closely to protect and promote the mutual interests as well as for peace and security in critical parts of the world.

He expressed confidence that President Trump would play his role to "reinvigorate" the Pak-U.S. strategic partnership.

"I am confident that in President Donald Trump, Pakistan has found a great partner who can reinvigorate our strategic partnership and strengthen Pakistan-U.S. ties, not only in trade and investment but in all other areas of cooperation," he said.

Earlier, the Foreign

Office in a statement appreciated President Trump's willingness to support efforts aimed at the resolution of the long-standing Jammu and Kashmir dispute that had serious implications for peace and security in South Asia and beyond.

"We acknowledge with appreciation the constructive role played by the United States, alongside other friendly states, in supporting the recent ceasefire understanding between Pakistan and India; a step towards de-escalation and regional stability," the statement mentioned.

President Donald Trump on his Truth Social wall, a social media platform, had written that: "I am very proud of the strong and unwaveringly powerful leadership of India and Pakistan for having the strength, wisdom, and fortitude to fully know and understand that it was time to stop the current aggression that could have lead to the death and destruction of so many, and so much. Millions of good and innocent people could have died! Your



LARKANA: People holding placards and wave Pakistani national flags as fireworks explode during a march expressing solidarity with the country's armed forces as they celebrate victory against India.

legacy is greatly enhanced by your brave actions.

I am proud that the USA was able to help you arrive at this historic and heroic decision."

Trump offers to work with India, Pakistan on Kashmir 'solution'

Aljazeera adds: United States President Donald Trump has offered to work with India and Pakistan to achieve a "solution" for the long-disputed Kashmir region, days after his administration brokered a ceasefire between the two

nuclear-armed rivals.

"I will work with you, both to see if, after a 'thousand years,' a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform on Sunday.

The US president dou-

bled down on a historically inaccurate assertion that India and Pakistan have been fighting for "a thousand years" or more.

The Muslim-majority territory has been contested since the partition of British India in 1947 into

India and Pakistan.

The two countries have fought three wars over the region. They both stake a claim over Kashmir as a whole but control parts of it.

India-administered Kashmir has seen decades of armed rebellion either for independence or a merger with Pakistan. New Delhi has deployed more than 700,000 soldiers to quash the rebellion.

The government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far remained committed to a decades-old policy of refusing international mediation to find a solution to the Kashmir issue. In 2019, Modi's government stripped India-administered Kashmir's semiautonomy, further alienating the Kashmiris.

In its response, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Sunday that it appreciates Trump's willingness to resolve the Kashmir issue, which has implications for peace and security in South Asia and beyond.

"Pakistan reaffirms that

any just and lasting settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute must be in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and must ensure the realization of the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people, including their inalienable right to self-determination," it said.

India's leaders have not directly commented, but Indian media quoted unnamed government sources as saying no decision has yet been made to engage in talks on anything beyond the ceasefire.

India and Pakistan agreed to halt all fighting on Saturday, but Trump was the first person to announce the deal on his online platform.

In his post on Sunday, Trump took credit for the ceasefire.

"I am proud that the USA was able to help you arrive at this historic and heroic decision," he wrote.

"While not even discussed, I am going to increase trade, substantially, with both of these great nations."

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No Indian pilot in Pakistan’s custody Key Indian mily installations targeted in retaliatory strikes: DG ISPR Rafale fleet grounded after PAF response: AVM Aurangzeb

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a decisive and high-intensity military response, Pakistan's armed forces launched precision strikes on 26 key Indian military installations under the banner of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, targeting sites involved in cross-border aggression and support for terrorism inside Pakistan.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said the operation was aimed at neutralising the sources of recent attacks on Pakistani soil, particularly those launched from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and deep within mainland India.

"The strikes targeted high-value military assets

Pakistan never requested for ceasefire

used to launch attacks on Pakistani civilians and support terrorism. Our response was proportionate, precise, and necessary for national defense," said Lt Gen Chaudhry.

DG ISPR said "put it on record" that Pakistan "never requested for a ceasefire".

"On the night of May 6 and 7, after those dastardly and cowardly attacks were made, Indians requested and Pakistan gave a very clear response that we will communicate back only after we have given the response that this act deserves.

"So on May 10, after the response and retribution [...] and on the request and intervention of international interlocutors, we responded to the already made request

Poonch were rendered non-operational.

"Military Logistics: Field Supply Depot in Uri and a radar station in Poonch.

"Command Hubs: The 10th and 80th Brigades at KG Top and Nowshera - both reportedly involved in orchestrating attacks that resulted in civilian casualties, including children, inside Pakistan.

Proxy Networks and LoC Posts Destroyed

Lt Gen Chaudhry also confirmed the destruction of intelligence fusion units and field operational posts in Rajouri and Nowshera, which allegedly trained and supported proxy networks involved in destabilizing Pakistan.

Furthermore, military positions along the Line of Control responsible for unprovoked shelling on Azad Jammu and Kashmir were struck with high precision.

"Following the strikes, several enemy units raised white flags and appealed for restraint, indicating the damage inflicted and the effectiveness of Pakistan's response," he added.

Rafale Fleet Grounded After PAF Response

Air Vice Marshal Aurangzeb Ahmed, Deputy Chief of Air Operations, credited the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) with successfully executing its objectives.

"S-400 Systems: Missile batteries in Adampur and

Pakistan's response leaves India's arrogance in dust: Kh. Asif

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Defense Minister Khawaja Asif on Sunday congratulated the nation on befitting response to India's aggression.

In an interview with a private news channel, the defense minister stated that the Pakistan's strong response has left them disappointed and their arrogant posture humbled, reduced to nothing but dust.

Khawaja Asif stated that India's policymakers have been compelled to reassess their policies in light of Pakistan's strong response.

When asked about potential talks, he emphasized that Pakistan would prioritize three major concerns including Indus Water, Kashmir and terrorism which need to resolve and ensure peace in the region.

These issues have been longstanding points of contention between Pakistan and India and resolving them would require significant diplomatic efforts.

Pakistan's stance on these matters is clear and any meaningful dialogue would need to address these core concerns, he mentioned.

To another query, Khawaja Asif remarked that India's arrogance was humbled. They misconstrued Pakistan's restraint for weakness but the armed forces delivered a decisive response.

Pakistan’s response to India earns global recognition

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's decisive response to Indian aggression has garnered global recognition.

Global media and international defense experts have acknowledged the professionalism, valor, and determination of Pakistan's armed forces.

According to the BBC, Pakistan demonstrated military superiority over India, while latter's strategy was an utter failure. It further reported that India failed to deliver a decisive blow, and the billions of dollars spent by New Delhi failed to yield any benefit. It also recognized that Pakistan's air power

posed a significant challenge for India.

The Telegraph commended Pakistan's effective defensive strategy and raised serious questions about Indian fighter jets. It described the destruction of advanced Indian aircraft like the Rafale as a "humiliating defeat" for India, declaring the Pakistan Air Force the undisputed King of the skies.

The Telegraph further reported that Pakistani jets used advanced air-to-air missiles to shoot down five Indian warplanes. By downing expensive Indian jets like the Rafale, Pakistan not only proved its air superiority but also astonished military

experts worldwide.

Al Jazeera reported that, for the first time in history, Rafale jets were destroyed.

Similarly, defense analysts acknowledged the heavy damage Pakistan inflicted on Indian military camps and airbases.

They noted that following Pakistan's attack, India reached out to the United States, requesting diplomatic intervention to secure a ceasefire.

Experts asserted that the facts confirm Pakistan's capability to fully respond to any Indian aggression and maintain its air and military superiority in pursuit of regional peace.



Sara khan

In a region long defined by fragile deterrence and recurring crises, the events of early May this year marked an extraordinary shift in the strategic reality of South Asia. Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, conducted by Pakistan in response to a coordinated and technologically advanced Indian offensive, demonstrated not only superior military capability but a calibrated and disciplined approach to modern warfare.

What unfolded was far more than a tactical military encounter; it was a defining moment in which conventional capabilities, strategic communication, and geopolitical balance intersected to redraw assumptions about power, deterrence, and escalation in the subcontinent. In the span of just two days, Pakistan transitioned from a posture of reactive defence to one of assertive control, setting a precedent whose implications will echo far beyond the Line of Control.

The scale and complexity of the military engagement

that unfolded on May 6 and 7 placed it among the most sophisticated air battles of the 21st century. Involving 112 combat aircraft from both sides, equipped with advanced Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile technology, the engagement tested not only aerial capabilities but the broader operational doctrine of both nations. Pakistan's performance was clinical: five confirmed aerial kills, including three Rafale jets, were achieved without a single aircraft lost. This outcome was neither coincidental nor merely tactical; it reflected a systematic investment in readiness, integration of real-time intelligence, and mastery of electromagnetic warfare. In contrast to India's high-profile procurement and narrative-driven defence posturing, Pakistan demonstrated quiet operational depth and maturity.

Equally significant was Pakistan's handling of the largest swarm drone attack in modern combat history. All seventy-seven hostile drones were eliminated—none returned. This feat underscored the robustness

of Pakistan's multi-layered air defence system and its ability to combine kinetic and non-kinetic countermeasures in a high-pressure environment. Even more telling was the neutralisation of advanced threats such as ballistic missiles and air-launched BrahMos cruise missiles. Despite the hypersonic speed and precision of these systems, most were intercepted mid-flight, thereby neutralising the strategic edge India had long assumed to hold. The technological confidence this built within Pakistan's defence establishment was not only validated but amplified across regional observers.

One of the most consequential elements of this operation was Pakistan's conscious decision to elevate its response within the conventional spectrum rather than relying on the threat of strategic escalation. Traditionally, Pakistan has leaned on its nuclear deterrent to counterbalance conventional asymmetry.

However, this operation marked a doctrinal evolution—demonstrating that Pakistan could respond to aggression with agility, precision, and measured force at the conventional level. By striking twenty-six Indian targets in response to nine Pakistani sites, Islamabad conveyed both capability and restraint, ensuring that its message was received without crossing red lines that would provoke wider conflict. This recalibrated response posture may well become the new template for crisis management in the region.

Beyond the battlefield, the strategic ramifications were swift and far-reaching. India, having long sought to position itself as a net security provider in the Indo-Pacific and a bulwark against regional instability, found its narrative unravelled. Despite its lobbying and media-driven campaign, it failed to garner unequivocal support from global powers. The Western bloc,

often perceived as India's diplomatic bastion, largely remained neutral. In contrast, Pakistan received quiet but firm diplomatic support from key partners—China, Türkiye, the Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia. Only one country, Israel, stood openly with India, reinforcing the ideological undertones of regional alignments. The international community's overarching response was not one of partisanship, but concern—concern that escalation between nuclear-armed neighbours had edged dangerously close to uncontrollable dimensions.

This realisation had economic consequences as well. Despite the geopolitical turbulence, Pakistan's engagement with the International Monetary Fund remained unaffected. The disbursement of financial tranches continued, signaling confidence in Pakistan's macroeconomic trajectory and its capacity to withstand shocks. This continuity, underlined by Pakistan's

economic restructuring efforts, further legitimised its position as a responsible state actor capable of managing both internal and external crises without succumbing to political instability or economic disarray.

Internally, the psychological and political effects of the operation were equally profound. In India, the aggressive posturing collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions. Its domestic narrative—built on anti-Muslim and anti-Sikh rhetoric—faced intensified scrutiny. The crisis exposed internal fissures and eroded New Delhi's moral standing, both domestically and abroad. Conversely, Pakistan witnessed a rare moment of national cohesion. The synergy observed between its armed forces, political leadership, and intelligence community revealed a matured internal consensus. The divisions that had previously hampered coordinated response mechanisms were, at least

temporarily, eclipsed by a shared national objective: the preservation of sovereignty and dignity.

Pakistan also won the narrative war. Its communications remained rooted in verifiable facts, which were acknowledged by both allies and neutral observers. India's narrative, often amplified by partisan media and disinformation networks, collapsed under scrutiny, rendering it a source of ridicule in many international circles.

Moreover, credible evidence of Indian support for terrorism in Balochistan and former FATA regions began to surface, reversing years of diplomatic pressure that had painted Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism. For the first time in decades, the burden of proof and justification had shifted decisively.

Strategically, the operation undid years of Indian efforts to de-hyphenate itself from Pakistan in global diplomacy. The subcontinental lens returned with renewed clarity. Pakistan was no longer seen as the lesser party in a binary

frame, but as a rational, capable actor with legitimate security concerns and the capacity to defend them. The Kashmir dispute, long buried beneath economic interests and strategic convenience, re-emerged in diplomatic corridors as a ticking fault line demanding resolution. More importantly, Pakistan's proposal for a structured dispute resolution mechanism with India gained traction as the only viable path forward.

Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos reaffirmed a principle too often sidelined in policy debates: national security is non-negotiable. Diplomacy, economic planning, and international engagement all rest on the foundation of credible defence.

Pakistan's performance in May not only safeguarded its territorial integrity but also restored its strategic credibility, both regionally and globally. It demonstrated that restraint must be chosen, not imposed—and that in choosing it from a position of strength, a state reclaims not only control over events but also over its narrative.

Atta Tarar grieved

ISLAMABAD (APP):Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Sunday expressed a deep grief over the passing of the mother of senior journalist from the Independent Urdu, Maimoona Khan. The minister conveyed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to Maimoona Khan and her family in a condolence message.

Over and Out





Kundi stresses investment in education of skilled women

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has said that government and non-government institutions should invest in educated and skilled women and youth of the province. An empowered woman is the foundation of a strong family, a peaceful

society and a developed nation, he expressed these views while talking to a delegation led by the Principal of the College of Home Economics, University of Peshawar, Dr. Shazia Shah. The delegation gave a special briefing on the cultural aspect of the College of Home Economics, discussed suggestions for

highlighting culture and exhibiting the skills and artworks of female students. The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that our educated women face problems in getting jobs. I want to open such a soft-war and window so that women can easily get jobs according to their qualifications.

The development of women is the development of the nation. We all have to work together to create an environment where every woman is empowered, every home is a place where every woman is a place where every family is a place where every woman May everyone be prosperous and connected to dignified employment.

Ashrafi lauds leadership for decisive response to hostile provocations

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has extended heartfelt congratulations to Pakistan's civil and military leadership for their recent successful and united response to hostile provocations.

Talking to the media at Jamia Manzoor-ul-Islamia, here on Sunday, he paid glowing tribute to the armed forces of Pakistan and military and civil leadership for their unwavering commitment to the country's security, stability, and sovereignty. "Above all, we thank Allah Almighty whose blessings enabled this historic success," he said.

Ashrafi praised the unity of the Pakistani nation, emphasizing that the collective resolve of the people delivered a resounding message to the enemy, one that will be remembered for generations. "Our national defense is firm, and now we must work together to strengthen our internal stability, especially our economy, through unity, trust in Allah, and commitment to national progress. Highlighting the readiness of Pakistan's religious institutions in times of national need, Ashrafi noted, "Over 3 million students of madaris, along with imams and khatibs across the country, stood united behind the call of the nation and its leadership. They remain ready to sacrifice for the defense and stability of Pakistan."

He also paid tribute to the sacrifices of martyrs, saying their memories must be preserved and honored.

Referring to the Pahalgam incident, Ashrafi reminded the world that Pakistan had called for international investigations at the time, but India avoided transparency. "Today, with the success of Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos, even global powers are speaking on Kashmir. The American President has acknowledged the need to address the Kashmir issue, something India used to reject outright," he said.

The PUC chairman expressed gratitude to Islamic countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Iran, for their diplomatic support. He specifically lauded Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan for being the first foreign dignitary to contact Pakistan after the Pahalgam episode, and noted the efforts of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in initiating diplomatic outreach.

Commenting on India's recent diplomatic overtures, he added, "When faced with defeat, India was seen seeking help from the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. We do not seek war, but any aggression will meet a decisive and befitting response, as witnessed recently."

Ashrafi reiterated Pakistan's principled stance against terrorism, saying that Pakistan has always been a

victim of terrorism. "We were the first to issue a religious decree against suicide bombings and terrorism from Lahore 25 years ago. We can neither support nor tolerate any form of terrorism."

He urged the international community to launch impartial investigations into other critical incidents as well, including the Jaffer Express tragedy and the killing of 90,000 Pakistanis as a result of Indian-sponsored terrorism.

Shifting focus to global Muslim solidarity, Ashrafi called on the Ummah not to overlook the continuing suffering in Palestine and Kashmir. "We stand in unwavering support of our Palestinian brothers and pray for their relief," he said. "As the U.S. President intervenes on Kashmir, we urge him to extend the same concern to the Palestinian cause."

He expressed hope that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will raise the issues of Kashmir and Palestine during the U.S. President's upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. "We pray that Allah strengthens our armed forces, fortifies our national defense, and blesses our country with lasting peace and prosperity."

He conveyed his congratulations and gratitude to the leadership of Pakistan's armed forces, government institutions, and the people. Later, Maulana Farooq led a special prayer for the nation's safety and prosperity.

Brick kiln union demands relief package

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The newly elected President of the Peshawar Brick kiln Union, Haji Jehangir Khan, has stated that the union will raise its voice on every platform to address the issues faced by brick kiln owners and workers.

Brick kiln owners and

workers in Peshawar are facing numerous problems, including the impact of inflation and increased coal prices on their business.

Haji Jehangir Khan has held multiple meetings with high-ranking officials to address these issues and find solutions. The union is demanding that the provincial government take

immediate action to provide relief to brick kiln owners and workers.

Haji Jehangir Khan has assured that the union will represent the interests of brick kiln owners and workers and work to resolve their problems. He has expressed his commitment to fulfilling the trust placed in him by the brick



kiln owners and workers. The union is urging the provincial government to take concrete steps to provide relief to brick kiln owners and workers, particularly in light of the current economic challenges.

Mother is first teacher, friend of child: Governor

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Moahmmed Kamran Khan Tessori and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while paying tributes to the mothers on the Mother's Day on Sunday said that mother was the first teacher and friend of the child.

They said that mother dedicated her life to upbringing and future of children. In their separate messages, the Sindh Governor and Chief Minister said that a mother improved the lives of children with love, sacrifice and prayers. Jawans of Pakistani forces were the great children of their

mothers. A mother's prayer for her children changes destiny, they said adding that Allah Almighty had placed paradise at the feet of a mother, they said.

Tessori and Shah said that a mother's love was the only unconditional love in the world. An educated mother plays key role in the formation of a civilized society, they said adding that every mother of the future should be educated to improve the future generations.

Governor pays tributes to armed forces, Pakistani pilots: Sindh Governor Moahmmed Kamran Khan Tessori on

Sunday while paying tributes to the armed forces of the country said that our forces had kept the head high of the nation.

Addressing a press conference at the Sindh Governor House, he said that our pilots did a good job against enemy. He said that Pakistani pilots were our proud and the success of operation Bunyan al Marsoos against Indian aggression would be

remembered.

The Governor said that the head of the Pakistan Army made good decisions against the enemy. He said that the nation had trust in its armed forces. He further said that the Governor House distributed sweets on the success of operation Bunyan al Marsoos. Tessori also spoke on Mother's Day and paid tributes to Pakistani mothers.

Victory over enemy a testament to national unity: Azma Bokhari

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari on Sunday hailed Pakistan's latest victory over its adversaries as a "shining symbol of national unity, sacrifice, and visionary leadership," paying tribute to the armed forces and national leadership for their role in safeguarding the country's integrity and sovereignty.

Addressing a press conference at the Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR), Bokhari conveyed heartfelt congratulations on behalf of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Pakistan Armed Forces, and the military leadership for what she described as "once again making history" in the defense of the nation.

Bokhari declared, "Those who dreamed of having breakfast in Lahore were served a full-course meal in India by our Shaheens." She emphasized that the Pakistani military not only thwarted the enemy's designs but also sent a powerful message across the

globe about Pakistan's strength and resolve.

Highlighting the role of the JF-17 Thunder fighter jets in the military success, Bokhari credited former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for his foresight in advancing Pakistan's defense capabilities. "These jets are proof of Pakistan's superiority and self-reliance, achieved through Nawaz Sharif's visionary policies," she stated.

She asserted that the same India that once threatened cross-border aggression is now facing the consequences of its provocations. "Pakistan has responded not with words, but with decisive action," she said.

Congratulating the entire nation, the Information Minister remarked, "This success belongs to every Pakistani—it is the outcome of our unity, sacrifice, and deep-rooted patriotism. The world must now recognize that while Pakistan desires peace, it will never compromise on its defense."

Bokhari praised the mili-

tary, national leadership, and the people for their courage and unity in confronting conspiracies against the country, saying their resilience will be recorded in history in golden words. She reiterated the JF-17 Thunder program and the historic nuclear tests as milestones achieved under Nawaz Sharif's leadership, which made Pakistan's defense impregnable.

Commenting on regional peace, Bokhari made it clear that peace between Pakistan and India cannot be achieved without addressing the Kashmir dispute. She also stated that Pakistan would raise critical issues, such as the Indus Waters Treaty and state-sponsored terrorism, at international platforms.

Referring to the scale of the damage inflicted, Bokhari claimed that India lost 70% of its power due to cyberattacks, which grounded its fighter jets and compelled the Modi government to seek a ceasefire through U.S. intervention.

She concluded by commending the Pakistani people, media, and social media

PML-N organises gratitude rally in Badami Bagh

LAHORE (APP): A rally of gratitude was organised by the PML-N at Hanif Park Badami Bagh here on Sunday. PML-N leaders Chaudhry Umar Farooq, Chaudhry Fahad Gujjar, Shahzad Gujjar led the rally. Chaudhry Yousuf Gujjar, Chaudhry Tanveer Gujjar, Chaudhry Ali Nawaz Bhinder, Abdullah Mohmand, Chaudhry Sultan Gujjar, Zardar Khan, Malik Talha, Baqir Shah, Rana Balo, Kashif Warden, Chaudhry Munawar Gujjar and other workers participated. National songs were played, workers carrying the national flag also raised slogans in favor of the Pakistan Army.

Ceasefire, a victory for peace: Pervez Ashraf

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Punjab President and former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf showered praises on armed forces and termed the recent ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India as a "victory for peace."

In a statement issued here on Sunday, Ashraf expressed his gratitude to friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and the United States for their diplomatic support in de-escalation between the two South Asian neighbours. He said the ceasefire was made possible due to Pakistan's measures and strategic response following the Indian incursion. He also congratulated Pakistan armed forces and political leadership for their unified stance and effective handling of the situation.

"The entire nation should offer prayers of thanks for the victory", the former premier said, adding that "long-standing disputes in the region must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. He emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and peaceful negotiations to ensure lasting stability in South Asia.

Showbiz personalities pay tribute to Pakistan Army

LAHORE (APP): Famous showbiz personalities have paid tribute to the Pakistani Army over the historic success in Operation "Bunyan-un- Marsoos". Actor Inran Ashraf told APP that the Pakistan Army and the people have become the best in front of the whole world. He said that Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos emerged successful within a few hours, the people stood by the Pakistani army and proved that the attack will be responded to with full force. He said the Pakistan Army had proved that every force that attacks us will face the same fate as India. Actor Yasir Nawaz said that the Pakistani Army taught India a lesson by giving a befitting reply that it would always remember. Salute to the unparalleled bravery of the Pakistani Army. Long live Pakistan. Long live the Pakistani Army, he said while expressing his gratitude. Likewise, Actor Ahsan Khan said that the Pakistan Army raised the name of Pakistan and its people all over the world. We have always heard that the defence of the nation is in strong hands, and Alhamdulillah, this has been proven today.

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2	Contract Management Specialist Position: 01	Reporting to CEO TransPeshawar, the Contract Management Specialist is responsible for coordinating all activities associated with the contract administration within the Company during the life cycle of the contracts. Responsibilities include negotiating, writing, monitoring and evaluating contracts; including ensuring compliance with federal and provincial laws and regulations.	Qualification: At least 16 years of education in Engineering, Business Studies, Economics, Law or a related field from a recognized university. Master degree in Engineering, Business Studies, Economics, Law or a related field from a recognized university will be an added advantage. Experience: At least 08 years of post-qualification relevant experience in contract lifecycle management; handling legal agreements, service contracts, or vendor agreements, contractual compliance, and legal, financial, and operational matters of contracts. Experience in contracts management with International Financial Institutions or Multilateral Banks shall be considered an advantage. Age Requirement: Up to 50 years on closing date of applications
3	Assistant Surveillance Supervisor Position: 01	The Assistant Surveillance Supervisor will assist Assistant Manager BRT Control Centre in the daily monitoring of operations through CCTV camera. This includes recording of contract violations and other components of the declared project in accordance with the requirements of the company's obligations.	Qualification: At least 16 Years of education from a recognized university in Information Technology, Computer Science or relevant field. Experience: At least 02 years of post-qualification relevant experience. Experience in monitoring, reporting and supervision will be an added advantage. Age Requirement: Up to 30 years on closing date of applications

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Application Deadline: 5pm of 27th May 2025

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TransPeshawar is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated strictly confidential.

Precision, patience, and principle: Pakistan’s response to Indian aggression

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

FOR several days leading up to May 7, 2025, the Indian government and its military apparatus appeared hell-bent on provoking Pakistan into war. Incendiary rhetoric, covert operations near the Line of Control (LoC), and misleading media campaigns were all calculated to test Pakistan's resolve. While a less responsible nation may have reacted hastily, Pakistan's political and military leadership exhibited remarkable restraint. They kept the nation calm, analyzed the evolving situation thoroughly, and chose not to be dragged into a conflict prematurely. However, even during this period of Pakistani composure, India resorted to egregious violations—launching cross-border incursions, targeting unarmed civilians, and using religious sites, particularly mosques, in urban centers as shields for its covert activities.

Despite these blatant provocations, Pakistan upheld its principled stance rooted in international law, Islamic ethics of warfare, and national dignity. Yet, when India violated all diplomatic boundaries and attempted to strike the Pakistani airbase—a clear act of aggression—the equation changed completely. Pakistan, forced into action, responded not in fury but with clarity, precision, and determination. The world bore witness to a disciplined and strategic retaliation. Pakistan's armed forces launched a carefully calibrated counteroffensive, avoiding civilian areas and focusing only on military installations, especially those that were directly used for attacks on Pakistani territory.

In accordance with Islamic teachings of warfare, the Pakistan Air Force, led by its seasoned pilots and guided by real-time intelligence, crossed into enemy territory with surgical precision. The Quran says, "And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed,

Allah does not like transgressors." (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:190). This principle was adhered to strictly. There was no bombardment of civilian structures, no targeting of innocent lives-only defense, and that too with honor.

The counter-strikes targeted Indian forward-operating bases in different places in India, from where hostile drones and long-range artillery had originated. Radar systems, fuel depots, and an advanced surveillance outpost were among the installations damaged in Pakistan's response avoiding civilian places. One senior retired NATO officer remarked in a global forum, "This was the most disciplined and ethical use of air power in a regional conflict I have seen in decades."

Pakistan's forces demonstrated not just military might, but moral clarity. As our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Do not kill any child, any woman, or any elder or sick person" (Sunan Abu Dawood). This guidance resonated throughout

the planning and execution of Pakistan's military response. The operational success was matched by a sophisticated diplomatic stance.

In the wake of Pakistan's response, the international community began to re-evaluate its position. Initially, many powerful nations had taken a neutral tone, dismissing the situation as a bilateral conflict that required no external involvement. However, after India's failed strike and Pakistan's proportionate and precise retaliation, concern rippled across international capitals. The United States, which had earlier refrained from taking sides, acknowledged Pakistan's responsible military conduct and called for immediate de-escalation. European Union diplomats, especially from France and Germany, appreciated Pakistan's commitment to international norms and echoed concerns about India's reckless military adventurism.

Middle Eastern nations, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, privately and publicly praised Pakistan's discipline and dignity under pressure. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held a special session to condemn attacks on religious sites and civilian populations by Indian forces and affirmed full solidarity with Pakistan.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in a televised address, called Pakistan's action a model of ethical military conduct and urged the world to hold aggressors accountable.

It became increasingly clear that Pakistan had won not only the tactical battle but also the diplomatic and moral argument on the global stage. The transformation in international sentiment—from indifference to recognition—underscored the credibility of Pakistan's leadership and the professionalism of its armed forces.

Within Pakistan, national unity surged like never before. From the streets of Karachi to the mountains of Gilgit, the people stood behind their armed forces. General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army

Staff, emerged as a figure of unshakable resolve and strategic vision. His conduct, calm under pressure, and inspiring leadership during these critical hours will be remembered as a defining moment in Pakistan's history. Indeed, many across the country have begun referring to him as "Khalid bin Walid II," a title reserved only for those who lead with faith, courage, and brilliance. The analogy is fitting. Like the great companion of the Prophet (PBUH), General Munir led from the front, ensured minimal collateral damage, and preserved the honor of the Ummah.

India, in contrast, faced internal embarrassment. Social media in India was rife with questions about their intelligence failures and the exaggerated claims their media had earlier propagated. The Indian opposition in Parliament questioned the motives of the Modi government, especially after international backlash. In major Western and Middle Eastern capitals, Pakistan was praised for its maturity and military professionalism.

While the skies have now fallen silent, the question remains: Will India learn from its miscalculation or continue to march toward instability? Time will reveal the answer. However, one thing is certain—Pakistan is ready for peace, but not afraid of war.

The nation stands united, its armed forces remain vigilant, and its leadership has shown that Pakistan will never bow to aggression.

As the Quran reminds us, "Indeed, Allah defends those who have believed. Indeed, Allah does not like every treacherous traitor." (Surah Al-Hajj, 22:38). This divine assurance strengthens the belief of every Pakistani today. We are a peace-loving nation, but we will never tolerate oppression or betrayal.

Let this moment serve as a lesson for those who mistake Pakistan's patience for weakness. We are a nation forged in sacrifice, guided by faith, and defended by warriors whose strength is matched only by their integrity.

Muqam leads *Youm-e-Tashakkur* rally in Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the special directive of the Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Shahbaz Sharif, nationwide celebrations were held to commemorate the historic success of Operation Bunyan-e-Marsos in Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A central rally was held in Peshawar, led by the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, and SAFRON, and President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Engineer Amir Muqam Khan.

Similar rallies were organized across the country to honor the valor of Pakistan's armed forces and to express the nation's unified and powerful response to Indian aggression.

Thousands of citizens took to the streets in patriotic fervor, chanting slogans in support of the Pakistan Armed Forces and expressing gratitude to Almighty Allah for this significant victory.

The rallies reflected a deep sense of national pride and unity. Addressing the participants, Engineer Amir Muqam stated: "Pakistan's brave forces have crushed India's hostile ambitions. This victory sends a clear message — any act of aggression will be met with a decisive and unforgettable response. Our forces

have not only defended the nation's sovereignty but have created a new chapter in courage and resilience."

He further said, "India has suffered a diplomatic setback, not just a military one. The response it has received from Pakistan will be remembered for generations. The enemy will now think twice before casting an evil eye on our homeland. We are proud of our valiant armed forces whose sacrifices and determination continue to safeguard the peace and dignity of our nation."

The participants reaffirmed their commitment to national unity and saluted the unmatched bravery of Pakistan's armed forces.

In Peshawar, major gatherings took place at iconic locations such as Qissa Khwani Bazaar, Hastnagri, and in front of the Press Club, where citizens from all walks of life participated enthusiastically. Holding placards and waving flags, participants raised slogans praising the bravery of armed forces and reaffirming their strong support for Pakistan's sovereignty.

"I pay salute to Pakistan armed forces for a strong response that severely jolted India," said Dr Ejaz Khan, former Chairman of International Relations Department at University of Peshawar.

He said had crease fire not reached India more air bases and military installations would have been burnt to ashes.

KP charts path to fiscal excellence with public financial management assessment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has launched its third Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment 2024, a globally recognized framework to evaluate public financial management (PFM) systems. Following assessments in 2007 and 2017, this initiative, led by the Finance Department with support from the Sub-National Governance Program-II, aims to enhance transparency, accountability, and service delivery while aligning with the province's strategic objectives.

A high-level stakeholders' workshop brought together around 35 representatives from Finance, Planning and Development, Health, Education, Local Government, Auditor General's Office, and development partners. The workshop's objectives are multifaceted, designed to facilitate a robust and inclusive assessment that drives meaningful reform.

First, it seeks to build consensus on the interpretation of PEFA indicators and scoring criteria, enabling stakeholders to apply a consistent and informed approach to evaluating PFM performance. Second, it aims to strengthen participants' understanding of critical PEFA dimensions—such as credibility, transparency, and accountability—and their relevance to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's PFM challenges, fostering a shared vision for reform. Third, the workshop provides a platform for hands-on working sessions to analyze indicator-specific data requirements, identifying gaps and challenges in data collection to ensure the assessment's accuracy. Finally, it focuses on pinpointing contextual obstacles in applying the PEFA framework to the province's unique PFM environment and collaboratively developing practical solutions to address them.

The Advisor to the Chief Minister for Finance inaugurated the session. Emphasizing the assessment's strategic significance, he stated that this will provide the needed lens to develop strategic and policy-oriented reforms for improving the PFM system which will serve as the backbone for improved service delivery and will lay strong foundations for achieving the government's strategic objectives. He underscored that the assessment is not merely a diagnostic but an opportunity to embed transparency, accountability, and fiscal discipline into the province's PFM system, aligning with flagship initiatives like the Public Financial Management Act 2022, Fiscal Responsibility & Debt Management Act 2022, Treasury Single Account, and digital financial transformations.

The Advisor called for a whole-of-government approach, urging stakeholders to address challenges in budget credibility, procurement efficiency, and audit outcomes. He stressed that reforms must be bold and enduring, avoiding short-term fixes to create a lasting impact.

The workshop focused on building consensus on PEFA indicators and scoring criteria, analyzing data requirements, and tackling sector-specific challenges in health, education, local governance, climate resilience, and gender equity through scenario-based exercises and discussions.

By leveraging lessons from past assessments, the workshop aimed to design actionable solutions to strengthen the province's PFM system. Expected outcomes include a reform roadmap prioritizing high-impact policy changes, enhanced coordination with development partners to unlock performance-linked financing, and positioning Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a national leader in PFM excellence. The Advisor termed the workshop as a defining moment which will unite stakeholders around a shared vision. He added that the PFM system will stand the test of time-propelling Khyber Pakhtunkhwa toward prosperity and governance excellence.

Dr. Ashfaq meets Governor to discuss healthcare challenges

PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant step toward addressing healthcare concerns, renowned hair transplant surgeon Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Khan met with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi to discuss key issues affecting the province's healthcare system, with a special focus on the challenges faced by young doctors.

During the meeting, Dr. Ashfaq Khan highlighted the pressing issues within the medical community, including lack of resources, limited training opportunities, and the need for better policy support for emerging medical professionals.

He emphasized the importance of supporting young doctors, who are often the frontline of medical service delivery in both urban and rural areas of the province.

Governor Kundi appreciated Dr. Ashfaq Khan's dedication and acknowledged the vital role healthcare professionals play in the development and well-being of society.

He assured his full support in exploring practical solutions and pledged to work closely with medical stakeholders to improve healthcare infrastructure and professional development opportunities in KP.

Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Khan, widely recognized for his contributions in the field of cosmetic surgery, continues to use his platform to advocate for broader health reforms and youth empowerment within the medical sector.

Dr. Khan also proposed the initiation of mentorship programs and skill-building workshops aimed at equipping young doctors with the latest medical techniques and ethical practices.

He stressed the need for government-backed initiatives to retain medical talent within the province and reduce the ongoing brain drain to other countries.

The Governor welcomed the idea, saying that such programs could significantly enhance the capacity of the province's healthcare system while fostering a new generation of well-trained, confident medical professionals ready to meet the province's growing healthcare needs.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, and SAFRON, and President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Engineer Amir Muqam addressing the Youm-e-Tashakkur Rally.

KP Tourism Dept unveils Dir’s tourism potential

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Department has formulated a comprehensive master plan to promote tourism in Dir, known for its breathtaking natural beauty and rich cultural heritage.

A whopping 2 billion rupee project has been designed to develop tourist sites across the province, with a special focus on merged districts and Dir's untapped potential.

Muhammad Bakhtiar Khan, Secretary of Tourism and Culture, revealed this during a meeting with a delegation of Dir Welfare Organization (DWO) Peshawar, led by Haji Sultan Yousaf Dir Lala here Sunday.

The delegation appreciated the provincial government's efforts to promote tourism and culture and assured full cooperation.

Despite Dir's immense tourist potential, the delegation highlighted that the lack of communication facilities in Upper and Lower Dir has limited tourist inflow to Kumrat alone. Other tourist sites like Laram Top, Khadango, Chinaroona, Bakht Bilanda, Nawa Pass, Lam Char, Shahi Top, Lawari Top, Dog Dara, Sheel Dab, Shabanal, Jehaz Banda, and Badgoi Top are equally rich in natural beauty and tourist importance.

The Secretary Tourism assured that concrete steps are being taken under a master plan to improve tourist facilities in these areas. The tender for the Jehaz Banda road has already been floated, while the Kumrat Development Authority has also been fully streamlined.

A 'HomeGuest' scheme has also been introduced to provide financial support to local individuals to accommodate tourists in their homes from Sherinal to Kumrat, similar to Chitral.

A comprehensive mega tourism development plan costing Rs2 billion has been chalked out for the entire province, including the newly merged districts, Malakand, and Hazara divisions. The Secretary Tourism hinted at the special interest of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Advisor on Tourism Zahid Khan Zeb, and Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah in promoting tourism.

The delegation requested that Dir's Cultural Day be celebrated at the provincial level, which the Secretary Tourism agreed to consider if forwarded through elected representatives. He emphasized that cultural festivals spread joy and foster people's creative potential, assuring that the government will promote tourism and culture in the province.

The meeting concluded with a ceremonial exchange of gifts, where the delegation presented the Secretary Culture with Dir's cultural identity, the "White Deroji Cap," and the Secretary Tourism gifted the delegation a symbolic representation of the national animal, the Markhor, and an honorary shield from the Department of Culture.

Ulema to hold Yum-e-Fatah on Friday

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: United Ulema Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Announces "Yum e Fatah" and "Yum e Izhar e Tashakkur" to Be Observed Across the Province on Upcoming Friday.

The United Ulema Board of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa organized a grand rally at the historic site of Qila Bala Hisar in Peshawar. The event was attended by prominent religious scholars from all schools of thought affiliated with the Board, who paid rich tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their timely and courageous actions.

In their speeches, the scholars stated that the sacrifices and professional capabilities of the armed forces in the defense of the nation are a source of immense pride for the entire country. They emphasized that the resolve and bravery of the armed forces have sent a powerful message of unity and solidarity across the nation.

During the rally, religious leaders from various sects spoke to the media and stressed the urgent need to promote national unity and interfaith harmony, declaring these values as the foundation of peace and stability in the country. Participants unanimously announced that the upcoming Friday will be observed throughout the province as "Yum e Fatah wa Izhar e Tashakkur", to express national appreciation for the steadfastness of the people and the services rendered by the Pakistan Armed Forces.

The Ulema also offered prayers for unity, brotherhood, and peace in the rally, urging the public to remain vigilant against divisive elements. They reaffirmed their commitment to continue promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and national cohesion through their sermons, public statements, and conduct.

The rally concluded with a collective prayer for the safety, unity, and prosperity of the country and its people.

ETEA’s efforts for transparency commendable: Meena

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Higher Education, Archives and Libraries, Meena Khan Afridi, has praised the timely action taken by the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against illegal activities during the Primary School Teaching Test held on Saturday at an examination center in District Bannu. In a special statement issued from his office on Sunday, the provincial minister stated that ETEA, while upholding transparency, brought the involved individuals to justice — strengthening hopes for further improvement in the system. In this regard, the minister was presented with an initial investigation report by ETEA, which revealed that during the test held on May 10, a candidate at ETEA's exam center established at the University of Science and Technology Bannu left the hall with the question paper and answer sheet and reached a guest house, where the paper was being solved and leaked. Acting on a tip-off, ETEA officials, along with the district administration and police, raided the guest house and caught ten individuals red-handed. According to the report, authorities seized one laptop, a scanner-cum-photostate machine, ten mobile phones, and several ETEA papers. It was further disclosed that the group was in contact with candidates at ten different examination halls in Bannu. An FIR has been registered at the Mira Khel Police Station in Bannu, and further investigations are underway. Meena Khan Afridi remarked that arresting the entire gang is a significant step in cleansing the system of corrupt elements. "We will not compromise on merit under any circumstances," he said, adding that he has directed the formation of a high-level inquiry committee to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter.



In brief

Charsadda supports Army

CHARSADDA (APP): A wave of celebration swept through Charsadda following Pakistan's robust response to Indian unprovoked aggression on Sunday. Streets and markets were adorned with national flags, creating a festive atmosphere throughout the district. Following a timely and strong response to India's misadventure by the Pakistani armed forces, people across the country, including Charsadda, expressed pride and patriotism. The excitement among locals was much palpable. Assistant Commissioner Riaz Khan led the way by decorating key areas such as Farooq-e-Azam Chowk, main Charsadda Bazar, markets, entry and exit points, and government buildings with the green and white Pakistani flags. He also distributed flags among the citizens, while many vehicles were seen carrying the national flag in solidarity. Charsadda's main bazaars echoed with chants of "Long Live Pakistan" and "Long Live Pakistan Army."

The nationwide enthusiasm reflected in the decorated streets, marketplaces, and public buildings served as a powerful message of unity and love for the homeland and its armed forces. Citizens' patriotic zeal was also widely visible across media platforms.

Hundi suspect arrested

MULTAN (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Multan Zone apprehended a suspect involved in "Hawala Hundi" and illegal currency exchange on Sunday. According to an FIA spokesman, the suspect, identified as Haroon Rashid, was arrested during a targeted operation at Nag Shah Chowk. FIA teams recovered Rs505,000 from his procession, along with crucial evidence, including transaction receipts and a mobile phone linked to illegal activities. The spokesperson said that the accused failed to provide satisfactory justification for the recovered amount. The FIA has initiated an investigation, while efforts are underway to trace and arrest his accomplices.

Ten power pilferers held

SARGODHA (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) on Sunday caught 10 power pilferers from various parts of the district. According to Fesco sources, Sub-Divisional Officers (SDOs) along with staff conducted operations against power theft in Gill Wala Bhattak, Noori gate area, Lahore road, Queen chowk and Muhammad colony and arrested 10 power thieves including Ghulam Rasool, Shah Saleem, Mujtaba Shah, Ahmed Shair, Noor Ullah, Amir Khan, Asmatullah, Ghulam Baqir, Shafique and Rabnawaz while steeling electricity. Further action was underway.

PFA seizes tea leaves

MULTAN (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) dismantled a large-scale adulteration unit involved in producing fake tea leaves at the Truck Adda near Jehanian Bypass in Kabirwala. Acting on a tip-off, a food safety team raided the production site and seized 500 kilograms of substantial tea, 5 kilograms of artificial colours and five processing machines. According to the DG Food Authority, used tea leaves were being dried, dyed with hazardous colours, and repackaged for resale in the local market.

APC reject Mines and Minerals Bill-2025

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): An All Parties Conference (APC) called by Awami National Party (ANP) strongly rejected the recently proposed 'Mines and Minerals Bill-2025' terming it attack on provincial rights and the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

The APC presided over by ANP District President Taimur Khan Marwat which brought together a wide representation from various political parties, legal fraternity, and civil society, including Shaukat Bettani, Abdur Rahim Bettani, Ghanfar Abbas, Pir Nomanuddin Shah and others.

The participants included officials and members of 'Malgari Wakilan', district presidents and general secretaries from multiple parties, High Court repre-

sentatives, and youth leaders.

The conference focused on the controversial bill presented by the provincial government in the assembly on May 10 which was rejected by all the participating parties unanimously, voicing serious concerns over federal overreach into provincial resources.

Speakers argued that under the 18th Amendment, the ownership and control of natural resources rest solely with the province and its people, and any federal interference in this regard is unconstitutional.

The proposed bill, they said, would not only provoke federal-provincial conflict but also deprive local communities, workers, and those associated with the mining sector of

their rightful share.

The participants warned that if the bill is not withdrawn, a province-wide constitutional and legal movement would be launched to safeguard local rights.

In addition to opposing the bill, the APC called for immediate rejection of the bill by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

It also demanded recognition of the rights of locals in Darazinda regarding oil and gas production.

Furthermore, the APC demanded establishment of a Geology Department at Gomal University in Dera Ismail Khan to promote local expertise in the field. The conference concluded with a unified pledge to resist any move that undermines the autonomy and resource rights of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Rally held to express solidarity with Army

SARGODHA (APP): A wave of patriotic fervour swept in and across Sargodha district on Sunday 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 the city and all the tehsils of Sargodha, voicing their strong commitment and support to them for the country's sovereignty and security.

All Tehsils of Sargodha, including Sillanwali, Shahpur, Sahiwal, Kotmomin, Bhulwal and Sargodha 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 operation Bunyan um Marsoos, aimed at countering threats to Pakistan's stability. What began as small corner meetings in local communities on Sunday morning quickly transformed into city-wide

rallies, with families, students, professionals, and political workers marching in unison.

In Sargodha, a vibrant crowd gathered near the historic Company Bagh, creating a sea of green and white colours of Pakistani flags.

Analysts view the public response of Sargodha as powerful message of resilience and civilian-military unity.

They welcomed peaceful rallies, stating that public support strengthens the morale of the armed forces and reinforces the country's resolve to defend its territorial integrity.

Tordher, Asad Qaiser inaugurate upgraded lab

F.P. Report

SWABI: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher, along with Member of the National Assembly and former Speaker Asad Qaiser, inaugurated the upgraded modern laboratory and the solarization of tube wells at Bacha Khan Medical Complex, Shah Mansoor, Swabi. The event was attended by hospital administration and other

relevant stakeholders.

Speaking on the occasion, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister stated that the laboratory upgradation is a significant step towards equipping the MTI hospital with modern facilities, which will enhance diagnostic services for patients.

He further added that the solarization of tube well is another vital project completed by the provincial government, aimed at ensuring sustainable water supply to the

hospital.

He emphasized that healthcare remains a top priority for the provincial government. Since coming into power, the government not only reinstated the previously suspended Sehat Card service but also expanded its scope to provide additional benefits.

He reiterated the government's commitment to continuing the journey of development in the region, ensuring that every sector receives due attention and progress.



QUETTA: Effigy of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi being set on fire during a rally on Youm-e-Tashakur to celebrate remarkable success of Operation Bunyan un Marsoos against India.

Pakhtoonyar welcomes action against irregularities in Bannu ETEA Test

BANNU: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Public Health Engineering, Pakhtoonyar Khan, has welcomed Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur's notice of the alleged irregularities and reported paper leak during the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) screening test held in Bannu on Saturday.

In a statement issued from his office, the minister strongly rejected the baseless and malicious propaganda being spread against him by political opponents in the wake of the incident. The minister said that one of the individuals arrested in connection with the case is affiliated with a rival political party — a party that, according to him, has resorted to cheap tactics after defeat in the political arena.

Pakhtoonyar Khan further said that a political figure based in Peshawar, who falsely presents himself as a constitutional office holder and is occupying a lavish government residence, is also supporting the culprits involved in the incident.

He added that the guest-house which was raided during the investigation is owned by a member of the same political party that claims to uphold the rule of law and whose owner is reportedly a member of that party's provincial council.

The provincial minister said he reserves the right to take legal action against the smear campaign launched against him.

Action by Domel Police

Suspect involved in serious crimes jeld

F.P. Report

BANNU: In a significant breakthrough, the Domel Police Station team, led by Station House Officer (SHO) Arshad Khan, arrested a suspect involved in multiple serious criminal cases, including motorcycle snatching, robbery, and attempted murder. The arrest occurred during a late-night operation near the CPCE road, close to the refugee camp.

According to police sources, SHO Arshad Khan

received intelligence regarding the presence of suspected criminals in the area. Acting swiftly, he mobilized his team and reached the location. Upon noticing the police, the suspects opened fire in an attempt to escape. The police remained unharmed during the exchange.

One suspect, later identified as Siraj, son of Gul Nawar Khan, a resident of Jhangri Kalla, Domel, was injured reportedly by his own accomplice's fire and was apprehended on the

spot. His accomplice managed to escape under the cover of darkness. Raids are ongoing to arrest the fugitive.

The injured suspect was shifted to the hospital for medical treatment and identification. He was found to be wanted in several cases registered at Domel Police Station.

During preliminary interrogation, the suspect disclosed the identities of other accomplices. Police have launched efforts to track and arrest them.

Bibi Aseefa condolences with various families

LARKANA (APP): First Lady and Member of the National Assembly, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, arrived in Mir Sohrab Mari village, Ghulam Hyder Shah Colony and various others places at Shaheed Benazirabad District on Saturday.

Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, along with Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechuho, condoled with the bereaved family of Mir Sohrab Mari, Coordinator of Youth and Students Affairs for Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, following the passing of his nephew.

Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also expressed sorrow with the family of the late Muhammad Panah Mari, including his father Sabir Hussain, uncle Khadim Hussain, Barkat Ali, Ghulam Sarwar, and Fida Hussain.

Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari led Fatiha prayers for the elevation of the late Muhammad Panah Mari's spiritual status and prayed for the family's patience and strength. District President Muhammad Salim Zardari, District Council Chairman Ali Akbar Jamali, Engineer Mir Muhammad Sial, Rasheed Chandio, Sher Baz Khan Mari, Abdul Rasool Brohi, Abdul Nabi Jamali, and Lala Arshad Khaskheli were also present.

First Lady and MNA Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari arrived in Ghulam Hyder Shah Colony, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari condoled with Labor Councillor Ali Ahmed Khaskheli over the demise of his brother, party worker Zamir Ahmed Khaskheli.

Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari recited Fatiha for

the departed soul's elevated status and prayed for the family's resilience.

First Lady and MNA Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari visited the Garibabad neighborhood. Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari condoled with Arslan Sattar Qureshi, son of former UC Nazim Abdul Sattar Qureshi, following his father's passing.

Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechuho joined Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari in offering condolences to the grieving family.

Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari conducted Fatiha prayers for the late Abdul Sattar Qureshi's spiritual elevation and prayed for the family's forbearance. Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechuho accompanied Bibi Asifa Bhutto Zardari in expressing condolences to the bereaved family.

CM Balochistan announces support for sportsmen, athletes; Boxer Waseem awarded Rs 100 mln

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, has announced a landmark initiative to support sportsmen and athletes across the province, emphasizing the government's commitment to reviving sports grounds and nurturing local talent. Speaking at an event in Quetta marking the successful hosting of the Pakistan International Boxing Championship, CM Bugti declared a cash prize of Rs 100 million for Quetta-born boxer Muhammad Waseem, who recently won the WBA World Gold Bantamweight Title. The event marked the first time an international boxing championship was held in Pakistan. CM Bugti praised the achievement and extended congratulations to the event organizers. "Bringing such a major global boxing event to Balochistan is no less than a dream come true," he said, recognizing the pivotal roles played by Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem Ahmad Khan, Commander Southern Command and world-renowned boxer Muhammad Waseem in making it possible. The Chief Minister reiterated that Balochistan is rich in untapped sports talent and assured that his administration will provide full support to athletes so they can shine on international platforms. He also acknowledged the historical neglect of sports in the region, attributing it to external forces aiming to discourage youth from engaging in positive activities. "The boxing event reflects that the people of Balochistan are peace-loving and passionate about sports," he added. CM Bugti also paid tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their role in ensuring peace and security, stating that the resilience and bravery of Pakistan's Army forced the enemy into a ceasefire. He especially thanked Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, the Chief of Naval Staff, and the Chief of the Air Staff for their commitment to securing a better and safer future for the youth.

Landi Kotal: Peeping through annals of history

LANDI KOTAL (APP): Nestled atop the Khyber Pass, the historic town of Landi Kotal in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has long stood as a witness to centuries of trade, conquest and cultural exchange between South and Central Asia.

Positioned strategically at over 1,000 meters above sea level in Khyber district, some seven kilometers inside Pakistan from Pak-Afghan border, Landi Kotal has served as a vital junction linking Indo-Pakistan subcontinent with Afghanistan through the Torkham border.

"Landi Kotal is a historic town that served as a gateway to subcontinent and route for kings, monarchs and invaders who marched into India via Khyber Pass," said Bakhtzada Muhammad, Deputy Director, Archaeology and Museums Department.

The region's historical

significance dates back to thousands of years. From the semi-nomadic Aryans to Gandhara civilization, many ancient peoples passed through rugged terrain of Landi Kotal.

The Persians, who conquered the area in 6th century BC, integrated it into the Achaemenid Empire, fostering the spread of Gandhara culture and introduction of reading and writing to areas like Swat, Dir and Peshawar.

"Landi Kotal's prominence continued with the arrival of Alexander the Great in 327 BC. His journey through historic Khyber Pass and strong resistance from local tribes of Afridi and Yousafzais are etched in history, as are his interactions in Taxila with Chandragupta Maurya, the future founder of the Maurya Empire," Bakhtzada informed.

He said this famous town has seen the rise and fall of empires—from the

Indo-Greeks, who introduced Greco-Buddhist art, to Mahmud Ghaznavi, who spread Islam in the region after defeating Hindu ruler Jayapala in 1001 AD.

The Mughals, led by King Zaheeruddin Babar, also made their way to subcontinent through Landi Kotal and defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in 1526 at first battle of Panipat. Thereon his successors ruled subcontinent for over 300 years.

Later, King Ahmad Shah Abdali launched campaigns into India from Peshawar, before the Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh captured the region including Landi Kotal in the early 19th century. The British also recognized Landi Kotal's strategic value, constructing the Khyber Pass Railway in the 1920s to reinforce military logistics.

One of its historic settlements is the Landi Kotal

fort that was of an ordinary type during the British rule, consisting of a keep and an outer fort with accommodation for 5 British officers and 500 native officers and men. From 1899, like the other posts in the Khyber, it had been garrisoned by Khyber Rifles, an irregular corps of militia recruited from tribes of the Khyber Agency.

In 1925 the heavily engineered Khyber Pass Railway was opened, linking Jamrud to Landi Kotal. Though now defunct yet remnant of colonial architecture and rail lines still draw history enthusiasts and is known as railways line wonder.

"Landi Kotal was not just a military town—it was once a bustling town along the Silk Road, hosting traders and travelers who exchanged stories, history, goods, trade, business, education and culture about each other especially

in Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan and Indo-Pakistan," said Dr. Muhammad Younas Khan, Chairman Pakistan Studies Department, Islamia College, Peshawar.

"The bustling Landi Kotal Bazaar remains a symbol of its rich legacy where traders and businessmen from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, Uzbekistan and beyond continue to gather in a vibrant fusion of languages, culture and traditions," Younas Khan said. Following Pakistan's independence in 1947, the town of Landi Kotal entered a new era of progress and development also keeping its ancient traditions and culture intact. On April 17, 1948, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited Peshawar and Landi Kotal where he was warmly welcomed by tribal leaders and Malik.

With the merger of

FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Landi Kotal now stands at the cusp of speedy progress and transformation through robust development programs for socioeconomic emancipation of nearly one million tribal people.

A key development initiative in this regard is the Khyber Pass Economic Corridor (KPEC), a major infrastructure project aimed at boosting trade and connectivity for regional prosperity.

Even in the modern era, Landi Kotal remains deeply rooted in its cultural heritage. Its scenic vistas, historic forts and oral traditions continue to attract tourists, historians and adventurers alike.

"Reviving the Khyber Pass is not just about trade—it's about reclaiming our history," says Asghar Afridi, a local tourist guide in Landi Kotal. "This route once connected empires and

civilizations. It can now connect people again."

Besides Khyber Pass, a tourist attraction nearby Landi Kotal, another, slightly less known landmark is a 'banyan tree', which was placed under arrest in 1898 by a drunk British officer named James Squid. Even today there is a board on the tree notifying passerby of its arrest.

The historic town of Landi Kotal, is more than a relic and a bridge to future. As the world watches the evolving geopolitical landscape of South and Central Asia, Landi Kotal stands at crossroads of history.

Whether as a historic passage for ancient empires or a modern trade route for emerging economies, its importance remains undiminished and the Landi Kotal stands as a proud reminder that history and development can go together for shared prosperity.



Pope Leo XIV appeals for 'no more war' in first Sunday message

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Leo XIV appealed to the world's major powers for "no more war" in his first Sunday message to crowds in St. Peter's Square since his election as pontiff.

The new pope, elected on May 8, called for an "authentic and lasting peace" in Ukraine, a ceasefire in Gaza, and the release of all Israeli hostages held by militant group Hamas.

Speaking in fluent Italian, Leo also welcomed the recent fragile ceasefire between India and Pakistan, negotiated overnight, and said he was praying to God to grant the world the "miracle of peace."

"No more war!" the pope said, repeating a frequent call of the late Pope Francis and noting the recent 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two, in which some 60 million people were killed.

Leo said today's world was living through "the dramatic scenario of a

Third World War being fought piecemeal," again repeating a phrase coined by Francis.

Tens of thousands of people in St. Peter's Square and on the Via della Conciliazione leading to the Vatican broke into applause at the call for peace on what was a joyous occasion despite Leo's solemn message.

The new pope said he carries in his heart the "suffering of the beloved people of Ukraine."

Hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed direct talks with Ukraine aimed at ending the bloody three-year war, Leo appealed for negotiations to reach an "authentic, just and lasting peace".

The pope also said he was "profoundly saddened" by the war in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian aid and release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas.

Leo said he was glad to hear of the recent India-Pakistan ceasefire and

hoped negotiations would lead to a lasting accord between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

Leo, the former Cardinal Robert Prevost, is the first U.S.-born pontiff and was a relative unknown on the world stage before his election.

He previously served for decades as a missionary in Peru before first becoming a cardinal to take up a senior Vatican role two years ago.

Leo's first Sunday address coincided with a previously planned pilgrimage to Rome by marching bands from around the world.

Minutes before the pope addressed the crowd, bands marched up the broad boulevard leading to the Vatican playing songs such as Y.M.C.A. by the Village People, the theme from the film Rocky, and music by John Philip Sousa, who composed the marching classic "Stars and Stripes Forever".

Peruvian Gladys Ruiz, who lives in Rome, was

among the crowd in the square, estimated at more than 100,000 by Italian authorities. Calling Leo a "Peruvian pope" Ruiz said his election is "a great honour for us". Leo has dual citizenship, having gained Peruvian citizenship in 2015.

Also present were Dennis Gilligan and wife Maureen from Boston, Massachusetts, visiting Rome for their anniversary. He said he had passed up an opportunity to see Pope John Paul II when he visited Boston in 1979.

"I regretted it all my life," he said. "This was very moving."

The crowd was also entertained by bands from Italy, Mexico and other parts of Latin America who came to Rome for the ongoing Catholic Holy Year.

In all of his appearances since his election, Leo has not made any mention of the country of his birth, angering some U.S. conservative commentators.



VATICAN CITY, VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV appears on the main central loggia of St Peter's Basilica for the Regina Caeli prayer in St. Peter's Square on Sunday in Vatican City, Vatican. Pope Leo XIV (formerly Robert Francis Prevost) was elected to the papacy on May 8 following the death of Pope Francis on April 21.

Bangladesh bans Sheikh Hasina's former ruling party

DHAKA (AP): The interim government in Bangladesh on Saturday banned all activities of the former ruling Awami League party headed by former influential Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted last year in a mass uprising.

Asif Nazrul, the country's law affairs adviser, said late Saturday the interim Cabinet headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus decided to ban the party's activities online and elsewhere under the country's Anti-Terrorism Act. The ban would stay in place until a special tribunal completes a trial of the party and its leaders over the deaths of hundreds of students and other protesters during an anti-government uprising in July and August last year.

"This decision is aimed at ensuring national security and sovereignty, protection of activists of the July

movement, and plaintiffs and witnesses involved in the tribunal proceedings," Nazrul told reporters after a special Cabinet meeting.

Nazrul said the meeting Saturday also expanded scope for trying any political parties involving charges of killing during the anti-Hasina protest being handled by the International Crimes Tribunal.

He said a government notification regarding the ban would be published soon with details.

Hasina and many of her senior party colleagues have been accused of murder in many cases after her ouster last year. Hasina has been in exile in India since Aug. 5 as her official residence was stormed by protesters soon after she left the country.

The United Nations human rights office in a report said in February that up to 1,400 people may have been

killed during three weeks of anti-Hasina protest.

Saturday night's dramatic decision came after thousands of protesters, including supporters of a newly formed political party by students, took to the streets in Dhaka and issued an ultimatum to ban the Awami League party by Saturday night. The members of the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami party also prominently took part in the protest.

There was no immediate reaction from Hasina or her party, but the chief of the National Citizen Party, Nahid Islam, who is also a student leader, applauded the Yunus-led government for its decision.

The student-led uprising ended Hasina's 15 years of rule, and three days after her fall Yunus took the helm as interim leader.

Albania votes as PM Rama seeks fourth term, promising EU integration

TIRANA (Reuters): Albanians started voting in parliamentary elections on Sunday with prime minister Edi Rama seeking an unprecedented fourth term in office after a campaign dominated by promises to join the European Union and accusations of widespread graft.

Polling stations opened at 7 a.m. (0500 GMT) and will close at 7 p.m. Results are expected on Monday and exit polls will be released after ballot boxes are sealed on Sunday.

Rama, in power as head of the Socialist Party (PS) since 2013, is favourite to win against his old rival, former prime minister Sali Berisha of the Democratic Party (PD), bolstered in part by an influential network built over 12 years in power, a recent period of healthy economic growth and a largely popular image abroad.

But opposition to Rama has intensified in the past year over a perceived crackdown on the opposi-

tion, including Berisha, while Rama weathered a series of scandals of his own. These include the arrest of his ally, the mayor of Tirana Erion Veliaj, this year on allegations of corruption and money laundering.

Veliaj and Berisha deny wrongdoing.

Rama has spent the last week reiterating his promise to join the EU by the end of the decade, although some experts doubt that timeline will be possible given the reforms required to join the bloc, including eradicating graft.

"Today the Albanian people will decide to push very strongly forward and to give us all the strength we need to make Albania the next European member state," Rama told reporters outside a polling station after casting his vote.

Berisha also backs Albania's EU aspirations and has promised to fight corruption and increase wages.

"It's going to be a new

summer day for Albanians," Berisha told Reuters after voting. "Vote, vote, vote."

Opinion polls show Rama winning up to 50% of the vote and Berisha up to 35%. Rama may need help from smaller parties to maintain a slim four-seat majority in the 140-seat house.

Many young voters especially are tired of the likes of Berisha and Rama who have run the country in various roles since the fall of communism in 1990. They point to Albania's stark income inequality that sees many people drive expensive Range Rovers around the capital Tirana while others live in cramped Soviet-era housing.

"I will vote for new politicians because those like Rama and Berisha have been here for three decades and they only replace themselves," said Arber Qazimi, 21.

An economics student called Erisa said she would

not even vote and was instead looking for a way to join the hundreds of thousands of Albanians who have emigrated over the past decade, many of them to nearby EU countries.

Others voted for something new.

"We want to see changes to stop youth from going out of the country," said Elson Toska, 37, after voting. "The future is not Europe, to go and work there. We have our own country."

By some measures, Rama has done well. Annual economic growth above 4% for 2022-2024, driven by trade with the EU and a tourism boom, outstripped other Balkan countries, the World Bank says.

But corruption remains a huge problem, experts say, driven by criminal gangs who make billions of euros from drugs and weapons trafficking overseas and bring it back to Albania to be laundered.

Under Trump pressure, Columbia University ends semester in turmoil

NEW YORK (AFP): Biliana, an international student at New York's Columbia University, is studying for exams but fears being arrested by immigration police.

Columbia professors meanwhile are scrambling to save research funding in the crosshairs of President Donald Trump's administration.

An atmosphere of crisis hovers over campus as the semester winds down, as the White House accuses the prestigious university and other Ivy League schools of anti-Semitism and "woke" liberal ideology.

Several hundred foreign students nationwide have been threatened with the cancellation of their visas, while others have been targeted — and a few arrested, including at Columbia — over everything from participation in pro-Palestinian protests to traffic violations.

"The situation is just terrifying," said Biliana, a 29-year-old law student, who feels such dread that she asked not to be identified by her real name or even the Latin American country she comes from.

"You feel like you cannot say anything, you cannot

share anything."

She went on: "Me and my friends, we have not been posting anything on Twitter," and many are deleting old posts for fear of crossing an invisible red line.

"Basically, what we're trying to do is just to go to normal classes," she said.

Last week, with final exams looming, 80 pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested after attempting to overtake the main library.

The university's interim president quickly condemned the protest action.

Biliana said she made sure to stay far away from these kinds of demonstrations, fearful she might show up in a photo and be falsely linked to the group.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said officials were reviewing the visa status of the "vandals" involved, adding: "Pro-Hamas thugs are no longer welcome in our great nation."

For newly elected student body president Oscar Wolfe, "There is definitely a heightened level of anxiety among international students, regardless of their involvement in the protests."

Wolfe arrived on campus in September 2023, just

before Hamas militants launched their October 7 attack on Israel, sparking the Gaza war and giving rise to protests that continue. He said he has known little more than a month of "normal" campus life.

Reflecting the turmoil, Columbia — which normally draws thousands of tourists to its Manhattan campus featuring colonnaded buildings, sweeping lawns and famous Alma Mater statue — has largely cut off public access to its grounds.

The Trump administration has accused the university of allowing anti-Semitism to flourish on campus — something the school strongly denies — and has slashed some \$400 million of Columbia's federal funding.

Harvard, another Ivy League college, has defiantly pushed back — suing the administration to halt a federal freeze of \$2 billion in grants.

Columbia, for its part, is negotiating with the government. But on Wednesday, interim President Claire Shipman announced that "nearly 180 of our colleagues who have been working, in whole or in part, on impacted federal

grants" were going to lose their jobs.

Rebecca Muhle, a professor of psychiatry, said her grant for a research project on autism was "not canceled, but it's not funded — it's in limbo."

"I cannot hire anyone or make large purchases," she said.

"There are many, many grants in this situation," Muhle added. "It's chaos, and you can't conduct good science in chaos."

History professor Matthew Connelly, who specializes in state secrets and their declassification, said he had been notified that the National Endowment for the Humanities had canceled two grants, with "no real reason given."

The grants, he said, were intended to train scholars and archivists in analyzing and preserving historical records, particularly those in digital form — "one of the great challenges facing researchers."

But Connelly said he was not about to throw in the towel. "Universities are a target, because everything we do is completely contrary to what the Trump administration is trying to achieve," he said.

33 killed in Sudan strikes blamed on paramilitary RSF



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.

On Friday evening, 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.

On Saturday, an RSF strike on a prison in the army-controlled southern city of El-Obeid killed at least 19 people and wounded 45, a medical source said.

The source told AFP that the jail in the North Kordofan state capital was hit by a RSF drone.

The war, which began as a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, has spiralled into what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

It has effectively divided the country in two with the army controlling the north, east and center while the RSF and its allies dominate nearly all of Darfur in the west and parts of the south.

Bus carrying pilgrims crashes killing 21 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (AFP): An overcrowded bus carrying dozens of Buddhist pilgrims plummeted into a precipice in Sri Lanka on Sunday, killing at least 21 and injuring 24, a senior transport official said.

The island nation's winding roads are among the most dangerous in the world, and the crash off a cliffside road on Sunday was among the deadliest recorded in Sri Lanka in decades.

The roof and side panels of the bus were sheared off, and more than half the seats were ripped from the floor of the vehicle, which landed wheels up into a tea plantation, photos of the wreckage showed.

The state-owned bus was carrying around 70 passen-

gers — about 20 more than its capacity — through the central hilly region of Kotmale when the driver lost control and it veered off the road before dawn, police said.

"We are trying to establish whether it was a mechanical failure or if the driver fell asleep at the wheel," a local police official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media.

Deputy Transport Minister Prasanna Gunasena told reporters at the scene that the injured were rushed to two area hospitals.

"Twenty one have died and we are trying to identify the victims," Gunasena said.

The toll could have been higher, the minister added, if not for local residents helping pull people from the mangled wreckage and rushing them to hospital.

Police said 24 people were being treated in the two hospitals.

One survivor told a local journalist that he had been in the front section of the bus and was lucky to have escaped with only minor injuries.

"The bus was leaning to the left side and as the driver was negotiating a bend, he lost control and it fell down the precipice," said the man, who did not give his name, in a video seen by AFP.

The bus was travelling from the pilgrim town of Kataragama in the island's

deep south to the central city of Kurunegala, a distance of about 250 kilometres (155 miles).

Sri Lanka records an average of 3,000 road fatalities annually, making the island's roads among the most deadly in the world.

Sunday's bus accident was one of the worst in the country since April 2005 when a driver attempted to beat a train at a level crossing in the town of Polgahawela. The bus driver was lightly injured, but 37 passengers were killed.

In March 2021, 13 passengers and the driver of a privately owned bus died when the vehicle crashed into a precipice in Passara, about 100 kilometres east of the scene of the crash on Sunday.

UK plans to end 'failed free market experiment' in immigration

LONDON (Reuters): The British government outlined plans on Sunday to end what it called the "failed free market experiment" in mass immigration by restricting skilled worker visas to graduate-level jobs and forcing businesses to increase training for local workers.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer is under pressure to cut net migration after the success of Nigel Farage's right-wing, anti-immigration Reform UK party in local elections this month.

Under the government's

new plans, skilled visas will only be granted to people in graduate jobs, while visas for lower-skilled roles will only be issued in areas critical to the nation's industrial strategy, and in return businesses must increase training of British workers.

Companies in the care sector will no longer be able to seek visas for workers recruited abroad.

The Labour government said the changes will be part of a policy document, known as a white paper, to be published on Monday setting out how ministers

plan to reduce immigration.

High levels of legal migration were one of the major drivers behind the vote to leave the European Union in 2016 with voters unhappy about the free movement of workers across the bloc.

After Britain eventually left the EU in 2020, the then Conservative government reduced the threshold to allow workers in categories such as yoga teachers, dog walkers and DJs to be eligible for skilled worker visas.

"We inherited a failed

immigration system where the previous government replaced free movement with a free market experiment," Yvette Cooper, the British interior minister, said in a statement. "We are taking decisive action to restore control and order to the immigration system."

While post-Brexit changes to visas saw a sharp drop in the number of European Union migrants to Britain, new work visa rules and people arriving from Ukraine and Hong Kong under special visa schemes led to a surge in immigration.

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An American Pope who sympathises with the poor

The election of Chicago-born Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as the new head of the 1.4 billion-strong Roman Catholic Church on Wednesday was swift and smooth. The conclave of cardinals deliberated for two days before they chose Prevost, who had worked in Peru for many years as the successor to Pope Francis who had passed away in April at the age of 88.

Cardinal Prevost has chosen to be called Leo XIV. He belongs to the Order of St. Augustine even as his predecessor Francis belonged to the Society of Jesus, also known as Jesuits. The question on everyone's mind was who will succeed Pope Francis who had brought in extraordinary qualities of moral leadership, and reached out to people across faiths. It is too early to say what will be the world-view of Pope Leo XIV.

The initial curiosity about him will be about him being an American. The question is certain to crop up as to what kind of an American he is, and whether his American roots will shape his papacy. There are clean signs that he is an American who identifies himself with the poor. Though born in a wealthy country, he had spent his time in one of the poorest countries in South America, Peru. Cardinal Prevost is known to be a critic of American President Donald Trump. That in itself reveals a lot about the new Pope. In a surprise, President Trump greeted the new Pope and underlined the fact that he (the Pope) was an American.

Apart from the fact that he is drawn to the poor, there is not much known about Pope Leo XIV's views on controversial issues facing the Roman Catholic Church. There is the issue of abuse of the young by Catholic priests in many parts of the world which poses a big challenge. Not many were happy with the response of Pope Francis. Similarly, it is not known what his views are on the issue of Catholic priests getting married, about women priests, and about gay priests. It would appear that he would lean towards conservatism, and he would not take bold steps that could prove to be risky for the stability of the Roman Catholic Church.

But with his social and political stance on poverty and equality, which seems to be inspired by Leo XIII (1878-1903), who criticised both capitalism and socialism, and suggested a Christian middle-path of justice and harmony, he could be seen as a promising leftist Pope. What stands out about Leo XIV is the fact that he does not enjoy being in the limelight, that he would pursue his programmes in a quiet manner, and lead the church in a balanced manner.

Perhaps it is his quietness that led the other cardinals to choose him as the Pope. The church wants to shun controversies and remain a stable centre of millions of the faithful around the world, and Leo XIV seems to be the man to provide the stability and quietness.

The new Pope has also emphasised in his first address as the head of the Vatican that he wants people to return to the church, and true to the principles of his Order of St. Augustine, he feels that individual Christians would be incomplete unless they are part of the church as a community.

It is the emphasis on the communitarian aspect of religious life that could mark out the papacy of Leo XIV. But the new Pope would be compelled to take note of the internal decay that has crept into parts of the church edifice and he would need to clean it up. But it looks like that he would do it in his own quiet manner and will take his own time to do it.

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Israel's front with Syria might prove to be one of many

Yossi Mekelberg

Ever since Israel gained its independence, the country's strategists have warned against multifront wars and, worse, ones that drag on for a long time. The need for decisive and short military campaigns derives from the military's reliance mainly on reservists and volunteers, hence for economic and social reasons it does not have the "luxury" of engaging in a prolonged war, especially for a small nation.

The Israel Defense Forces — a "people's army" of conscripts and reservists — also requires a high level of consensus regarding the objectives of a war and the means employed, something that the current Israeli government hardly enjoys among its people. Moreover, being territorially small and having little strategic depth, where population centers and strategic assets are close to its borders, is also a source of vulnerability that creates a certain security mindset.

Israel has now been embroiled in a multifront war, with some fronts more active than others, for more than 18 months, while the conflict with the Houthis, and by extension Iran, is heating up again, and there is tense anticipation of a full-scale assault on Gaza that will have horrific consequences. However, the front with Syria stands out. Unlike Gaza, Lebanon, or even Yemen, there was no initial act of aggression by Damascus before Israel took a unilateral step to take swaths of Syrian land beyond that part of the Golan Heights already occupied since 1967, in addition to its use of excessive military force following last December's revolution which toppled the regime of Syria's dictator Bashar Assad.

Since the 2011 uprising in Syria and the ensuing deadly conflict there, Israel has operated quite freely in Syria, mainly attacking convoys of weapons and ammunition from Iran on their way to Hezbollah in Lebanon and their depots in Syria, and targeting Hezbollah and Iranian military personnel who were propping up the Assad regime until its downfall. Ostensibly the end of the

previous regime in Syria should have been a source of relief for Israel, especially as it came hard on the heels of Israel's actions that substantially reduced the military capabilities of Hezbollah in Lebanon and decimated its leadership in the autumn of last year, and the end of the Tehran-friendly regime in Damascus. After all, for years Israel had been concerned over the continuing presence of Iran and its proxies close to its borders. This is no longer the case now that Hamas and

ment that kept this border quiet. However, it was Israel that was first to violate the armistice agreement by immediately taking control of more than 400 sq. km of land that according to the post-1973 war agreement was a demilitarized buffer zone deep inside Syrian territory. Initially, the Israeli government claimed that this was a temporary measure, although any observer of Israel's past behavior in these circumstances knows that the notion "temporary" is relative and can mean

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Admittedly, there are genuine worries for the safety of minorities and the prospect of sectarian violence by the rebels who overthrew Assad, especially against the Alawite minority, but also against Christians, Druze, and Kurds, which is inexcusable. Yet, when Israel is bombing targets in Syria — and last week it hit locations close to Syria's presidential palace, claiming the strike to be a warning to the government to protect the Druze minority — we are entitled to suspect that it is exploiting the predicament of the Druze as a justification for making the temporary presence of its military deep in Syria a permanent fixture and to establish a Druze buffer zone, possibly an autonomous one, on the border with Israel.
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Hezbollah's military capabilities have been so badly hit, and with the change of leadership in Damascus the weapons-supply lifeline to Hezbollah in Lebanon has been cut, creating a buffer zone between Israel and its number one regional enemy.

However, the change of leadership in Syria brought to power Ahmad Al-Sharaa. This is a source of concern for Israel, which took the decision to use military power to capture land from the new government, not as retaliation for any hostile act but as a "down payment" to deter a leadership that might or might not be hostile. Thus far there has been no suggestion that Syria is abrogating the 1974 disengagement agree-

ment that kept this border quiet. However, it was Israel that was first to violate the armistice agreement by immediately taking control of more than 400 sq. km of land that according to the post-1973 war agreement was a demilitarized buffer zone deep inside Syrian territory.

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any length of time. Not only has the Israeli military set up watchtowers there, along with prefabricated housing modules, roads, and communication infrastructure — in other words military outposts — but Israel's defense minister has said that the Israeli forces are "prepared to stay in Syria for an unlimited amount of time" to ensure Israel's security.

Israel, like many others in the region, has legitimate concerns about what kind of country Syria will become after Assad, considering that the main armed group to lead the revolution has emerged from the remnants of Jabhat Al-Nusra, Al-Qaeda's former Syrian branch. Unfortunately the Israel of

post-Oct. 7 has only one modus operandi, and it is the use of excessive military force, which antagonizes even those countries that do not necessarily harbor ill intentions toward it.

Admittedly, there are genuine worries for the safety of minorities and the prospect of sectarian violence by the rebels who overthrew Assad, especially against the Alawite minority, but also against Christians, Druze, and Kurds, which is inexcusable. Yet, when Israel is bombing targets in Syria — and last week it hit locations close to Syria's presidential palace, claiming the strike to be a warning to the government to protect the Druze minority — we are entitled to suspect that it is exploiting the predicament of the Druze as a justification for making the temporary presence of its military deep in Syria a permanent fixture and to establish a Druze buffer zone, possibly an autonomous one, on the border with Israel.

Considering Israel's complete disregard for the lives and human rights of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, the Netanyahu government's claim that its military actions in Syria are those of a defender of a minority in another country is bound to be greeted with at least some degree of skepticism, despite the unquestionable special relations between the Druze community in Israel and the state, being the only minority that agreed to mandatory military service as part of its integration into Israeli society.

This still did not give the Druze any dispensation by the controversially racist Nation State law of 2018, which excludes minorities and omits equality for all, despite the more than 500 of them who have died while serving in the security forces in the years since Israel's independence. With a government led by a cynical prime minister, and too many ministers with expansionist dreams and who are even willing to sacrifice its hostages in Gaza after they failed to protect them on Oct. 7, there is justified suspicion that security is not the only reason for Israel's aggressive policies toward Syria.

A new era of US-Middle East grand strategy

Salman Al-Ansari

Some view US President Donald Trump as the pioneer of transactional relationships. That may be partially true, but in reality, a series of transactional deals can lay the foundation for a new and enduring strategic vision. The era of the US focusing on meaningless idealism, at least in its Middle East policy, is over. And even if a future Democratic administration eventually takes power, that shift will be hard to reverse.

The golden rule for any government should be simple: Serve the national interest. Yet, the concern with previous US administrations was that they often appeared to willingly make decisions that ran directly against America's core interests, especially in the Middle East.

Some of this could be chalked up to incompetence or ignorance. But the greater fear is that it was intentional, driven by the rise of global far-left agendas that harbored resentment toward their own country's history, conduct, and identity.

We have witnessed grievance politics, "woke" ideology, and an all-out war against family values, faith, and basic common sense — a new radical version of postmodernism that perhaps deserves to be called the "post-common-sense era."

Despite fierce criticism, the Trump administration arguably saved the US — and by extension the broader Western world — from falling into that abyss. It did so by enacting dramatic course corrections to stabilize America's future trajectory.

Now, four months into his second term, Trump is doubling down on this approach, particularly in the Middle East.

In regional policy, the US leader has remained clear-eyed, and impatient with rigid bureaucracy. He wants real, immediate change, not decades of incremental steps that often lead nowhere.

One major obstacle to US interests in the region has long been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the US has maintained strong relations with most Middle Eastern countries, the potential for deeper, more beneficial partnerships has been limited by this unresolved dispute, which fueled widespread distrust and resentment across the region.

Trump now has a chance to deliver one of the most historic achievements of the 21st century: finally ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — not by endless negotiations that lead nowhere, but by pushing both sides toward a lasting peace.

Such a breakthrough would not only strengthen US interests and regional stability, but also would deal a devastating blow to the extremists and radicals who have always thrived on chaos and hatred.

This would also be a service to Israeli citizens, liberating them from the dangerous self-destructive policies of their own extreme leadership.

Trump understands the language of prosperity. And prosperity cannot happen without security. He knows that for economic growth to flourish, peace must pre-

vail.

He will likely mobilize his network of right-wing American Jewish officials and business leaders to apply real pressure on the Israeli government — pressure that previous administrations hesitated to use. For years, some factions within Israel have exploited American goodwill without offering meaningful concessions in return.

During his first term, Trump gave Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unprecedented political support: He recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem, endorsed Israeli settlements, brokered the Abraham Accords, and delivered major financial and military aid. No US president had done more.

Yet Netanyahu responded with four major problems: no flexibility on Gaza, constant pressure to push the US into a war with Iran, reckless military adventures in Syria, and alleged interference in US political affairs. From Trump's perspective, the Israeli leader took everything and gave nothing meaningful back.

Trump has now seen Netanyahu's true face, without filters. He also now clearly understands Saudi Arabia's longstanding position regarding the importance of resolving the Palestinian issue for lasting regional peace.

The US president is unlikely to view Netanyahu as an asset anymore. Rather, he will see him as a free rider — a liability Washington can no longer afford if it is serious about an "America First" foreign policy. That does not mean the US will abandon Israel; quite the opposite. True friendship means helping Israel avoid its own self-destruction and securing a future where it can peacefully coexist with its neighbors.

Trump now has a golden opportunity to shift the longstanding dynamic of the US taking dictation from Israel on Middle Eastern affairs. Instead, he can reestablish an independent American foreign policy that serves American interests first. And, as history often shows, what is good for America tends to be good for the wider world as well.

If a figure as bold as Trump cannot redirect this relationship, it is unlikely that any future American president can.

As a historical reflection, many believe the US replaced Britain as the world's leading power immediately after the Second World War. But the true turning point came in 1956, during the Suez crisis, when the US forced Britain, France, and Israel to halt their aggression against Egypt. That moment redefined global perceptions of power.

If the US still aspires to reclaim that kind of moral and strategic credibility, it must be willing to remind its allies, including Israel, of the natural order of partnership.

In the end, that will not only protect American interests, but also safeguard Israel's future by saving it from the dangerous path charted by leaders like Netanyahu.

Pope Leo XIV embodies the power of love, not the love of power

Wadie Abunassar

Last Thursday, the College of Cardinals elected Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as the new pope, succeeding Pope Francis, who died on April 21. The new pope chose the name Leo XIV, inspired by his predecessors who bore the same name and by the symbolic meanings associated with it, which are worth reflecting on.

The name "Leo" means "lion." However, this lion does not represent worldly power, but the power of love — following the example of Jesus Christ, the founder and greatest teacher of the church.

It is believed that the new pope chose this name in honor of Pope Leo I, who in 452 met Attila the Hun, the invader of Europe who terrified the Roman emperor. The pope met him with-

out armies and persuaded him not to attack Rome.

Others believe he was inspired by Pope Leo XIII, famous for his encyclical Rerum Novarum, issued on May 16, 1891 — a significant document defending the rights of the working class, which was suffering from exploitation and serious challenges at that time.

Some people fear the new pope because he is American. But this fear is rooted in superficial analysis. First, it generalizes Americans in a way that is detached from reality. Second, it overlooks the fact that the elected pope left the US and served for more than 25 years in Peru, South America, far from his homeland, dedicating himself to the weak and marginalized.

Notably, in his first

speech from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, he did not speak in English or refer to his American roots. Instead, he spoke in Spanish, addressing the diocese he once led in Peru.

The new pope said in his speech that he is an Augustinian, meaning he belongs to the Augustinian order, named after St. Augustine, who lived in North Africa (354-430). A core principle of this order is sharing what you have with others — unlike many political leaders today, who not only hoard what they have but also seek to take what belongs to others.

It is worth noting that the new pope was elected relatively quickly, in the third round of voting by the College of Cardinals and

less than 30 hours after the conclave began. This reflects the strong confidence he enjoyed among the cardinals, having secured more than two-thirds of their votes.

This may be attributed to his positive reputation during his service in Peru and his work alongside Pope Francis over the past three years as head of the Congregation for Bishops.

Many wrongly see the pope as merely a head of state. This is a common misconception among politicians who expect the pope to support one side over another or align with a political faction. Though he leads the smallest state in the world, the pope is primarily the shepherd of the largest spiritual body on

earth, the Catholic Church.

So, it is inaccurate to focus solely on the Vatican when discussing the pope. The Vatican is simply the seat of the pope, who leads the Holy See, which holds spiritual authority over more than 1.3 billion people.

Most of the popes' positions and actions stem from their pastoral role, not from political motivations. Though historical context and politics have an influence, the vast majority of popes have aimed to emulate Christ, each with their own approach and personality.

I advise anyone looking for a mere "employee" in the pope to look elsewhere. The pope cannot endorse wrongdoing or stay silent in the face of injustice, especially in a world increasingly ruled by narcissistic and populist leaders who enda-

nger not only their people but also global stability.

Pope Leo XIV chose two words as his motto: "Hope and Reconciliation." In an age of turmoil, hope still lives. Like Christ, he wishes to offer hope to those walking in darkness and living in fear and anxiety. He also aims to promote reconciliation — building bridges with and among all people, fulfilling Christ's desire that we love one another as we love ourselves.

I pray to the Almighty to support the pope in his new mission and grant him success for the good of all people, especially the faithful — that he may face all challenges with the power of love, not the love of power, which is glorified by the wicked and, sadly, by some people as well.

Bread and power: North Africa’s looming food crisis

Hafed Al-Ghwel

For decades, governments in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya have clung to a simple formula for stability: Keep bread affordable at any cost. In the post-independence decades, regimes poured oil revenues and public funds into massive subsidies, fixing the price of flatbread and flour at mere cents. This “bread-for-quiet” social contract became a pillar of political governance.

In Algiers, a baguette still costs about \$0.10 thanks to heavy state subsidies — a ruinous legacy of leaders who understood that hungry citizens could quickly become angry citizens. The strategy succeeded in the short term. Even during wars and uprisings elsewhere, North African populations were mostly insulated from outright famine or food riots. The region’s rulers ensured supermarket shelves stayed stocked and staple foods remained within reach. But that apparent success masked a deeper failure to build anything resembling resilient food governance systems.

Authoritarian and centralized governance structures have maintained food access on paper, but often by brute force of spending rather than sound planning. Through the 1970s and 1980s, many North African states devoted around 5-6 percent of gross domestic product to food and fuel subsidies — a huge fiscal burden justified as the cost of social peace. Dissent was managed through cheap calories instead of democratic voice.

Yet, this top-down approach bred complacency and neglect. As regimes fixated on urban consumers and import supply chains, they paid scant attention to rural development. Small farmers were left to toil with aging irrigation canals and little support, and agricultural innovation stagnated. In Tunisia, decades of urban-first policies drove

many youth away from farming; today nearly half of Tunisian farm laborers are over the age of 60, a grim indicator of a graying countryside.

Similar trends are visible in Algeria and Morocco, where younger generations see no future in tilling the soil. The implicit deal — autocratic governments providing food security in

Morocco’s worst harvest in decades caused its cereal output to plummet by over 60 percent, and the entire region had to import an estimated 51 million tons of cereals to make up the shortfall.

Even oil-rich Algeria felt the squeeze. Algeria consumes roughly 11 million tons of wheat a year, but grows only a quarter of that

more erratic. By last summer, reservoirs in parts of Tunisia fell to less than one-fifth of their capacity, forcing authorities to start rationing water to households overnight.

Morocco and Algeria have faced successive droughts that turned once-fertile plains into dust bowls. In Morocco’s once-lush Middle Atlas region,

North Africa’s addiction to imported food is an open secret and a dangerous Achilles’ heel. More than half of the calories consumed across the Maghreb come from beyond the region’s borders. Wheat from France, sunflower oil from Ukraine, sugar from Brazil — the daily meals of Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, and Libyans are entwined with global supply chains and volatile commodity markets. This dependence hardly mattered when world prices were low and foreign exchange was plentiful. But those conditions are vanishing. When drought and geopolitics upended grain markets in 2022 North African governments were forced to dig deep into their coffers.

exchange for political quiescence — has proven hollow in the long run. The fields are full, but the farms are failing.

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on its own soil. The rest must be purchased abroad, its cost covered by fickle oil and gas revenues. As energy prices fluctuate and Algeria’s currency weakens, it hampers the government’s ability to absorb the cost of bread for 45 million. With each dinar devaluation, imported wheat becomes pricier and the subsidy bill swells. These fiscal cracks put regimes in a bind: do they dip into dwindling foreign reserves to uphold the social contract of cheap food, or do they risk an uprising by letting prices rise?

Underlying this fragility is a deeper environmental and generational crisis in North African agriculture. The region’s farmlands are literally drying up. North Africa is one of the driest areas on Earth, and climate change is hitting it with a sledgehammer. Year after year, temperatures break records and rainfall grows

farmers watch as shrinking snowpacks and erratic rains decimate their harvests; the country’s ambitious irrigation projects and “Green Morocco” agricultural plan have struggled to keep pace with the sheer scale of water scarcity. Poor water management has compounded the pain — decades of over-extraction from aquifers, inefficient irrigation, and neglect of water infrastructure mean that precious winter rain often evaporates unused. Now climate models project yet another brutally hot year ahead, raising fears of a new cycle of crop failures.

This ecological stress intersects with a demographic time-bomb on the farms. Because government policies historically devalued farming as a livelihood, young people in Algeria, Tunisia, and beyond have steadily abandoned rural life for the cities, the civil sector or going abroad.

Those who remain tilling the land are aging fast. The sight of a 70-year-old farmer working alone in his field is no longer unusual.

In Tunisia, the median age of farmers has drifted upward into the senior years, leaving fewer energetic hands to adapt to climate challenges or adopt new techniques. When the old farmers age out, who will replace them? The danger is that local food production capacity simply withers away through attrition, even as climate change makes it ever harder to grow crops.

Meanwhile, North African countries have talked up grand schemes — Algeria speaks of “greening” the Sahara with new farms, Morocco experiments with drought-tolerant grain varieties, but progress is slow and often superficial. The hard truth is that it is easier for leaders to import shiploads of wheat than to undertake the politically thankless work of overhauling irrigation systems, land policies, and rural investment.

But that easy path is now leading to a dead end, and the signs of strain are everywhere. The politics of food in North Africa is fast approaching a dangerous precipice. The old bargain of authoritarian stability in exchange for guaranteed bread is unraveling under the weight of climate change and economic reality.

If governments in Algiers, Rabat, Tunis, and Tripoli cannot pivot from emergency measures to genuine reform, they risk a future where they can no longer afford to feed their people who, in turn, can no longer afford to wait. The cost of failure will be measured not just in import bills or inflation percentages, but in upheaval on the streets and empty villages left behind. In a region where bread has always been political, it may soon become the very currency of survival — or revolt.

Why Türkiye-UK ties are soaring

Dr. Sinem Cengiz

The defense cooperation agreement signed last week between Türkiye and the UK marks the latest step in a growing relationship, reflecting how Ankara and London are drawing closer as their strategic interests increasingly align.

The Türkiye-UK Defense Industry Cooperation Council Charter was officially signed by the two countries, formalizing and institutionalizing their collaboration in the defense sector. This agreement marks the beginning of a new phase in strategic cooperation between Ankara and London. Citing a “changing global security environment” and “common threats,” these two NATO allies highlighted the importance of deepening their ties in the defense sphere.

In 2023, the Turkish and British defense ministers signed a statement of intent on defense cooperation, which included plans for joint training exercises and enhanced security collaboration. Another clear sign of the deepening defense ties between the two countries is the negotiations over a potential sale of Eurofighter Typhoon jets to Türkiye — a deal reportedly valued at nearly \$10 billion.

When Keir Starmer assumed office as prime minister last summer, there were concerns that Türkiye-UK ties might lose the momentum they had gained over the past decade, particularly with the shift to a Labour government. However, contrary to these concerns, Starmer gets along well with Türkiye’s leadership. He was even criticized by the leader of Türkiye’s largest opposition party, who accused him of overlooking domestic political issues in Türkiye while focusing on regional security concerns, such as developments in Syria. Since taking office, Starmer has held phone calls with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and met him on the sidelines of international forums, including COP29 in Baku and the NATO Summit in Washington.

This signals a shift in London’s foreign policy toward a more pragmatic approach, recognizing Türkiye’s increasing significance in the Middle East. While there are differing views within the Labour government on Ankara, regional flashpoints such as Syria, Gaza and Ukraine have driven the UK to prioritize cooperation with Türkiye — a crucial NATO ally. The UK has also refrained from publicly commenting on Türkiye’s support for Azerbaijan during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, indicating its desire to maintain strong relations with both Ankara and Baku.

Although the UK had lobbied for Türkiye’s accession to the EU, its own departure from the bloc has significantly reshaped its relationship with Ankara. Brexit has, in many ways, opened a window of opportunity for the UK to strengthen defense and economic ties with Türkiye, including rejuvenating talks on a free trade agreement.

Türkiye today views the UK as a valuable partner in several key areas other than defense, including investment, migration policy and trade. A major point of convergence between the two countries is the issue of illegal migration, particularly in light of the UK’s stricter

immigration policies since Brexit. Some analysts have even suggested that one of the driving factors behind the UK’s decision to leave the EU was concerns over Türkiye’s potential membership, which could have led to increased refugee flows from conflict zones into Europe.

Ultimately, both Türkiye and the UK have had to face similar challenges, including the weakening of the EU, the escalating refugee crisis and the growing threat of Russian aggression. Both countries have opposed Russia’s actions in Syria and Ukraine, though Ankara has skillfully navigated its relationship with Moscow, managing to compartmentalize cooperation on certain issues. One example of this is Türkiye’s purchase

ongoing war in Gaza. British Foreign Secretary David Lammy recently acknowledged for the first time that the UK was working with France and Saudi Arabia on recognizing a Palestinian state ahead of a key UN conference in June. Furthermore, the UK and the Palestinian Authority last month signed a memorandum of understanding on strategic cooperation, which included joint efforts to plan for Gaza’s future in alignment with Arab and Palestinian initiatives.

To close ranks with the regional powers, British Defense Secretary John Healey last November paid visits to both Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, where discussions centered on regional security and deepening defense cooperation. Strengthening ties with

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In addition, Türkiye’s growing role in the Middle East — a region in which the UK has key strategic interests — is another driver of the strengthening relationship. One of the most pressing issues on which Türkiye and the UK have similar concerns is the

Türkiye and other regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia, presents the UK with an opportunity to exert or maintain its influence in the Middle East.

Syria is another area of interest. During a meeting between top Turkish and British diplomats in March, Türkiye and the UK discussed the unconditional removal of sanctions on Syria, focusing particularly on restoring financial flows to the country.

Ankara and London appear to be mutual beneficiaries of this closeness, as their national interests outweigh their political differences. For Türkiye, the UK provides the opportunity to cooperate with a NATO ally that is not constrained by the EU’s conditions, while for the UK, Türkiye serves as a gateway to both its economic and political interests in the region.

New EU roadmap resets energy relationship with Russia

Andrew Hammond

US President Donald Trump had pledged previously to find a solution to the Ukraine war within 24 hours of assuming office. Yet, more than 100 days into his second term, the conflict continues, with no end in sight and key players in Europe now planning for a potentially “long game” ahead.

This development coincides with the 25th anniversary on Wednesday of Vladimir Putin’s first election win as Russian president. A quarter of a century on, Putin’s rule looks likely to continue into the medium term at least, even if his hold on power sometimes seems fragile. He may even break Joseph Stalin’s record of around three decades in office during the time of the Soviet Union.

In this context, and with uncertainty over US policy, despite the recently agreed US-Ukraine minerals deal, Europe is planning with a longer-term horizon. Not only might the Ukraine war endure for months, possibly even years, there is also a possibility that Putin could remain Russian president into the 2030s.

Since European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen began her second five-year term in December, some key decisions on Russia

have been repeatedly postponed. Most notably, a plan to end all Russian energy imports to the EU by 2027 was delayed twice this year before its eventual release on Tuesday.

The plan’s release this week may, therefore, prove hugely important. European Energy Commissioner Dan Jorgenson said “no more will we permit Russia to weaponize energy against us. No more will we allow our member states to be blackmailed. No more will we indirectly help fill up the war chest in the Kremlin.”

He highlighted that last year EU countries still paid about €23 billion (\$26 billion) to Russia for energy. Moreover, so far in 2025, the EU has imported over €euro;5 billion of Russian energy, according to the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

Key measures and time frames, in what is now intended as a big last push to end the bloc’s reliance on Russian fossil fuels and nuclear materials, are very ambitious in the period to 2027. The plan rests heavily on the EU’s political will, and this will be fortified with several legislative proposals for implementation in coming months.

Monitoring and enforcement of measures will also be stepped up with EU legislation, which will be adopted by qualified majority voting, not unanimity which would give outsized power to states with sympathy to Moscow, including Hungary. There will also be new rules to improve traceability and transparency of Russian energy flows.

One of the key policies that will help reduce European dependence on Russia is increasing energy supplies from the Middle East. Since 2022, for instance, 22 European energy deals have been announced with the UAE, 11 with Qatar, four with Saudi Arabia and two with Oman.

To be sure, much progress has already been made since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This includes the RePowerEU plan by scaling up use of clean energy, while also saving on energy consumption. This has helped generate, at times, more EU-wide electricity from wind and solar sources than from gas.

Even within a year of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, Russia had lost its mantle as the biggest energy supplier to the EU. Moreover, the bloc has since reduced by two-thirds

its dependence on Russian pipeline gas plus ended imports of the country’s seaborne oil and coal.

However, there has not been close to a clean break yet, hence the perceived need in Brussels for Tuesday’s plan. The repeated delays to the eventually released document have been slammed by critics. For instance, MEP Beata Szydło even asserted that the postponements were “reached without proper inter-service consultation, and even without the participation of DG ENER management.”

Fast forward from December, and the timing on Tuesday’s announcement coincides with renewed interest in Russian pipeline gas. This includes speculation that the Trump team in Washington might lift sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and other Russian energy initiatives transporting energy to Europe.

So Jorgenson is right that the new roadmap is “not without consequences” and will need to be delivered “in a coordinated way” across the EU. Policy success will be a key test now of the second von der Leyen commission’s political will, while balancing this with much wider

strategic goals. This includes an EU desire not to become over-reliant on any other single energy supplier, including the US, which, under the Trump administration, is perceived by many in the bloc to have become a less reliable ally.

There are also wider, key strategic issues. First, a renewed mega-priority for the commission is enhancing economic competitiveness, including via cheaper energy costs. Gas prices in Europe are often multiples of those in the US. Yet, the new plan will completely cut off access to potentially significantly cheaper Russian energy, at least as long as Putin stays in office.

While Putin holds the reins, which seems possible now till at least the 2030 Russian presidential election, Moscow will be seen by much of Europe as a pariah state. Of course, this could change dramatically if a new, reforming, pro-Western leadership comes into power. However, some significant EU sanctions against Russia may remain for as long as Putin remains in the Kremlin, even if the Ukraine war ends. Before Russia invaded, Western sanctions were already in place for violations of international law, including the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Hala Al-Khatib

When on March 2, we heard all crossings into Gaza were closed, we thought it would not last more than two weeks. We really wanted a normal Ramadan where we could invite our surviving relatives for iftar and not worry about what food we could find to break our fast.

But it did not turn out this way. We spent the holy month breaking our fast with canned food. My family, like most families in Gaza, had not stocked up on food or essentials, as no one expected the crossings to close again, or the famine — or even the war — to return.

In the days after the closure, food and other basic goods disappeared from the markets, and prices skyrocketed. A kilogramme of any vegetable jumped to \$8

or more, sugar \$22 and baby formula \$11. A sack of flour previously costing \$8, went up to \$50; within two months, it reached \$300.

Most people in Gaza could not afford these prices. As a result, families, including my own, began reducing the number of meals they eat, limiting themselves to just breakfast and dinner, and shrinking each person’s portion — half a loaf of bread for breakfast a whole one for dinner. Men, women, elderly people and children would stand in front of bakeries and charity kitchens for hours, in shame and sorrow, just to get a few loaves of bread or a small plate of food. For some families, this would be their only food for the day.

All the residents of central Gaza, where I live, relied on only three bakeries: two in Nuseirat and one in Deir el-Balah. The crowds at these bakeries were overwhelming, blocking roads and halting movement in the area. Every day, there were cases of fainting and suffocation due to the pushing and shoving. In the end, only a small number of those who waited since morning would get bread.

My father would go to the bakery before sunrise to line up, instead of using what’s left of our flour, because we did not know how long this situation would last. But he would find the line already long, dozens having slept outside the bakery. He would stay until noon, then send my brother to take his place in the line. In the end, they would return with nothing.

On March 31, the World

Programme announced the closure of all of its bakeries, including the three we could access, due to the depletion of flour and the lack of gas needed to run the ovens. This marked the start of true famine.

Soon, charity kitchens started closing as well because they ran out of food stock. Dozens of them shuttered in the past week alone. People grew even more desperate, many taking to local groups on Facebook or Telegram to beg for anyone to sell them a bag of flour at a reasonable price.

We live in a “lucky” neighbourhood where the kitchen still functions. My niece Dana, who is eight years old, lines up in front of it every day with her friends, waiting for her turn as if it were a game. If she receives a single scoop of food, she comes back running, feeling very proud of herself. And if her turn doesn’t come before the food runs out, she returns in tears, complaining about how unfair this world is.

One day during Ramadan, a boy, displaced with his family to the al-Mufti School near our home, was so desperately trying to get food that he fell into the pot of hot food the charity kitchen was cooking. He suffered severe burns and later died from them.

The signs of famine began becoming apparent everywhere about a month and a half after the closure of the crossings. We see them in every aspect of our

lives — sleeping on an empty stomach, rapid weight loss within, pale faces, weak bodies. Climbing stairs now takes us twice the effort.

It has become easier to get sick and more difficult to recover. My nephews, 18-month-old Musab and two-year-old Mohammed, developed high fever and flu-like symptoms during Ramadan. It took them a whole month to get better because of the lack of food and medicine.

My mother has been suffering from severe vision loss due to complications after eye surgery she had in late February. The malnutrition and the lack of eye drops she needed to recover have made her condition much worse.

I myself have been unwell. I donated blood to al-Awda Hospital in

Nuseirat just days before the border was closed and this seriously affected my physical health. Now, I suffer from extreme weakness in my body, weight loss and difficulty focusing. When I went to the doctor, he told me to stop eating canned food and to eat more fruit and meat. He knew that what he was saying was impossible to do, but what else could he say?

Perhaps the most difficult part about this situation is having to explain famine to little children. My nieces and nephews cannot stop asking for things to eat that we simply cannot provide. We struggle to convince them that we are not punishing them by hiding food, but that we simply do not have it.

Five-year-old Khaled keeps asking for meat every day while looking at food

pictures on his mother’s phone. He stares at the images and asks whether his martyred father gets to eat all this in heaven. Then he asks when his own turn will come, to join his father and eat with him.

We struggle to answer. We tell him to be patient and that his patience will be rewarded.

I feel helpless seeing daily scenes of famine and desperation. I ask myself, how can the world stay silent while seeing children’s bodies go thin and fragile and the sick and injured die slowly?

The occupation uses every method to kill us — by bombing, starvation, or disease. We have been reduced to begging for a piece of bread. The entire world watches and pretends that it cannot even give us that.

Ahsan chairs progress review meeting of CPEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday chaired a progress review meeting of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The meeting was attended by officials from Ministry of Communications, Economic Affairs Division, Board of Investment, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, National Highways Authority, Quetta Electric Supply Company, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, and Gwadar Development Authority. Officials from all provincial governments attended the meeting online, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Planning and Development. Key issues discussed during the meeting were formation of agricultural technology working groups to spearhead innovation and cooperation in agro sciences, arrangements for

hosting 5th JWG Meeting in Pakistan, preparations for forthcoming JCC in June, distribution of agricultural equipment, operationalization of Gwadar's desalination plant, and installation of 15 000 household solar power lighting units in Balochistan. Regarding preparations of JCC, Minister was briefed by relevant departments about their Joint Working Group meetings' status. He directed them to complete all meetings in May 2025. Regarding the substantial agricultural assistance given recently to Pakistan by China, which includes 12 billion rupees' worth of agricultural machinery and equipment, Minister directed provincial departments to distribute them to grassroots departments within 10 days. The PARC official briefed Planning minister that the donated machinery includes 40 tractors, 40 multipurpose harvesters,

and other machinery, which will enhance the capacity of agricultural research institutions and farming communities in Pakistan, ultimately contributing to the country's food security and economic development. "All provinces must shift towards agricultural mechanization to enhance the capacity of Pakistan's agricultural production," emphasized the Minister. Special secretaries of agriculture from provinces briefed the minister on their status of agricultural machinery distribution plans. Most of the provinces had done all required meetings with stakeholders and stated that they had received demand from relevant departments. Minister directed them to expedite the distribution of machinery as per their plan. During the meeting, the installation status of Chinese donated solar systems to Balochistan was also discussed. During the last meeting,

the Minister had directed the Balochistan government's Energy Department to complete a list of 15000 beneficiaries and upload their list on website to ensure transparency. The Minister was briefed by relevant officials that installation has been completed in 7 districts while installation process in remaining 29 districts is underway. Stressing the fact that this project will address energy shortages and climate-related concerns, the Minister instructed the authorities to expedite the process of installation in all 36 districts. Furthermore, Minister Ahsan Iqbal strictly directed Power Division, Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO), and Ministry of Maritime Affairs to ensure completion of transmission line to Gwadar South Free Zone so that the Desalination Plant of 1.2MGD can be operationalized at the earliest.

Pak cargo operations uninterrupted despite war with India

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Despite war like situation and heightened tensions with India and attempts to undermine Pakistan's economy, the country's cargo operations have continued without interruption. The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Chairman, Faheemur Rehman Saigol, who is also presently Acting Chairman of the KPT commented the Karachi Port Trust team, the technical staff, and the military for their tireless efforts to keep the country's ports fully operational amid these challenging circumstances. Pakistan's ports are a critical part of the nation's infrastructure, playing a central role in facilitating trade and commerce. In recent times, with rising geopolitical tensions, there were external attempts to disrupt these operations, but the resilience shown by Pakistan's port operators, supported by the military's strategic security efforts, has proven to be unmatched. PIAF Chairman expressed appreciation for the seamless handling of cargo operations, emphasizing the commitment of KPT's staff and other stakeholders. "While India claims that

Pakistan's ports have been destroyed, these allegations are baseless. The operations have continued without a second's pause, proving that our ports remain a vital part of the global trade network," the KPT Acting chairman stated. "These actions show the strength of Pakistan's economy and the dedication of the people who work relentlessly to keep it moving forward." PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol further highlighted the critical role played by Pakistan's armed forces, particularly the Navy and Army, in defending the country's economic infrastructure. "Despite limited resources and a weaker economy, Pakistan's military has stepped up to safeguard our ports and ensure that the nation's lifelines remain intact. Their courage and dedication in the face of external threats are commendable," Saigol added. He further emphasized the importance of collaboration between the military and the civilian sectors in ensuring national security and economic stability. "The smooth operation of our ports and the uninterrupted handling of cargo is a direct result of the brave actions of our armed forces

and the unwavering commitment of the KPT team," Saigol said. He stressed that the smooth operation of Pakistan's ports amidst these trying times was not only due to the resilience of the KPT team but also a reflection of the collective strength of the nation. "The cargo operations are proof that we, as a nation, are standing strong against any attempt to destabilize our economy," Saigol remarked. Nasrullah Mughal, Senior Vice Chairman of PIAF, expressed solidarity with the military and affirmed that the business community is fully prepared to face any challenge. "As businessmen, we understand the critical importance of keeping our economic borders secure. We stand united with our armed forces to protect Pakistan's economic sovereignty," Mughal stated. Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry, Vice Chairman of PIAF, emphasized the role of the business community in defending the country's economic frontiers. "Just as the army defends our physical borders, we, the businessmen and traders, protect Pakistan's economic boundaries. The leadership of PIAF

also called on all sectors of society to remain united and continue contributing to Pakistan's economic stability. "The military and business community must work together to withstand these challenges. As long as we continue our operations smoothly and stay resilient, we will overcome any obstacles that come our way," Saigol concluded. The business community's role in safeguarding Pakistan's economic borders has never been more crucial. "We understand the vital role we play in ensuring that Pakistan's trade remains uninterrupted and that our economic lifelines are kept secure," said Mughal. PIAF leaders reiterated their support for the country's armed forces and pledged to continue working towards ensuring the smooth flow of goods, contributing to the national economy, and standing as a united force against any attempts to undermine Pakistan's economic stability. As Pakistan continues to face external challenges, the resilience shown by KPT's operations and the commitment of the business community are crucial to ensuring that the country's economy remains robust and secure.



ISLAMABAD: A man buying pigeon from a vendor.

FTO Coordinator felicitates armed forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman on Sunday felicitated Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir and the valiant armed forces of Pakistan for inflicting a crushing defeat on the enemy. In a statement issued here, he said the entire nation stands united behind its brave military, which has once again demonstrated its unmatched professionalism, courage, and commitment to safeguarding the sovereignty of the motherland. He lauded the sacrifices made by the armed forces and reaffirmed the business community's unwavering support for national defense. He emphasized that a strong military guarantees peace, stability, and prosperity for the entire nation.

PFC observes Youm-e-Tashakur

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) on Sunday observed "Youm-e-Tashakur" for crushing defeat of the enemy and lauded the armed forces of Pakistan for a "landslide victory" in a war with India. Speaking briefly on the occasion, PFC Chief Executive Mian Kashif Ashfaq praised the armed forces for their courage and professionalism, linking national security directly to economic stability.

Business community lauds armed forces for decisive victory

LAHORE (APP): The business community from South Punjab on Sunday extended heartfelt congratulations to the valiant armed forces of Pakistan for their overwhelming victory against the arch-enemy, inflicting significant damage to its military infrastructure, installations, and air bases. In a statement issued here, Shahid Imran, Convener of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Regional Commi-

tee on Food, praised the valor and operational precision of the armed forces, describing the triumph as a "defining moment" for national security. He emphasized that the military's success has not only elevated national morale but also strengthened regional stability, an essential condition for sustainable economic activity. "A secure Pakistan is a prosperous Pakistan," he stated, adding that robust defence capabilities are vital to attracting foreign

investment and fostering long-term economic growth. Shahid Imran reiterated the unwavering support of the business community for Pakistan's armed forces and acknowledged the sacrifices made by military personnel in the line of duty. He noted that this historic victory has sent a clear and powerful message of Pakistan's resilience in the face of aggression, further uniting the nation in pride and patriotism.

Malik hails ceasefire as opportunity for peace

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday welcomed the Pakistan-India ceasefire, highlighting its potential to foster lasting stability in a region that is home to nearly one-fifth of the world's population. In a statement issued here, he described the ceasefire as a pivotal opportunity to rebuild trust between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. "Sustainable peace is the bedrock of prosperity," he said, urging both countries to prioritize dialogue and

regional collaboration over confrontation. Iftikhar Malik linked the easing of hostilities to economic revival, stating that reduced tensions could unlock avenues for cross-border trade, foreign investment, and large-scale regional connectivity projects that have long been hindered by instability. "A peaceful environment attracts global investors," he remarked, emphasizing that South Asia's immense GDP potential has been undercut by decades of conflict. Expressing optimism, he noted that the ceasefire

could reignite multilateral cooperation and transform South Asia into a hub of innovation and inclusive growth. "Peace is not only a political imperative but also an economic necessity," he added. "A durable peace sends a strong global message that dialogue, not conflict, is the path forward." He also called on all SAARC member states to support this positive development and renew their commitment to reviving the regional economic agenda through cooperation and shared progress.

Environmental impact of sewage and plastic waste in Arabian Sea near Karachi



Ali Raza

Karachi, the largest coastal city of Pakistan, faces a growing environmental crisis due to the uncontrolled dumping of sewage and plastic waste into the Arabian Sea. Every day, thousands of gallons of untreated sewage and industrial wastewater are discharged directly into the

sea through storm water drains and open channels. This mix of human waste, toxic chemicals and plastic pollution is having a devastating impact on marine life, the environment, and public health. The continuous flow of sewage reduces oxygen levels in the water, making it difficult for marine species like fish, shrimp, and coral to survive. Industrial pollutants contain hazardous substances such as lead, mercury, and other heavy metals that poison the water and accumulate in sea life, making seafood unsafe for human consumption. A fisherman, Abdullah Mallah, hailing from

Ibrahim Haidri, said, "I've been catching fish since 1997. My father did the same work. We used to earn well from fishing." Abdullah explained that now it is becoming difficult to catch fish. "Sometimes we return with only a small catch. The fish population in the Arabian Sea is decreasing due to the sewage and plastic people throw into the sea. This is a huge loss for fishermen and the fishing business." He urged the public to stop throwing waste into the sea and called on the government to implement a strict policy on this matter. Plastic waste, including shopping bags, bottles,

packaging, and fishing gear, floats on the surface or sinks to the seabed. Marine animals often mistake plastic for food, leading to injuries, choking, and death. Over time, plastic breaks down into micro plastics, which enter the food chain and may pose long-term health risks to humans. The polluted coastline also affects tourism, fishing livelihoods, and the overall beauty of Karachi's seafloor. Environmental experts call for urgent waste treatment facilities, stricter regulations, and public awareness campaigns to protect the Arabian Sea and the health of future generations.

Saudi industrial output rises 2%

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia's industrial production index rose 2 percent year on year in March 2025, driven by strong growth in manufacturing, particularly in the chemical and food industries, official data showed. The IPI increased to 106.5 in March from 105.4 in February, reflecting a 1.1 percent rise on a monthly basis, according to preliminary data from the General Authority for Statistics. The manufacturing sub-index registered a 5.1 percent annual increase in March compared to the same month in 2024. This growth was supported by a 14.3 percent uptick in the manufacture of chemicals and chemical products and the manufacture of food products, which increased by 6.9 percent. The data underscores

continued momentum in the Kingdom's non-oil industrial base, a key pillar of the Vision 2030 economic diversification strategy. In a release, GASTAT stated: "On a monthly basis, the sub-index of manufacturing activity showed an increase of 2.9 percent, supported by the rise in the activity of the manufacture of chemicals and chemical products, which increased by 7.2 percent, and the manufacture of food products which increased by 12.4 percent." Mining and quarrying activity, which includes crude oil extraction, slipped 0.2 percent year on year in March. Saudi Arabia produced 8.96 million barrels of oil per day during the month, slightly down from 8.97 million bpd a year earlier. On a monthly basis, mining activity ticked up

0.1 percent. Other sectors showed mixed performance. The output of non-metallic mineral products increased 6.1 percent year on year, while the basic metals segment fell 6.6 percent but edged up 1.4 percent from February. The production of electrical devices grew 4 percent year on year but declined 1.1 percent month on month. The paper and paper products segment saw a 1 percent annual increase and a 0.6 percent rise from the previous month. Furniture output contracted 15.7 percent year on year but rose marginally, by 0.2 percent, on a monthly basis. Other economic activities within the manufacturing sector grew by 0.4 percent year on year and 0.3 percent month on month.

Meanwhile, the electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply sub-index dropped 0.9 percent year on year and 7.7 percent month on month. In contrast, water supply, sewerage, and waste management activities surged 15 percent annually and 3.7 percent from February. Overall, oil-related industrial activities rose 0.5 percent annually and 0.1 percent monthly in March. Non-oil activities, which encompass manufacturing and utilities, expanded 5.6 percent year-on-year and 3.3 percent month on month. The Industrial Production Index measures changes in industrial output based on the International Standard Industrial Classification framework, covering mining, manufacturing, utilities, and waste management sectors.

BMP warns new Tax Ordinance could stifle investment growth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Businessmen Panel (BMP) of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has raised significant concerns about the recently implemented Tax Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2025. FPCCI's Businessmen Panel Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the ordinance could severely harm the country's investment climate, which is already under pressure due to various economic challenges. He further warned that if not reconsidered, these tax measures may discourage both domestic and foreign investors from engaging with Pakistan's economy, thus hindering growth. Anjum Nisar expressed disappointment that the

new tax laws, while aimed at increasing government revenue, could backfire by creating unnecessary complexities in the business environment. "The tax laws are intended to increase compliance and improve revenue, but they bring with them a set of challenges that may, in fact, make it harder for businesses to operate efficiently," Nisar said. He emphasized that businesses already face multiple hurdles, including rising costs and an unpredictable economic environment, and the new tax regime could add additional layers of burden on businesses. "The government needs to understand that businesses are the backbone of the economy. They are the ones who create jobs, drive innovation, and generate the taxes that support govern-

ment functions," he said. "Unfortunately, this new ordinance adds layers of complexity that may make it more difficult for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to thrive." The FPCCI former Chairman highlighted that while Pakistan's economy is struggling to recover from previous setbacks, the business community must be supported, not further burdened. He stated that the law, as it stands, does not provide the needed incentives for businesses to flourish. "What we need is a policy environment that fosters growth, encourages investment, and provides a stable foundation for entrepreneurs to take risks. This ordinance does the opposite by imposing measures that will only increase the difficulty of doing business,"

Nisar added. A key concern raised by Anjum Nisar was the potential for increased operational costs due to the tax measures. "The tax burden placed on businesses under this new ordinance could push many firms to reconsider their investment plans in Pakistan. It might even lead some businesses to relocate to other countries that offer more favorable tax regimes," he warned. He stressed that the government needs to carefully consider the balance between generating tax revenue and ensuring that the business sector is not overwhelmed by excessive regulations and high taxes. He also pointed out that the current economic landscape is far from favorable. He explained that businesses in Pakistan are already

dealing with a host of external challenges, including inflation, a volatile currency, and global supply chain disruptions. "With so much already weighing on the shoulders of businesses, adding more compliance-related challenges through this new tax ordinance is simply not the right approach," he noted. "It will stifle growth, and ultimately, the government will find it harder to collect the revenues it desires." The BMP Chairman further explained that a more sustainable approach to tax reform is necessary. "The government must focus on policies that reduce the burden on businesses, simplify the tax code, and promote ease of doing business. Tax reforms should encourage businesses to invest, expand, and create jobs rather than discourage them

from doing so," Nisar said. In light of the potential negative impacts, he has called on the government to re-evaluate the provisions of the ordinance and engage in constructive dialogue with stakeholders in the business community. "It is imperative that the government takes the time to consult with the private sector before moving forward with such sweeping changes. A collaborative approach will ensure that the tax laws are effective in raising revenue without harming the business environment," he stated. He emphasized that the focus should not only be on raising revenue but also on ensuring that Pakistan remains a competitive destination for investment. "We must create a tax system that is transparent, efficient, and most importantly,

friendly to businesses," Nisar said. "If the government wants to achieve long-term growth, it must work with businesses, not against them." He also cautioned that the success of any economic policy depends on its practical implementation. "The government may have good intentions with the new tax law, but its implementation could end up causing more harm than good. The tax administration needs to be efficient and business-friendly. Otherwise, businesses will simply be unable to meet the increased compliance requirements," he stated. In conclusion, Mian Anjum Nisar reiterated his position that the FPCCI and the Businessmen Panel are committed to supporting the government in its efforts to reform the tax

system. However, he made it clear that the government must carefully weigh the potential consequences of the new tax laws. "We all want to see Pakistan's economy grow, but that growth must be underpinned by a tax system that supports businesses. We urge the government to reconsider the current provisions of the Tax Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 and take steps to create a more balanced and business-friendly tax environment," Nisar concluded. The FPCCI's Businessmen Panel remains committed to advocating for policies that will encourage sustainable economic growth, strengthen Pakistan's position as a competitive investment destination, and ensure a brighter economic future for the nation.



In brief

Bussi sets women's record

AGUASCALIENTES (Agencies): Vittoria Bussi broke cycling's hour record for women for a third time on Sunday. The Italian rider covered a distance of 50.455km on the Velodromo Bicentenario in Aguascalientes, Mexico. The 38-year-old set the new mark after abandoning an attempt just over the halfway point on Saturday. Bussi held the previous record having become the first woman to break the 50km barrier when she covered 50.267km on the same velodrome in October 2023. She also held the hour record for three years from September 2018 to September 2021, when her mark of 48.007km was bettered by British rider Joss Lowden (48.405km). Dutch rider Ellen van Dijk then covered 49.254km in May 2022, before Bussi regained the record in 2023. "I can say with a smile that I contributed to the history of the hour record for women," said Bussi. "This record has always been really special to me as an athlete and as a person, and I hope I have transmitted to young generations and people that sport is not just an athletic performance but that athletes bring messages to the world. "The hour' taught me that one of the most important things in life is to understand the preciousness of time in every single instant of our life." The current men's record holder is Italy's Filippo Ganna, who covered 56.792km in October 2022. Bussi is set to attempt another world record in Aguascalientes - the women's 4km individual. The record has been lowered several times since the distance for the women's individual pursuit was increased from 3km to 4km in January, making it the same as the men's event. British rider Anna Morris holds the current record of four minutes 24.060 seconds, set in Manchester in February.

Celtics claim vital win

NEW YORK (Agencies): The Boston Celtics dominated the New York Knicks in game three to cut the deficit to 2-1 in their NBA Eastern Conference play-off semi-final. The Celtics blew 20-point third-quarter leads in the first two games of the best-of-seven series in Boston as the Knicks mounted stunning comebacks against the reigning NBA champions. But the visitors made no mistake in New York, moving into a 71-46 lead at half-time and remaining ruthless to see out a vital victory. The Celtics rediscovered their three-point shooting ability that deserted them in the first two games, hitting 50% of their shots from beyond the arc in Madison Square Garden. Payton Pritchard led the Celtics with 23 points, while star Jayson Tatum added 22. Jalen Brunson hit a game-high 27 points for the Knicks. "I don't think we came with the mindset of being satisfied, but I think it was just subconsciously satisfied being up 2-0," Brunson said. "Just not the way we need to approach the game." Game four is in New York on Monday. Timberwolves grab series lead over Golden State Warriors Anthony Edwards scored a game-high 36 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves moved into a 2-1 series lead over the Golden State Warriors. Edwards scored three three-pointers in the fourth quarter as the Timberwolves came from behind to claim a 102-97 victory. It means the Timberwolves could have the opportunity to win the series at home next Wednesday, should they take game four on Monday.

PCB, BCB discuss uncertain Bangladesh tour to Pakistan

DHAKA (Monitoring Desk): The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has stated that it is engaged in "active and ongoing discussions" with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) over the upcoming white-ball tour of Pakistan, scheduled for later this month. In a statement released on Saturday, the BCB stressed that ensuring the safety and security of its players and support staff remains paramount. "The BCB wishes to reiterate that the safety and security of its players and support staff remain the Board's highest priority," the statement read. "All decisions concerning the tour will be made with careful consideration of the current situation in Pakistan, ensuring they align with the best interests of the team and Bangladesh cricket," it further said. Bangladesh are scheduled to arrive in Pakistan on May 21 to play five T20Is in Lahore and Faisalabad, with the series expected to begin on May 25. However, tensions along the India-Pakistan border cast uncertainty over the tour. The Bangladesh team

is set to travel to Dubai later this week as part of their tour preparations. Meanwhile, Bangladesh cricketers Rishad Hossain and Nahid Rana — who were involved in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2025 before it was postponed indefinitely — returned home on Friday. Rishad, who represented Lahore Qalandars, and Rana, who played for Peshawar Zalmi, arrived in Dhaka on Friday evening. They are expected to depart for the UAE along with the rest of the Bangladesh squad on Wednesday. Given Bangladesh's upcoming international commitments, it is unlikely that the duo will rejoin the PSL if it resumes in the near future. The PSL 10 season was abruptly suspended with eight matches still remaining, amid heightened regional tensions. The series between Bangladesh and Pakistan now hangs in the balance as uncertainty looms. According to sources quoted by Geo News, the remaining PSL matches are likely to be held in Rawalpindi. PSL authorities have advised franchises to keep their over-

seas players in Dubai and asked local players to remain ready for action. Efforts are reportedly underway to gather all six teams in Islamabad, with Rawalpindi being considered the frontrunner to host the remainder of the tournament. The developments follow the Pakistan Cricket Board's decision to suspend PSL 10 indefinitely, in compliance with directives from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The BCB had already announced its squad on May 4 for the five-match T20I series, which included both the UAE and Pakistan legs of the tour. Litton Das was named captain, with off-spinner Mahedi Hasan appointed as vice-captain. **Bangladesh squad for T20Is in UAE and Pakistan:** Litton Das (c), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain, Jaker Ali, Rishad Hossain, Mahedi Hasan (vice-capt), Tanvir Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Nahid Rana and Shoriful Islam.

Zarco first home winner of French MotoGP

LE MANS (AFP): Johann Zarco produced an outstanding ride in difficult wet conditions at Le Mans on Sunday to become the first home winner of the French MotoGP in 71 years. Riding in his 150th MotoGP, the 34-year-old Honda LCR rider hit the front after eight laps and held his position through to the end of the race to become the first Frenchman to take the chequered flag in the top category race since Pierre Monneret in 1954. In front of the biggest-ever attendance at a MotoGP event and with his mother watching him for the first time ever, Zarco finished 19.907 seconds ahead of six-time world champion Marc Marquez (Ducati) with 20-year-old rookie Fermin Aldeguer (Ducati-Gresini) claiming a first podium in just his sixth race. Zarco was in tears before he was even off his bike and immediately celebrated with his team and, after the crowd had offered an impromptu rendition of La Marseillaise, he performed a back flip off a wall, his favourite celebration since his two Moto2 world titles in 2015 and 2016. "It's incredible, I can hardly believe it," said an emotional Zarco whose only previous MotoGP win came in Australia in 2023. "I always give my best but I never thought I'd win. The way I won was very



special. I had to be in control and almost wait for victory to come." There were no points for Alex Marquez, Marc's younger brother, who went sliding off four laps from the finish, the last of the day's six non-finishers, all victims to the filthy weather which made the track so treacherous. Marc Marquez, who won Saturday's Sprint, now has 171 points in the championship, increasing his lead at the top of the championship to 22 points ahead of his brother. 'Small mistake' With the rain coming down, there was mayhem from the opening lap as the riders struggled with their slick tyres, Francesco Bagnaia and Joan Mir sliding off on turn 4. Mir was out but Bagnaia, the 2022 and 2023 world champion, rejoined the race. Ahead of him, however, there was plenty more trouble as pole-sitter

Fabio Quartararo, another home favourite, tangled on lap 5 with Brad Binder sending both of them into the gravel. A couple of laps later, Binder went off a second time to end his race with Jack Miller, one of just four riders to start on wet tyres, also crashing out. The early stages saw championship leader Marc Marquez overtake Quartararo and then battle for the lead with his brother. Along with a number of others, the Marquez siblings had come in to swap to dry bikes at the end of the warm-up lap after the original start was aborted which meant, under new rules, they had to serve a double long-lap penalty. That slowed them up and when they both came into the pits to change bikes and take on the wet tyres, Zarco took over the lead. "That double long lap was the only small mistake I made," said Marc Marquez.

Zverev cruises into Rome last 16, Sabalenka battles past Kenin

ROME (AFP): Alexander Zverev continued his Italian Open title defence by cruising past qualifier Vilus Gaubas and reaching the last 16, as Aryna Sabalenka progressed with a battling 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 win over Sofia Kenin. Zverev barely broke a sweat on centre court against Gaubas, easing to a 6-4, 6-0 win to set up a last-16 clash with France's Arthur Fils. The world number two took one hour 26 minutes to see off Gaubas, suggesting that the burn-out he said he was suffering earlier in the year might be behind him. Zverev is hoping a good defence of his Rome crown will set him up to go one better than last year at the French Open and be crowned champion. But he will face a much tougher test against Fils, who beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 2-6, 6-4, 6-2, than the one put up by Gaubas. "In the beginning it was a bit difficult for me, it was also very, very windy," said Zverev, "The wind really calmed down after the first set and then it's easier to get into a rhythm, easier for me to have clean strokes." It was a good day for French players in the men's tournament with Fils' win and world number 83



Corentin Moutet shocking Holger Rune 7-5, 5-7, 7-6 (7/4) on the picturesque Pietrangeli court to claim his first ever win over a top-10 player. Fils came through an eventful match with former Rome finalist Tsitsipas which ended with the pair arguing over the net. Tsitsipas was angry at Fils for ignoring his apologies after the Greek accidentally hit his opponent with a shot in the seventh game of the second set, sparking a post-match row which caused the umpire to come down from his chair. Daniil Medvedev swept past Alexei Popyrin 6-4, 6-1 and next faces home hope Lorenzo Musetti who fol-

lowed Sabalenka on centre court by beating Brandon Nakashima 6-4, 6-3. Carlos Alcaraz will continue his bid for a first Rome title when he takes to centre court to face Laslo Djere in the last match of the day. Sabalenka through World number one Sabalenka came through a tough match with former Australian Open winner Kenin to set up a clash with Marta Kostyuk, who beat Leylah Fernandez 6-4, 6-2. The Belarusian has reached the final of her last four tournaments, winning in both Miami and Madrid, and is now hot favourite at the Foro Italico even after Sunday's below-par dis-

play. Last year's losing finalist was not at the races in the first set, consistently misplacing her backhands before appearing to complain about the surface on centre court. "I was completely off, and I'm really glad I was able to cool myself down and... start focusing on the game and the right things," Sabalenka told reporters. "This court, because it's super slow and the ball really drops a lot, for her (Kenin's) game, for her style, it definitely suits her well. So you have to stay low and you're always on the back foot." Sabalenka has a great opportunity to claim her third 1000 series crown of the season, after three-time winner Iga Swiatek was dumped out by Danielle Collins on Saturday. "She's facing really tough challenges I believe, on and off the court," added Sabalenka of Swiatek. "Maybe needs some time off and then she's going to get back on top of her game because the level is there. She's a champion." One of Sabalenka's key rivals for the women's title, Coco Gauff, cruised past Magda Linette in straight sets 7-5, 6-3 and will be expected to see off Emma Raducanu in the next round.

Sajid Sadpara climbs world's 7th highest peak without oxygen

I S L A M A B A D (Monitoring Desk): Pakistani climber Sajid Ali Sadpara has successfully scaled Dhaulagiri, the world's seventh-highest mountain at 8,167 metres, without the use of supplemental oxygen. Sajid Sadpara achieved the feat with the support of Seven Summit Treks Nepal and Sabroso Pakistan, while technical climbing equipment was provided by Kailas. Dhaulagiri, located in north-central Nepal, is one of the most challenging 8,000-metre peaks in the world due to its steep terrain and unpredictable weather.



Sajid Sadpara has previously summited multiple 8,000m peaks, often climbing without oxygen — a testament to his high-altitude endurance and

technical skill. His achievement was widely celebrated in Pakistan's mountaineering circles and by international climbing organisations. Sadpara is the son of the late climber Muhammad Ali Sadpara. He died during a winter ascent of K2 in 2021. Sajid Sadpara said he is now working to fulfil his father's dream of conquering all 14 of the world's highest mountains without the aid of supplemental oxygen. He has already climbed K2 twice — once without oxygen — and continues to be involved in high-altitude rescue missions, including on K2.

Boxer Waseem wins title at 1st Int'l Boxing C'ship

QUETTA (Monitoring Desk): Pakistani boxer Muhammad Waseem has claimed victory at the first International Boxing Championship held in Quetta, adding another prestigious title to his career achievements. The World Boxing Association (WBA) sanctioned event, hosted at Quetta's Polo Club, marked the first International Boxing Championship of its kind in South Asia. The tournament featured globally renowned boxers compet-

ing in various categories, with four title fights among a total of eight matches. In the headline bout, Muhammad Waseem defeated Venezuela's Veseton Orono with a knockout in the ninth round to secure the WBA World Gold Bantamweight Title, thrilling the home crowd with his dominating performance. Other international competitors who emerged victorious in their respective fights included the UK's Jamie Gelly, Sohail

Iqbal, and Alegz Delmaghani, alongside Morocco's Tariq Zaina and Mexico's Jesus Seracho. The championship also showcased women's boxing talent, with Pakistani female boxers Fatima Hazara and Malaika defeating their fellow countrywomen in competitive matches. The successful organization of this high-profile international boxing event in Quetta represents a significant milestone for the sport in Pakistan and South Asia as a whole.

Barca edge Real Madrid in thriller



BARCELONA (AFP): Barcelona mounted a spectacular comeback to beat Real Madrid 4-3 on Sunday and move to the brink of the La Liga title. Kylian Mbappe scored a hat-trick for Madrid but Raphinha's double and goals from Lamine Yamal and Eric Garcia gave Barcelona a seven-point lead on the reigning champions with three matches remaining. Hansi Flick's side were knocked out of the Champions League in the semi-finals by Inter Milan on Tuesday and risked their season collapsing if they were beaten by Madrid, but they resisted after Mbappe's early brace. Barcelona battled back to claim a fourth Clasico victory from four meetings this season, showing their dominance over Carlo Ancelotti's side. "We've opened up an important gap, it was key to win this game after the Champions League (defeat), the fans have forgotten it and so have we, let's enjoy this," Yamal told Movistar. "It was important to win today to bring the league title closer and it went very well, we're very happy." Real Madrid had made the perfect start to what is expected to be the Italian coach's final Clasico at the helm. Mbappe earned a penalty when he was scythed down by Barcelona goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, although the Catalans complained in vain the French forward was offside in the build-up. The striker beat Szczesny, who dived the right way and got his fingers to it, but could not

keep it out. In the 14th minute Mbappe doubled Madrid's advantage with a lethal finish after Vinicius Junior played him through, with Barcelona complaining again about a perceived foul on Yamal earlier in the move. It was his 26th La Liga strike, taking him past Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski on 25 at the top of the scoring charts, and his 38th of the season across all competitions, beating Ivan Zamorano's club record of 37 in a first season with Los Blancos. Just as they have done on so many occasions this season, Flick's spirited young Barcelona fought their way back in front with a stirring comeback. Thibaut Courtois tipped Gerard Martin's drive over, and from the corner Garcia headed home Ferran Torres' flick-on. Torres flicked wide from close range with an improvised effort and Fede Valverde was booked for a crunching tackle on whirlwind teenager Yamal. Madrid could not stop the 17-year-old star from levelling with a cultured bending effort beyond Courtois after Torres laid the ball off to him in the box. Raphinha brace Two minutes later, Raphinha sent Barca ahead, with Pedri threading a pass through for the Brazilian winger to drill home. Raphinha headed over from a brilliant Yamal cross with the outside of his boot, something of a trademark for the Spain international. Mbappe thought he had won another penalty when he fell under pressure from Frenkie de Jong but

VAR revealed an offside in the build-up. Moments later, Raphinha netted his second, picking Lucas Vazquez's pocket on the edge of the area, exchanging passes with Torres and beating Courtois. Mbappe netted from an offside position before the break, bringing a roller-coaster first half to a close. Yamal had a goal ruled out for offside early in the second half as Barcelona looked to put their arch-rivals to the sword. Flick brought on Alejandro Balde and Andreas Christensen, with the latter cutting out a dangerous ball as Vinicius looked for Mbappe. Next time around the Brazilian found his man, with Mbappe slotting home his hat-trick as he and Vinicius broke in behind Barca's high line. Barcelona appealed for a penalty when Aurelien Tchouameni blocked Torres' shot with his arm, but after watching the incident again the referee decided not to award a penalty. Real Madrid substitute Victor Munoz might have levelled late on but fired high and wide when sent through, and Szczesny denied Mbappe, who had another strike ruled out for offside. Barcelona thought they had wrapped up their win with a superb Fermin Lopez solo effort but it was harshly disallowed for handball against the midfielder. Madrid had no time left to fight back though, and Barcelona, who last won the league in 2023, could seal the title as early as Wednesday, should Los Blancos stumble against Mallorca.



In brief

Short circuit sparks fire

RAWALPINDI (APP): A sudden fire broke out in the storeroom of the officers' wards at Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH) in the jurisdiction of the Waris Khan Police Station on Saturday. The initial reports suggest that the fire started due to a short circuit. As soon as the incident was reported, Rescue 1122 teams quickly reached the scene and brought the fire under control. Due to the quick response and professional work of the rescue teams, there were no injuries or serious financial losses. According to the hospital administration, only some files and a small amount of equipment in the storeroom were damaged.

Police conduct crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have launched a crackdown following arrest of four liquor suppliers and recovered a large quantity of liquor from their possessions. According to police spokesman, operations were carried out in the areas of Pirwadhai, Taxila, and Saddar Wah. During the operation, police have recovered 35 liters of liquor and 30 bottles of branded liquor from the suspects. Cases have been registered against the arrested individuals, and further investigations are underway. Divisional SPs commended police teams and said the police are taking strict action to stop the supply of liquor and eliminate this illegal activity from the region.

Six men with illegal arms held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested six illegal arms holders and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during operation here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, the arrests were made in different areas. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs appreciated the performance of police teams and said that strict action against illegal arms holders will be continued. Meanwhile, R.A Bazaar police have arrested a man involved in the theft and recovered Rs 18,000 and other stolen goods from his possession. SP Potohar Talha Wali said that strict action will be continued against those who deprive citizens of valuable assets.

WASA support armed forces

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) on Sunday organised a "Youm-e-Tashkar" rally to express unwavering support for the defenders of the motherland. The rally aimed to express gratitude to Allah Almighty for the success of Operation "Banyan Marsus" and to congratulate the nation on this historic success. The participants carried national flags and banners inscribed with slogans in support of the armed forces. The atmosphere echoed with loud chants like "Long Live Pakistan Army", "Down with India", "We are proud of our army", and "Pakistan Zindabad". MD WASA Muhammad Saleem Ashraf, while addressing the rally, said that Operation "Banyan Marsus" had shattered the dream of Indian supremacy and forced the enemy to cease fire. He further said that the nation was proud of this success, and WASA Rawalpindi stands by the Pakistani forces. Saleem also called on the international community to play its effective role for a lasting and just solution to the Kashmir issue so that lasting peace could be established in the region. At the end of the rally, special prayers were offered for the security, development and the freedom of the Kashmiri people.

Pakistan will not tolerate attacks on integrity: Kayani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani on Sunday reaffirmed that Pakistan is a sovereign and independent nation that will never tolerate any aggression against its independence, dignity, or territorial integrity.

In a statement issued here, Bilal Kayani congratulated the nation and its leadership, emphasizing that the country has once again demonstrated its unity, resilience and strength in the face of external threats.

"The world has witnessed that our aspiration for peace must not be mistaken for weakness," he added. Commenting on recent Indian aggression, Bilal Kayani said Pakistan was fortunate to have decisive leadership at a critical moment.

He paid tribute to for-

mer Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the broader political leadership whose guidance, he said, contributed significantly to Pakistan's success.

He also extended special praise to Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Babar Sidhu and Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf, noting that the nation proudly salutes their leadership and service.

Highlighting the role of the Pakistan Army, Bilal Kayani said General Asim Munir's determination and bravery effectively neutralized the enemy's aggression. "Our armed forces demonstrated outstanding professionalism,

courage and dedication, asserting clear superiority even in conventional warfare," he said.

"Alhamdulillah, Pakistan has emerged victorious — a success made possible by the grace of Almighty Allah and the unity of our people, which remains our greatest strength," he added.

Bilal Kayani said the country's leadership, citizens and media each played historic roles in defending national interests. "As a nation, we had already overcome the psychological battle long before the first strike," he remarked.

He reiterated that Pakistan, as a responsible state, stood firmly on the side of truth. "That moral clarity led to our triumph on military, diplomatic and ethical fronts — all by the will of Allah," he added.

Minister praises Saudi govt's hajj arrangements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Highlighting the efforts of the Saudi government, Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousaf Sunday assured that this year's Hajj will be exemplary compared to previous years, thanks to comprehensive arrangements made by the Saudi government.

Talking to Radio Pakistan, Minister praised the Saudi government's Hajj arrangements, describing them as a model of excellence. He highlighted the comprehensive measures put in place to ensure the comfort and safety of pilgrims, showcasing the Saudi government's commitment to providing a seamless Hajj experience.

He said, "Exceptional arrangements have been put in place by the

Pakistani Mission for the intending pilgrims, adding, all camps in Mina are air-conditioned, providing a comfortable environment with sofa-cum-beds and ample storage space for luggage."

The Minister highlighted that 100 percent accommodation for Pakistani pilgrims has been arranged in the Markazia area of Madinah, within walking distance from Masjid Nabawi (SAWW). He praised the dedication of the entire Hajj mission team and urged them to provide the best possible facilities to the pilgrims.

The minister expressed gratitude to the Saudi authorities for their continued support and cooperation in ensuring smooth arrangements for Pakistani pilgrims. He advised the intending pilgrims to

strictly follow the rules, regulations, and instructions issued by the Saudi government, emphasizing their importance for the safe conduct of Hajj.

The Minister also urged pilgrims to pray for Pakistan's peace, progress and prosperity, the unity of the Muslim Ummah, and for the oppressed Muslims of Gaza and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Regarding Hajj flight operations, he stated that Pakistani pilgrims are being transported to Madinah in the first phase, while the remaining pilgrims will be airlifted directly to Makkah.

Sardar Yousaf concluded by appreciating the efforts of the Hajj mission team and reiterating the commitment to providing exceptional services to the guests of Allah.

Jinnah Square Murree Road underpass nearing completion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the Jinnah Square Murree Road underpass project and reviewed the progress of the ongoing development work. The walls on both sides of the underpass have been completed, while work on the roof has now been started.

It is worth mentioning that the underpass will be inaugurated on May 22. During the inspection, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed that 100 per cent of the work should be completed within the current month. He expressed satisfaction

over the pace and quality of development work despite recent rainfall.

The Interior Minister also instructed for the development of green areas and beautiful landscaping around the project. He also inspected the under construction bridge near the underpass as well. He also directed immediate action for the removal of encroachments on the Expressway. He stated that transforming Islamabad into a world-class city in terms of traffic management and public facilities is the top priority.

Chairman CDA

Muhammad Ali Randhawa, while briefing on the project, said that 75% of the development work has been completed.

Out of the four slip roads, three have been completed, and traffic has been restored for public convenience.

It was further highlighted during the briefing that despite rains and weather conditions, the development work will be completed on time.

The Federal Secretary for Interior, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, and other officials were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police holding a Thanksgiving Day Rally from the Sports Complex, to express solidarity with Pakistan Armed Forces on successful operation "Bunyan Marsous" against India. —APP Photo



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister and President PML-N KPK Engr. Amir Muqam shaking hand with MPA, Ali Hadi from Kurram Agency KPK who joined PML-N. General Secretary PML-N KPK Murtaza Javed Abbassi also present on the occasion. —APP Photo

Pakistan army proved it's pride: Aleem Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Sunday said that Pakistan Army has raised the nation's head with pride by crushing the enemy's arrogance.

He said once again, we have stood successful in the battle of truth and falsehood. Congratulations to the entire nation on today's glorious and great victory, said a press release. President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party Abdul Aleem Khan said that today is the day to recall sayings of Allama Muhammad Iqbal regarding the victory for the Muslims against the enemy which we have done a hundred times in the history.

Aleem Khan said that we all pay tributes to the Pakistani Army and the Air Force, who have demonstrated their capabilities to the whole world by proving their superiority in the skies. The minister further said that Pakistan has also proven to be a responsible state in war and the excellent strategy of the military leadership has yielded excellent results and victory was destined for Pakistan.

ANF recovers 122 kg of drugs worth Rs 162.4 m

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting four operations across the country, recovered as many as 122 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 162.4 million and arrested five suspects, including a Nigerian, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Sunday.

He informed that 40 capsules containing 760 grams of cocaine were recovered from the stomach of a Nigerian at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore. In another operation, 6 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle in Sector G-9, Islamabad and two suspects were arrested. Similarly, 5,250 kg of hashish was recovered from a rickshaw near Chugi No-26, Islamabad and two suspects were nabbed. As much as 110 kg of heroin was recovered near Shanglona Check post in Loralai area of Qila Saifullah. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Two street criminals arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two members of a gang involved in street crimes and recovered 3 stolen motorcycles, cash amount Rs. 4,300 from their possession during crackdown here Sunday. Police have also recovered weapons used in the crimes. According to police spokesman, Bani Police held members of a gang involved in street crimes and registered separate cases against both of them.

SP Rawal Muhammad Haseeb Raja commended the police team and said that the detained persons would be chalaned in court with solid evidence. The protection of life and property of citizens is the top priority for which all resources are being utilized, he added.

Overseas Pakistanis show solidarity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Pakistanis on Sunday expressed heartfelt gratitude to the nation and extended their appreciation to the armed forces for their bravery and successful operation against Indian aggression, showcasing unity and patriotism across the globe.

Speaking on PTV News, the overseas Pakistanis have praised the armed forces' professionalism and hailed their role in protecting the nation's integrity and sovereignty.

Hassan Dar, a London-based overseas Pakistani and Muslim League N supporter, expressed admiration for the government and armed forces,

terming them 'Shaheen' a symbol of strength and resilience."

According to Rashid Hashmi, an overseas Pakistani, the Air Force's bravery in 2025 will be etched in history, inspiring future generations to recount these heroic tales to their children. Rashid Hashmi further appreciated Nawaz Sharif's visionary leadership of PML-N and commended the armed forces for their unwavering dedication to national security.

"The Army Chief was hailed as 'Sipa Salar' by Rashid Hashmi, who praised his exceptional military acumen and dedication to national security." He humorously

remarked that the Indian forces were not only defeated but also made to cry, showcasing the Pakistani military's prowess.

From London, another Kashmiri resident vehemently condemned India's atrocities in IIOJK and praised the Pakistani army for its support and solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

"Pakistan's army is a beacon of hope for Kashmiris struggling against Indian occupation," said another overseas.

"Pakistan's armed forces are a symbol of resistance against Indian aggression in IIOJK," he added.

Ayaz commends Youm-e-Tashakkur announcement

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has welcomed the announcement made by Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif to observe a "Day of Gratitude" in light of the successful culmination of operation Bunyanun Marsoos, terming it a deeply significant and unifying moment in the nation's history.

"The successful execution of operation Bunyanun Marsoos marks a moment of profound national pride and reflection," the Speaker said. "Today is not merely a celebration of military success, but a day to offer gratitude before Almighty Allah for guiding the nation with strength, dignity, and honour," he added.

Ayaz Sadiq commended the valiant role played by the Pakistan armed forces, saying that the nation's defense was rendered impregnable through their unmatched courage, operational excellence and unwavering commitment to the sovereignty and security of the homeland.

"Our armed forces demonstrated extraordinary resolve and professionalism on every front. Their sacrifices and steadfastness reflect the highest traditions of patriotism," he said.

Ayaz Sadiq underscored the significance of national unity and political consensus during the critical period of conflict.

"At a time when the nation was under threat, the people of Pakistan rose above their differences and stood united in defence of the motherland. Political forces across the spectrum exhibited maturity and placed national security above partisan interests, sending a clear and powerful message of unity to both friends and foes alike."

Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that Pakistan emerged from the crisis with not only a strategic and defensive advantage but also a moral and diplomatic victory on the international stage.

"The robust, principled and restrained response by Pakistan in the face of aggression won the respect of the global community. Our diplomatic outreach and consistent narrative helped shape a broader understanding of Pakistan as a peace-loving, sovereign nation committed to regional stability."

He said the effective and proportionate response delivered to the enemy during operation

Bunyanun Marsoos was not only a military achievement but also a manifestation of national resilience and wisdom. "Every success, every inch of regained honour was made possible by the blessings and mercy of Almighty," he added.

Ayaz Sadiq has also expressed deep sorrow and solidarity with the families of those who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

"Our martyrs are the eternal guardians of the nation's honour. Their sacrifice is the foundation upon which our future security is built. The nation will forever remember and cherish their bravery."

He offered prayers for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs and extended heartfelt condolences to their bereaved families.

"May Allah grant them patience and strength in their hour of grief. Their loved ones did not die in vain — they live on in the nation's gratitude and in its resolve to remain free, proud and united."

He also said "Today, Pakistan stands stronger — politically, militarily and morally. Let this day of gratitude remind us of what we can achieve when we are united, resolute and guided by faith."

Citizens warned of heat-related illnesses

ISLAMABAD (APP): PDM Punjab advised citizens to take precautionary measures on Saturday, especially during peak afternoon hours to avoid heat-related illnesses, urging vulnerable segments including the elderly and children to stay hydrated, limiting unnecessary sun exposure.

PDM Punjab Spokesperson talking to a private news channel said the Pakistan Meteorological Department predicted Lahore and other areas of city would experience hot and dry conditions in the coming days, with overall hot days expected and a little chance of rainfall as a dry weather pattern settles over Punjab.

He urged citizens to

take precautions, citing the Pakistan Meteorological Department's forecast of extremely hot days ahead.

This weather shift exacerbates existing dry conditions in parts of Punjab, sparking concerns over deteriorating air quality and potential public health issues, he said.

The department cautioned that a prolonged dry period is forecasted for the next 48 to 72 hours, with temperatures likely to escalate further and a negligible chance of precipitation, resulting in heightened heat stress, he added.

Residents are advised to stay hydrated, avoid outdoor activities during peak heat hours and take necessary precautions to protect themselves from

heat-related illnesses, official mentioned.

The heatwave warning has been issued as a precautionary measure to ensure public safety and minimize health risks, he noted.

The authorities are on high alert, closely monitoring the weather situation and prepared to respond to any emergencies. Citizens are urged to remain vigilant and report any heat-related incidents or concerns to the local authorities, he urged further.

Special care is recommended for vulnerable populations, including the elderly, children, and those with pre-existing medical conditions, he added.

Birth anniversary of Ansari

HERAT (TOLOnews): A number of cultural figures and poets in Herat held a ceremony to commemorate the 1050th birth anniversary of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari. The event was held at the shrine of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari in Gazar Gah, with the participation of intellectuals, religious scholars and enthusiasts of Islamic mysticism. Khwaja Abdullah Ansari was born in Herat in the 5th century AH (Islamic calendar) and is regarded as a pioneer of Persian Islamic mysticism.

Saberi met Russian investors

KABUL (BNA): Deputy Minister of Finance and Administration at the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum Mawlawi Hesamuddin Saberi met with a delegation of Russian investors to discuss potential investment opportunities in Afghanistan's mining sector. The investors expressed optimism about the possibilities for investment, particularly in gold and copper mining. They emphasized the need for the Ministry's support in establishing a standard, well-equipped laboratory.

Amir-ul-Mu'minin highlights Intelligence's role in Islamic system

KABUL (BNA): The Esteemed Amir-ul-Mu'minin stated in a one-day joint training and reform seminar held for officials of the General Directorate of Intelligence that the intelligence service of the Islamic system is obligated to neutralize all hidden and overt plots. According to the Presidential Palace, the seminar was attended by the operational deputy and directors of the relevant departments of the General Directorate of Intelligence. In his speech, the Amir-ul-Mu'minin delivered val-

uable remarks to the participants regarding the importance and necessity of intelligence within an Islamic system, describing the intelligence service as the backbone of governance. He stated that since the Islamic system came into existence through jihad and sacrifices, the intelligence department is therefore responsible for thwarting all hidden and visible plans that the enemies of the Islamic system devise and aim to implement against it. The Amir stressed that intelligence officials must not allow anyone, whether

publicly or secretly, to insult or disrespect Islamic and religious values. He emphasized that intelligence must work in cooperation with other departments to implement Sharia and help shape public awareness and understanding. In conclusion, the Amir-ul-Mu'minin advised intelligence officials to show mercy to the people, behave well within society, avoid arresting individuals based on suspicion, refrain from mistreating detainees, uphold confidentiality, and remain steadfast in their commitment to Sharia.

Kharlachi crossing reopened

PAKTIA (TOLOnews): The Kharlachi crossing in Dand Patan district of Paktia province has reopened for trade after a seven-month closure. The Paktia Chamber of Commerce and Investment, along with other local traders, has called on neighbor country to refrain from creating obstacles to trade activities. Haseebullah Gardizi, head of the Paktia Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "The Kharlachi crossing in Dand Patan reopened for trade yesterday. We call neighbor country to resolve mutual issues through dialogue and not create problems along this trade route. Too often, they close this route based on partial talks. Such disruptions must not happen again."

At the same time, several traders emphasized the need for improved facilities at the Kharlachi crossing. Khwajauddin Kaliwal, a trader in Paktia, said: "Compared to other routes, the Dand Patan route is shorter and more economical. This crossing should remain open for trade. Drivers are also pleased that there are no barriers along this road."

Another trader, Mahboobullah Muhammadi, said: "The Dand Patan crossing is vital for Afghanistan's economic growth, but neighbor country repeatedly causes issues there. The Afghan government should provide trade facilities on alternative routes such as the Wakhan corridor, which connects us to Indian and Chinese markets and can play a key role in economic development."

Besides Kharlachi, the Torkham and Ghulam Khan crossings were also closed by neighbor country for movement and trade. The Torkham crossing was reopened after nearly a month following an agreement between both sides.

China invites Taliban FM for official visit

KABUL (Amu TV): China has invited Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban's acting foreign minister, for an official visit at the end of May, Taliban said Sunday, in a move that signals growing political and economic engagement between Beijing and the Taliban.

The invitation followed a meeting in Kabul between Muttaqi and China's special envoy for Afghanistan, Yue Xiaoyong, where the two sides discussed expanding bilateral cooperation. According to a statement from the Taliban Foreign Ministry, China reaffirmed its support for the Taliban at international forums and expressed interest in increasing trade and investment in Afghanistan.

"China assured its continued backing of the Islamic Emirate in global platforms," the ministry said, using the Taliban's official name for their government. The ministry added that the upcoming trip would focus on "political relations and economic collaboration."

The visit, if it proceeds, would mark a significant



diplomatic gesture from Beijing, which has maintained close ties with the Taliban despite their lack of formal international recognition. In February, China became the first country to accept the credentials of a Taliban-appointed ambassador, Bilal Karimi.

The announcement comes a day after a trilateral meeting held behind closed doors in Kabul between Chinese, Pakistani, and Taliban. The parties reportedly agreed to limit India's strategic footprint in Afghanistan and encouraged the Taliban to align more closely with regional

initiatives led by Beijing and Islamabad. The Taliban had quietly supported Islamabad's request for an independent investigation into the April 22 attack in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Kashmir, though Taliban officials did not publicly comment on the matter.

China has steadily expanded its economic footprint in Afghanistan over the past three years, winning major contracts in the country's mining sector. Taliban authorities have awarded Chinese firms deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars, includ-

ing a gold mining concession in Takhar Province and a cement project in Logar. Regional analysts say China views engagement with the Taliban as a strategic investment in regional stability and access to Afghanistan's untapped resources, while also seeking to limit Western and Indian influence in Central and South Asia. Taliban, facing growing international isolation and economic hardship, have leaned heavily on their relationships with regional powers like China, Russia, and Iran to secure investment and legitimacy.

Badakhshan authorities, Chinese firm explore hydropower investment

B A D A K H S H A N (TOLOnews): Local authorities in Badakhshan, in collaboration with a Chinese company, have conducted a preliminary survey for the construction of a hydropower dam in the Pul-e-Such area of Jurm district.

The governor of Badakhshan, Mohammad Ayub Khalid, said that Pul-e-Such has the potential to generate more than 75 megawatts of electricity. He emphasized that efforts

are underway to initiate the construction of a power station in the area.

"If a dam is built here, it will have the capacity to generate 75 megawatts of electricity. We're currently here for the survey phase, with both Chinese and domestic companies involved. We will present the findings to the leadership to assess the feasibility of the project and plan accordingly," said Khalid. Hekmatullah Akhundzoda, head of Badakhshan's electricity department, said: "A Chinese company, in

coordination with local officials, has come to assess the Pul-e-Such area for a potential dam project and is even ready to invest in the project."

Local officials urge both domestic and international investors to consider opportunities in Badakhshan, particularly in the energy sector.

Nek Mohammad Malang, the police chief of Badakhshan, assured investors of full security: "We guarantee the safety of all companies and individuals. Ensuring their security is

our responsibility, and we are committed to protecting them day and night."

Mohammad Aseel Kazemi, the district governor of Jurm, said: "Alhamdulillah, Badakhshan has excellent potential for electricity generation. Pul-e-Such is one such location. If a dam is built here, it will not only supply power to Badakhshan but also to the entire northern region."

Meanwhile, residents of Badakhshan are calling on the interim government to begin construction on the project without delay.

Security, uplift, public welfare discussed

BADAKSHAN (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs stated in a meeting with Qari Mohammad Amin Tayeb, Deputy Governor of Badakhshan Province, that ensuring security, peace, and the welfare of the people is one of the key responsibilities of the Islamic Emirate.

According to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, during the meeting, Qari Tayeb provided an update on the economic, social, security, and governance situation in Badakhshan Province.

He emphasized that the Mujahideen and Islamic Emirate officials in the province are continuously serving the people and striving to ensure peace and security.

Qari Mohammad Amin Tayeb also conveyed the concerns of the local population regarding transportation infrastructure, development initiatives, and employment, and requested attention from the relevant authorities.

Meeting on investment in electricity technology held



KABUL (BNA): Engineer Safiullah Ahmadzai, Chief Operating Officer of Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), met with officials from Xinjiang Electric Group, a leading Chinese electrical appliance manufacturer.

During the discussions, representatives from

Xinjiang Electric expressed interest in cooperating on advanced electricity solutions.

Ahmadzai announced plans for joint technical meetings between the Chinese company's technical staff and the operational department of the Afghanistan Electricity

Company. Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat's administration highlighted their ongoing efforts to engage with various international firms to introduce innovative electricity systems, aiming to enhance service reliability and reduce waste through cutting-edge technology.

Right to dower promised, but never granted

BAMYAN CITY (Pajhwok): In some parts of the country, including central Bamyan province, women remain silent on one of their most fundamental rights — dower (mahr).

Mahr is a woman's key Islamic and legal entitlement determined at the time of marriage. For many women, however, it is a cliché written on the wedding contract.

Khadija Akhlaqi, a middle-aged woman from Bamyan, says with a suppressed sigh: "It's been about 25 years since I got married, but my husband hasn't paid me a single afghani in dower. He doesn't even consider paying it."

Her dower had been set at 80,000 afghanis at the time of her marriage, but she has never been able to receive that amount.

Khadija's story is far from unique. Zainab, Laila and dozens of other women in Bamyan — as indeed across the country— share similar experiences.

Zainab, another inhabit-

ant of Bamyan who married 12 years ago, believes harmful traditions and customs have prevented most women from receiving mahr.

She explains: "If a woman asks for her dower, it often leads to negative consequences, including arguments, emotional distance and even divorce. That's why I chose to stay silent."

Laila, who has been married for 20 years, has also not received her dower fixed at 120,000 afghani.

She says quietly: "I asked a few times, but all I got in return was insults and indifference. Here in Bamyan, a woman may receive dower only if she gets divorced — and that too only if she's lucky."

Religious scholars stress that, from an Islamic perspective, dower is a woman's legitimate right, and her husband is bound to grant it.

Cleric Niamatullah Sadeqi says: "Mahr is a financial obligation set in

the marriage contract in accordance with the Islamic law. The husband is required to give it after marriage."

He adds without mutual consent and determined dower, a marriage is not valid. Islam encourages modest mahr, but insists on its voluntary payment as a religious duty.

Sadeqi also emphasises women's right to demand dower at any time and have full authority over how to use it. No one has the right to interfere, intimidate or pressure a woman into giving it up.

Why are women denied this right?

Hajar Hosseini, a social activist, points to several factors: "Harmful cultural practices, lack of awareness, economic hardship and social taboos have made dower claims a matter of shame. In the eyes of many, a woman seeking her right is seen as dishonourable."

According to Hosseini, when claiming one's dower

is viewed as a transgression, women are forced into silence, foregoing a right clearly protected by both religion and law.

A protected, enforceable right

Haji and Religious Affairs Director Maulvi Mohammad Hanif Hanafi said: "According to the commands of Allah and the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), all women are entitled to mahr and no one has the right to deny them this."

He pointed out women, who were denied their Islamic and legal right to mahr, could file formal complaints with judicial organs.

Although dower is enshrined in Islamic law as a non-negotiable right, in practice — particularly in regions like Bamyan —many women avoid seeking it for fear of social taunts, domestic conflict, or even violence. In the end, they often surrender their right — lock, stock and barrel.

Baghlan enmity that cost 120 lives remains unresolved

PUL-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): A 35-year-old enmity between two families that has so far claimed 120 lives remains unresolved in Deh Salah district of Baghlan province.

The enmity began 35 years ago between two families in the village of Gadali in Qasan Valley and now, weary of the conflict, both sides are calling for peace and a Jirga to intervene.

First a dispute broke out over the marriage of a girl, in which one person was killed.

Since then, 120 people have been killed as the enmity remained unresolved.

Local tribal elders called the enmity the longest and bloodiest in the province.

Arbab Bismillah Khan, a resident of the district, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the enmity was between the families of Arbab Ghiyas and Mulla and it arose over

the marriage of a girl.

"The girl from Arbab Ghiyas family wanted to marry another boy, but Mulla's family wanted her to marry a young man from his family. This led to a dispute between them. The man from Mulla's family who wanted to marry the girl was killed, and the enmity began. The next day, 17 people from both sides were killed in revenge."

According to him, the enmity between Arbab Ghiyas and Mulla families has been ongoing since last 35 years and so far 120 people from both sides have been killed.

According to him, the enmity has devastated both families as their young men have been killed, their newlyweds are hiding and their children are living in poverty.

He said after the Islamic Emirate's return to power, it banned carrying

weapons, and therefore no new incidents between these families had taken place, but before that, they used to attack each other every day.

What residents say about the enmity

Bashir Khan, a resident of Gadali village, said that the long-standing enmity had weakened after many young men from both sides lost their lives, but it had not ended.

"The original story is that a boy from Gadali village was walking on the river bank when rays from glass of his waistcoat hit the girl's eyes. The girl said it was intentional and informed her family members. They became suspicious of the boy. Eventually, a dispute arose between the two families, and the boy wearing the waistcoat was killed. Later, other people were killed in retaliation. This situation continues."

According to him, the enmity has now been passed down to grandchildren and once 29 people were killed on both sides in a single day.

After this, they attacked each other again, killing 17 people and even the girl who started the enmity was also killed.

Similarly, another resident, Arbab Mirza Rahim, said that the bitter stories of this long-standing enmity still remain in their minds, but no one has been able to make peace between them yet.

He added: "I was a small child when Arbab Ghiyas refused to give in marriage his sister-in-law to Mulla's nephew. This enmity started and many people died between them."

Although local elders tried to reconcile them, their decisions were ineffective. Then there were clashes between them and about 120 people from both

families have been killed in the past three decades.

The resident said there were now several young people in both families, some had left the country and others might be in the country now.

"The possibilities of reconciliation between them have also increased now."

According to him, several reconciliation attempts during the previous governments had failed because neither side respected the decisions of jirgas and attacked each other.

Meanwhile, a member of Mulla's family, who did not want to be named, said their grandparents gifted them with such animosity before their births that had deprived them of the joy of life.

He added: "Our grandparents left us with such a bloody enmity over the marriage of a girl that I have no interest in dis-

cussing or talking about it. What has happened has not been good. We, the younger generation, have no desire to continue it...."

Although he did not want to talk further about it, he said briefly: "Every member of our family was a great figure in society, but we lost them. Why should it be continued? Personally, as an educated young man, I do not want it to continue. I think the other side will also believe that nothing should happen between us anymore."

Pajhwok tried to have the opinion of Arbab Ghiyas' family members, but despite repeated attempts, it failed to establish a contact with them.

Why does such hostility occur? Shahzaman Zamani, a professor at a private university in Baghlan and an expert on legal issues, said that conflicts between families arise due to illiteracy,

poverty, ignorance, hatred and bad local customs.

He added that there were two ways to resolve such conflicts, one is legal and the other is a moral obligation.

He said that the government has a legal obligation to address such conflicts and find solutions within the framework of law and Sharia.

He said tribal elders and religious scholars should first pave the way for negotiations between the hostile families and then resolve problems that have arisen between them.

However, the Islamic Emirate has paved the way for resolution of such hostilities and has resolved thousands of disputes in the past three years through the mediation of tribal elders and religious scholars.

Mullah Alam Majidi, spokesman for the governor of Baghlan, said that the committee appointed to

resolve three long-standing hostilities in Qasan will begin its work in near future.

He added: "A number of old hostilities have been resolved in Baghlan. A joint committee of tribal elders and religious scholars has also been formed to resolve the old hostilities in Deh Salah district. The governor himself, the deputy governor, and other officials have also started mediation efforts for reconciliation."

Majidi said a big meeting will be held between the two families in Andarab in the next few days to resolve the issue so that there will be no more problems between them.

Majidi said that in the near future, both families will be ready for reconciliation and a decision will be made between them so that neither side will try to attack the other again.

Gandapur orders high-level inquiry into irregularities in ETEA test

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has taken serious notice of the alleged irregularities in the screening test for the hiring of school teachers being conducted by Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA), and has directed the Chief Secretary to initiate a high-level inquiry into the matter. A formal letter has been dispatched from the Chief Minister's Secretariat to the Chief Secretary in this regard.

According to the letter, the Chief Minister expressed deep concern over reports of misconduct and a possible paper

leak during the ETEA screening test held in Bannu on May 10, 2025. Initial reports indicate that several individuals were apprehended from a private guesthouse in possession of the test paper, bubble sheets, laptops, and scanning machines while the test was still underway. The incident raises serious questions about the integrity and oversight of the testing system.

The letter further says that the Chief Minister has termed the alleged irregularities as grave violation of merit and transparency and has instructed that a thorough and timely investigation be conducted further directing that a senior

officer or a group of officers be tasked to carry out a detailed inquiry, identify those responsible, and recommend disciplinary action against those involved. The Chief Minister has said that ETEA is, currently, conducting exams across the province to recruit thousands of teachers, any form of malpractice undermines not only the future of candidates but also public trust in the system. He has further instructed that the investigation should not only focus on the immediate facts of the case but also potential weaknesses within ETEA's operational framework; and should recommend legal and administrative action

against any individual or institution found guilty of misconduct or negligence.

Additionally, Secretary Elementary and Secondary Education has been directed to review examination arrangements across all districts, ensure effective monitoring of the testing process, and take necessary steps for improved coordination between local administrations and ETEA staff. The Chief Minister has ordered that a comprehensive report on the incident be submitted within fifteen days. He has reaffirmed that the provincial government will not compromise on the principles of merit, transparency, and accountability.



GAZA: Islam Hajjaj consoles her 6-year-old daughter Najwa, who suffers from malnutrition, at a shelter in central Gaza City, on Sunday. Amnesty International accuses Israel on April 29 of committing a "live-streamed genocide" against Palestinians by forcibly displacing Gazans and creating a humanitarian catastrophe in the besieged territory, claims Israel dismisses as "blatant lies".

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill 13 people

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP): Israeli strikes overnight and into Sunday killed 13 people in the Gaza Strip, mostly women and children, according to local health officials.

Two of the strikes hit tents in the southern city of Khan Younis, each killing two children and their parents, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies. Another five people were killed in strikes elsewhere, according to hospital.

The Israeli military says it only targets militants and tries to avoid harming civilians. It blames Hamas for civilian deaths in the 19-month-old war because the militants are embedded in densely populated areas. There was no immediate Israeli comment on the latest strikes. Israel has sealed Gaza off from all imports, including food, medicine and emergency shelter, for over 10 weeks in what it says is a pressure tactic aimed at forcing Hamas to release hostages. Israel resumed its offensive in March, shattering a ceasefire that had facilitated the release of more than 30 hostages.

The U.N. and aid groups say food and other supplies

are running low and hunger is widespread.

Children carrying empty bottles raced after a water tanker in a devastated area of northern Gaza on Sunday. Residents of the built-up Shati refugee camp said the water was brought by a charity from elsewhere in Gaza. Without it, they rely on wells that are salty and often polluted.

"I am forced to drink salty water, I have no choice," said Mahmoud Radwan. "This causes intestinal disease, and there's no medicine to treat it."

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of Palestinian civilian affairs, says enough aid entered during a two-month ceasefire this year and that two of the three main water lines from Israel are still functioning. Aid groups say the humanitarian crisis is worse than at any time in the 19-month war.

U.S. President Donald Trump, whose administration has voiced full support for Israel's actions, is set to visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates this week in a regional tour that will not include Israel.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostages. Fifty-nine hostages are still inside Gaza, around a third of them believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's offensive has killed over 52,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants or civilians. The offensive has destroyed vast areas of the territory and displaced some 90% of its population of around 2 million.

In a separate development, Israel said it retrieved the remains of a soldier killed in a 1982 battle in southern Lebanon after he had been classified as missing for more than four decades.

The recovery of Sgt. 1st Class Tzvi Feldman's remains brought more closure to a case that has plagued Israel for years. The Israeli military said his remains were recovered from deep inside Syria,

without providing further details.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Feldman's surviving siblings on Sunday and told them that the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar Assad late last year led to an "opportunity" that allowed the military and the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, to gather additional intelligence and eventually locate and retrieve the body, according to video released by his office.

Feldman went missing, along with five other Israeli soldiers, in a battle with Syrian forces in the Lebanese town of Sultan Yaaqoub. Several years later, two of the missing soldiers were returned alive to Israel in prisoner exchanges with Syria. The remains of another soldier were returned in 2019, after Russia said it had helped locate them in Syria, while the fate of the other two remained unknown.

Cases of soldiers missing for decades have a powerful emotional and political resonance in Israel, where military service is compulsory for most Jewish men.

International airlines begin resuming flights

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: International airlines have started resuming flight to Pakistan.

According to reports, Gulf airlines have announced resuming flights to Pakistan from Sunday, May 11.

Earlier this week, several Gulf carriers suspended flights to Pakistan, including

ing Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways.

Emirates cancelled flights from Dubai to Sialkot, Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar on Wednesday. "Customers on cancelled flights must not proceed to the airport," it said on its website.

Etihad cancelled flights to Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. "Additionally, some other services may be

rerouted to avoid the affected airspace, potentially resulting in extended flight times," Etihad Airways said in a statement.

Qatar Airways "temporarily suspended flights" to Pakistan, citing Pakistani airspace closure. "The airline is closely monitoring the situation and will continue to prioritise the safety of its passengers and crew," it said.

PM lauds President Trump

Continued from Front Page

The latest fighting between the two neighbours started when India attacked Pakistan in the aftermath of a shooting attack in India-administered Kashmir's Pahalgam, which killed 26 civilians at a tourist location.

New Delhi again accused Pakistan of backing the "terrorist" groups that have launched many deadly attacks in India-administered Kashmir for decades.

Pakistan strongly denies the charges, maintaining that India has supported "terrorism" in its territory for many years and the Pahalgam attack was a false-flag operation to start a war.

The missile, drone and artillery attacks signified the most serious fighting between the two countries since they became nuclear-armed powers decades ago.

'Neutral' site for talks
US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Saturday that in addition to the ceasefire, the two countries agreed to conduct broad talks over a host of issues at a "neutral" site soon.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said his country believes in the path of peaceful negotiations to resolve problems around distribution of water resources and "all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir".

But India has for decades refused to hold negotiations over the contested region as it has tried to strengthen its hold over it.

Mohammad Waseem Malla, a research fellow at the International Centre for Peace Studies in New Delhi, told Al Jazeera that Trump's statement, though not entirely surprising, was "striking both in tone and substance" and likely to raise concerns in New Delhi.

"Any suggestion of third-party involvement, even in passing, crosses a red line for New Delhi — especially under the current government, which has redefined the country's foreign policy and its emphasis on territorial sovereignty."

He added that while Trump's mention of boosting trade and promoting peace may seem conciliatory internationally, India's domestic political climate and strategic priorities make it difficult to entertain such offers right now.

"The key will be how New Delhi calibrates its response given current sensitivities."

Key Indian mily installations targeted...

Continued from Front Page

He stated that Pakistani aircraft had neutralized multiple high-profile threats, including Indian Rafale jets.

"We scored 6-0. Not a single loss on our side. The Rafales were hit and grounded - they have not taken off since near the western border," he declared. "We were tasked to re-establish deterrence, neutralize key threats, and retain air superiority - and we achieved all three."

Aurangzeb also highlighted the role of indigenous anti-drone systems in neutralizing UAV incursions, including U.S.-made drones used by India. According to him, all enemy drones were detected by radar and rendered useless through jamming, spoofing, and electronic warfare measures.

"This response reinforces our national security posture and demonstrates the PAF's readiness to defend Pakistani airspace at all costs," he said, also praising Chief of Air Staff Zaheer Ahmad Babar for his leadership.

Navy Thwarts Maritime Threat

Vice Admiral Rab Nawaz revealed that the Pakistan Navy effectively blocked an Indian naval advance, particularly that of aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which had been inching toward Pakistan's maritime boundary.

"On May 9, the Vikrant was positioned 400 nautical miles off the Pakistani coast before retreating toward Bombay. Our maritime air arm was fully prepared to intercept and respond if it came any closer," he stated.

The Vice Admiral emphasized that Pakistan's naval forces maintained constant surveillance and communication with the Air Force to ensure integrated defense across all domains.

"Let's be clear: the Vikrant sails with 8-12 MiG-29s - barely enough for its own defense. The

cost of any maritime aggression was well understood by the adversary, which is why they backed off," he added.

No Indian Pilot in Custody

Dispelling rumors circulating on social media, Lt Gen Chaudhry confirmed that no Indian pilot was in Pakistani custody following the operation.

"There is no Indian pilot in our custody. Claims to the contrary are part of misinformation and propaganda," he clarified.

Pakistan Army Hails Youth as 'Frontline Cyber Warriors' in Information Warfare

In a powerful acknowledgment of national unity and digital resilience, the DG ISPR lauded the unwavering support of the Pakistani nation during recent military operations, singling out the youth as key defenders in the information domain.

Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry expressed the armed forces' deep appreciation for the moral courage, steadfastness, and prayers of the Pakistani people, describing their support as a "force multiplier" in times of national crisis.

"We are especially grateful to our resilient youth who stood as front-line cyber warriors, boldly countering hostile narratives and safeguarding Pakistan's interests in the digital space," Lt Gen Chaudhry said.

He praised the nation's young generation for playing an instrumental role in protecting the country's narrative against coordinated disinformation campaigns, particularly on social media and other digital platforms.

The military spokesperson also acknowledged the crucial role played by the Pakistani media, commending its responsible coverage and resistance to Indian propaganda and psychological operations aimed at sowing discord.

"The media demonstrat-

ed maturity and a sense of national responsibility by exposing falsehoods and countering India's war-mongering rhetoric," he noted.

In a rare moment of bipartisan recognition, Lt Gen Chaudhry extended gratitude to the entire political leadership of the country - regardless of party lines - for exhibiting unity and standing firmly behind the armed forces.

"The support from all political parties, without exception, reflects a collective commitment to safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity," he said.

The remarks underscored a broader message of national solidarity and resilience in the face of escalating regional tensions, with military, media, political leadership, and civil society aligning in defense of the country's sovereignty both on the battlefield and in the digital realm.

Furthermore, he extended gratitude to the political leadership across all parties for their unified stance and unwavering support for the armed forces, underscoring the collective resolve in defending Pakistan's sovereignty.

This recognition comes in the wake of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, where Pakistan's armed forces conducted precision strikes on key Indian military installations in response to unprovoked aggression. He further said that in a conflict between two rival nuclear powers ... such a conflict is actually an absurdity and it is inconceivable and sheer stupidity.

"In the case of India and Pakistan, such a conflict can lead to peril of more than 1.6 billion people," he replied to a question. "In reality, there is no space for war between India and Pakistan, and if anyone wants to carve out this space for war, he is actually carving out the space for mutual annihilation."

The Fifth column: Shadows within the nation in times of war

Syed Saqib Hussain

THE concept of the "fifth column" first emerged in the smoke and rubble of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), when General Emilio Mola, leading a Nationalist army against the Republican government in Madrid, famously spoke of four columns of troops advancing from outside the city-and a "fifth column" of sympathisers and saboteurs already entrenched within. This fifth column, he explained, would sow chaos from within,

undermine morale, and ultimately help secure victory without the need for full-blown frontal assault.

Since then, the term has transcended its original context to refer to any internal threat-covert actors, collaborators, or propagandists-who serve an external adversary's interest by weakening a nation from within. In a world increasingly shaped by psychological operations, digital surveillance, and information manipulation, the fifth column has evolved into something more elusive and far-reaching.

ing.

The recent flare-up in tensions between Pakistan and India-an escalation that began with cross-border skirmishes and culminated in a tense military exchange-once again exposed how modern conflicts are no longer confined to tanks, troops, or missiles. Alongside battlefield manoeuvres, another war was quietly unfolding in cyberspace, on television screens, and across mobile phone networks: a war of narratives, misinformation, and internal sabotage.

During this period, India

claimed to have struck alleged militant camps inside Pakistan-a move widely covered by Indian media with triumphant fervour. In response, Pakistan conducted measured strikes targeting Indian military installations. Yet, in the background of these events, a barrage of disinformation flooded social media.

Unverified images, doctored videos, and provocative rhetoric circulated widely, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. It was here, in the digital trenches, that the fifth column appeared to re-

emerge-not as shadowy agents meeting in the dark, but as online personas, media operatives, and algorithm-driven bots.

Unlike traditional espionage, today's fifth column often operates through platforms like WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, where conspiracy theories and polarising content can be disseminated in seconds.

Some of these narratives aim to erode trust in national institutions and cast doubt on the armed forces' capabilities. In many cases, these actors do not need to be foreigners. They could

be disillusioned citizens, ideological extremists, or even unwitting individuals manipulated by larger foreign agendas.

Mainstream media, too, has not remained untouched. In moments of heightened tension, the rush to be first often overtakes the responsibility to be accurate. Sensationalism, unverified reports, and nationalistic fervour can turn newsrooms into unwitting instruments of psychological warfare. Certain segments of the media have at times walked this perilous line, amplifying the voices

of the fifth column rather than countering them.

In Pakistan, the state's response to this emerging threat must go beyond traditional strategies. It requires a multi-layered strategy that includes media literacy campaigns and robust cyber defence systems. More importantly, it calls for the nurturing of a civic culture that values critical thinking, unity in diversity, and resilience in the face of psychological manipulation.

While the ceasefire announced on May 10, 2025, has brought an halt to open hostilities, the qui-

eter, more insidious war continues. The fifth column is not an army that marches, but one that whispers-its goal not to conquer territory, but to fracture minds, distort perceptions, and hollow out national resolve from within.

In this evolving battlefield, where information is both weapon and target, Pakistan must remain vigilant not only at its borders but within its own narrative spaces. For in modern warfare, it is not merely the strength of arms but the unity of purpose-and clarity of truth-that determines a nation's survival.