

Putin declines meeting
ISTANBUL (Reuters): Russia's Vladimir Putin spurned a challenge to meet face-to-face with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Turkey on Thursday, dealing a blow to prospects for a peace breakthrough. Zelenskyy said Putin's decision not to attend but to send what he called a "decorative" line-up showed the Russian leader was not serious about ending the war.



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Pakistan ready for talks on Kashmir issue

PM visits Kamra Airbase to honour PAF heroes who repelled Indian aggression

F.P. Report

KAMRA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said Pakistan was ready for dialogue with India for the sake of peace but the talks should be on Kashmir issue and for grant of right to self-determination to the Kashmiris.

He made the offer while speaking to the Pakistan air force pilots and personnel during a special visit to Kamra air base. He said Pakistan was ready for talks with India to achieve peace but it had certain conditions. He asked India to hold talks on the Kashmir issue, adding the people of Occupied Kashmir should be given their right to self determination according to the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The freedom movement of Kashmir was very much alive, he remarked and added that Pakistan was wrongly accused of the Pahalgam incident. Pakistan wanted a transparent investigation into the incident but India resorted to aggression instead of conducting a probe into the incident, he continued.

The prime minister made the visit to the air base to appreciate Pakistan air force which successfully defended the nation during one of the longest aerial engagements of the 21st century, firmly establishing Pakistan's air superiority by downing Indian aircraft in a critical defence operation. He lauded the bravery and skill of the "Shaheens" (falcons) of the PAF, whose swift and decisive action shattered the enemy's illusion of aerial dominance during the high-stakes confrontation.

Speaking to the PAF pilots, he said, "The entire nation stands proud of your courage. You have not only defended our skies, but also upheld Pakistan's honour on the global stage." The prime minister was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf,



Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, along with other senior civil and military officials.

He said from May 6 to May 10, during the war with India the whole world was astounded by the professional capabilities of the armed forces and the enemy was taken aback with the response of Pakistan. The confidence of the world especially of our friends enhanced in Pakistan after the way it responded to the Indian aggression, he noted.

He said it was the most magnificent victory which changed thinking of the world and altered the balance of power in the region. People of Pakistan were proud of the performance of the armed forces and their heads were high with pride, he added.

He said a clear message was sent to the enemy that it should refrain from casting an evil eyes towards Pakistan. He congratulated the chief of army staff, air chief and naval chief on the brilliant performance of the armed forces. The whole world acknowledged that Pakistan won the war with the home grown technology and professional expertise of the armed forces, he added.

Shehbaz Sharif said the eagles of the armed forces shot down six planes of the enemy, adding, "Our armed

forces defeated an enemy which was bigger in terms of population and it had in recent years bought hundreds of billions of dollars worth of military equipment." He said Pakistan crushed the false vanity of the enemy.

"During the short war, in just few hours, the armed forces with the courage, bravery and valour changed the course of history for all times to come," he asserted. He said the whole world was looking at the flag of Pakistan with respect. The whole nation was united and praying for the success of the armed forces and the country, he said adding the way the air forces shot down enemy's Rafale planes, the world would remember the spectacle for eternity.

While quoting Quranic verses, he said the JF Thunder plane shot down India's Rafale plane which brought back memories of the legends of Pakistan air force like M.M Alam, Cecil Chaudhry and Sarfraz Rafique, who demonstrated exceptional brilliance in a previous war against India.

"In the wake of unprovoked aggression, Pakistan's Armed Forces exhibited exemplary restraint, strategic foresight, and operational precision. Their swift and calibrated response not only neutralized the threat but also delivered a decisive blow to hostile military infrastructure—unequivocally reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering



resolve to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," he continued.

He said Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir led the armed forces from the front. "The entire nation takes immense pride in the valour and vigilance of its armed forces. Under the capable stewardship of the Chief of Army Staff, our defenders have once again underscored that Pakistan's security is inviolable, and any act of belligerence will be met with a forceful, resolute, and unforgiving response," he added.

Highlighting the Pakistan Air Force's operational success, the Prime Minister added: "Confirmation of successful downing of a sixth Indian aircraft on the night of 6/ 7 May, a Mirage-2000 near Pampore east of Srinagar, is further testament to the PAF's combat excellence and the unflinching resolve of our Armed Forces to protect the motherland at all costs." He lauded the visionary leadership of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, acknowledging his pivotal role in modernizing the PAF and spearheading the seamless integration of advanced technologies that have significantly enhanced the Force's operational capabilities.

In a tribute to the airmen, the Prime Minister observed: "To our fearless pilots and dedicated air personnel—your courage and precision embody

the indomitable spirit of Pakistan's Armed Forces. You have stood resolute, upholding the sanctity of our skies and defending the sovereignty of our country with unwavering resolve." Reaffirming the government's and nation's collective determination, the Prime Minister said: "Pakistan's Armed Forces remain fully prepared and resolutely committed to defending every inch of our territory. Any aggression will be countered with a timely, proportionate, and decisive response." We stand united, vigilant, and unshakable for the defence of our homeland."

The coordination among the branches of the armed forces was exemplary, he said adding Pakistan's navy was ready to respond to the aggression of the enemy the way it did in 1965. The prime minister said the nation would never forget the sacrifices of its armed forces.

He said Pakistan acted with patience and tolerance in the face of aggression of the enemy which rejected the offer of peace and launched an attack which was replied befittingly by the forces. The enemy targetted innocent children, mothers and youth who did not commit any wrong, he said adding Pakistan's forces accurately targetted the military installations of the enemy.

IHC issues notices to NAB

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued notices to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and other concerned parties on the petitions filed by the PTI founder and Bushra Bibi seeking suspension of their sentences in the £190 million reference. The hearing was conducted by Acting Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan true brothers: Premier

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday termed Pakistan and Azerbaijan as true brothers on the overwhelming support of the people and leadership of Azerbaijan during the recent crisis in South Asia.

"Spoke to my dear brother President Ilham Aliyev this afternoon and conveyed my profound gratitude to him for Azerbaijan's resolute support to Pakistan during the recent crisis in South Asia," the prime minister narrated his sentiments, after his telephonic conversation with the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, on his official X wall. The prime minister wrote that the overwhelming support of the people and leadership of Azerbaijan had demonstrated to the world that Pakistan and Azerbaijan were true brothers.

PM Sharif added that they had also discussed ways to further deepen their bilateral partnership through enhanced Azerbaijani investment in Pakistan and reiterated his invitation to the President to visit Islamabad at his earliest convenience. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, expressing his concern over the recent provocative statements by the Indian leadership, affirmed that in face of any future aggression, Pakistan would resolutely defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Speaking with the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, over the telephone, the prime minister emphasized that Pakistan had agreed to the ceasefire understanding with India in the interest of regional peace, and remained committed to upholding it. He stressed that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was the root cause of instability in South Asia, which should be resolved in accordance with the UN Security Council's resolutions.

Pakistan did not request truce: Dar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told the upper house of the Parliament on Thursday that Pakistan did not request a ceasefire during the recent escalation with India. Instead, Dar said, it [ceasefire] was initiated following a call from the US Secretary of State, who conveyed that India was willing to halt hostilities.

Speaking in the Senate session chaired by Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani, he said the ceasefire took effect after Pakistan confirmed its readiness to stop military actions, with subsequent calls from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and China reinforcing diplomatic efforts. Dar emphasized that Pakistan had exercised restraint and communicated this to all friendly nations even before the outbreak of hostilities.

He stated, "We told our friends we would not initiate an attack, but we would certainly respond if provoked." Dar reiterated that Pakistan's response was measured, decisive, and in line with international norms. The foreign minister revealed that the recent conflict began after the Pahalgam incident, which India immediately blamed Pakistan, despite offering no concrete evidence—much like the earlier Pulwama incident.

"We offered a transparent and neutral investigation into the Pahalgam attack, but India refused," said Dar, adding that Pakistan ensured India's narrative did not dominate the inter-

national discourse this time. He said, on May 7, 70-80 Indian aircraft violated Pakistani airspace, releasing 24 payloads that struck civilian areas, including mosques. Pakistan retaliated, downing six Indian jets, including Rafale, without losing a single aircraft.

Dar stated that India attempted to stoke tensions among the Sikh community by bombing their areas and falsely blaming Pakistan. He said Pakistan's response included destroying 80 Indian drones, of which only one had inflicted injuries on Pakistani forces. He further stated that Pakistan had evidence of India launching attacks on multiple Pakistani military bases and civilian infrastructure, but Pakistan refrained from targeting Indian civilian areas in return.

"We told the world we will not hide our response - and we didn't," he said, referencing the public release of videos showing Pakistan's counterattacks. Dar noted that the National Security Committee made swift decisions in response to Indian aggression, and Pakistan's military executed those plans effectively. He also addressed the international community's perception, stating, "Pakistan is no longer diplomatically irrelevant; we have proven our strategic and diplomatic significance."

The deputy prime minister said India used the Pahalgam incident as a pretext to sabotage the Indus Waters Treaty and reiterated that this agreement cannot be unilaterally suspended or terminated, citing recent remarks by World Bank President

Ajay Banga. Dar praised Pakistan's military, especially the Air Force, for its performance and said that India's losses in the conflict amounted to at least \$3 billion. Pakistan, on the other hand, suffered civilian casualties, primarily women, children, and the elderly.

He also stressed the need for internal political stability and national unity in the face of persistent external threats. The government, Dar noted, has announced a special compensation package for the martyrs and assured full state support for their families. He concluded that while Pakistan remains committed to peace, it has demonstrated that any act of aggression will be met with a firm and proportionate response.

Opposition Leader Senator Shibli Faraz echoed Dar's sentiments, lauding the Pakistan Air Force and urging the country to leverage this military success for diplomatic and strategic gains. He said Pakistan has established its defense capabilities, particularly by setting a new standard in air warfare.

He emphasized that the entire nation stands united in safeguarding the country's geographical boundaries and stressed the importance of further building on this success in all aspects. Senator Sherry Rehman said the armed forces of Pakistan have made a new history by establishing new conventional deterrence against India. She also thanked US President Donald Trump for making Kashmir again the talking point of the global community.

Nation to mark Thanksgiving Day today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Thursday that the entire nation would stand united to observe Thanksgiving Day on Friday for 'Marka-e-Haq' (Battle of Truth) in the wake of recent standoff with India.

Speaking to the media, he said the nation did demonstrate great resolve during the 'Marka-e-Haq' which was remarkably fought by the Armed Forces under 'Operation Bunyanum Marsoos'. "It is the time to passionately observe this historic victory with national zeal, and pay homage to the Almighty, besides prayers for our martyrs," he said, explaining the salient features of the commemoration program.

The day will commence with gun salutes and national prayers for the country, the Armed Forces, and the martyrs, he added. He said the entire nation would express its gratitude to the Almighty and offer special prayers during Friday congregations for the country's prosperity and the security forces' future adventures.

Guard changing ceremonies would also be held at the mausoleums of Qaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal, he noted. He said flag-hoisting ceremonies would take place across the country at major public places and locations. Visits would be paid to the graves of martyrs and national heroes to offer homage and prayers.

The central event will be held in Islamabad, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the services chiefs, including Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf, and federal ministers. The information minister emphasized that special tributes would be paid to the national heroes, and a message of solidarity and unity would resonate throughout the nation. He urged all citizens to hoist the national flags atop their homes to demonstrate solidarity with the Armed Forces, including the martyrs, and to celebrate this historic victory.

ISPR DG vows decisive response to any violation

ISLAMABAD: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has issued a stern warning that Pakistan will respond decisively and forcefully to any ceasefire violation by India.

In an interview with a British TV channel, the military spokesperson stated that any incursion or challenge to Pakistan's sovereignty would provoke a harsh and immediate reaction.

"Our response to any aggression threatening our territory or integrity will be severe," he asserted. Only days after the ceasefire understanding was reached, Gen Ahmed Sharif cautioned that any military confrontation between the nuclear-armed neighbours could result in devastating consequences for both.

"If India imagines there's room for limited warfare with Pakistan, it's inviting mutual destruction," he added. Highlighting the gravity of nuclear risk, he noted that major global powers, including the United States, recognise the danger posed by any escalation.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has expressed interest in mediating the long-standing Kashmir issue. However, India has traditionally opposed external mediation and has not formally agreed to negotiations under the truce terms. The military spokesperson reiterated that the Kashmir dispute must be resolved in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions, through the will of the Kashmiri people.

"Pakistan sees its military response as a strategic success against a more powerful adversary and hopes it signals a shift in the regional balance," he added. Earlier today, the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of Pakistan and India agreed to take the peace process forward days after the US-brokered ceasefire.

Pakistan's DGMO Maj Gen Kashif Abdullah and his Indian counterpart Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai had a third contact over hotline. The contact is yet to be officially confirmed. Sources said the two sides had established contact for the third time and agreed to maintain the status quo and take the peace process forward after the ceasefire. — Agencies

Pakistan demands probe into nuclear material theft in India

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday called on the international community to investigate repeated incidents of nuclear material theft and security lapses at India's nuclear facilities. In a strongly worded statement, the Foreign Office (FO) condemned recent remarks by Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on nuclear weapons, calling them "irresponsible" and a reflection of India's insecurity and failed defence strategy.

As media reported, "The International Atomic Energy Agency should take charge of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday, days after the nuclear-armed neighbours ended their worst military conflict in nearly three decades". Deadly fighting broke out between the old enemies last week after India struck what it said were "terrorist camps" in Pakistan in retaliation for an attack in Indian Kashmir last month that killed 26 men, which it said was backed by Pakistan.

"Are nuclear weapons safe in the hands of such an irresponsible and rogue nation?" Singh said while

Pakistan, India DGMOs 'hold third hotline contact'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of Pakistan and India established contact through a hotline on Wednesday afternoon, their third such communication since the two sides agreed to uphold a ceasefire facilitated by the United States and other friendly countries. According to well-placed sources, the two military officials discussed the ground situation and agreed to maintain the status quo, with the ceasefire holding "for the time being", in line with their previous discussion on Monday. No official statement has been issued by either side regarding the conversation or its specific outcomes.

addressing soldiers in Indian Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar. "I believe that Pakistan's nuclear weapons should be taken under the supervision of IAEA." Responding to Singh's remarks Islamabad had denied the allegations and both countries sent missiles and drones into each other's airspace in the days that followed, before they reached a truce on Saturday. The spokesperson said the Indian minister's comments also indicated a lack of understanding of the responsibilities outlined by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). He

added that Pakistan's conventional capabilities are sufficient to deter Indian aggression.

The spokesperson further expressed concern over repeated cases of theft and illegal trafficking of nuclear material in India, urging the global community to take notice. In 2024, reports emerged of radioactive equipment being stolen from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. In another incident, five individuals were caught with nuclear material. He noted that last year, Californium—a radioactive substance worth \$100 million—was recovered in India. — Agencies

Pakistan welcomes US decision

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday welcomed the United States' decision to lift sanctions on Syria, marking a pivotal step towards regional stability and economic recovery.

Pakistan has consistently advocated for constructive engagement and dialogue, a statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson said. The easing of sanctions is expected to facilitate economic growth, improve access to essential services, and support the rebuilding efforts of Syrian authorities.

"We commend the commitment of all countries, in particular the US, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, working constructively towards a peaceful Syria," the spokesperson added.

President: No compromise on Pakistan's sovereignty

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari said Pakistan will never compromise on its sovereignty, territorial integrity, or its core national interests and aggression against the homeland will be met with full force.

In a message on the occasion of thanksgiving day, to observe the victory against India, on May 16, he said, "It is a great moment for us to celebrate the success of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos in response to Indian unprovoked aggression. I am grateful to Almighty Allah for blessing us with victory in this critical hour."

"I pay tribute to the valiant soldiers of the Pakistan Armed Forces and the entire military leadership, especially the Joint

Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Chief of Army Staff, and the Chief of Naval Staff. This victory not only belongs to Pakistan's Armed Forces but also to the entire Pakistani nation, who stood like Bunyan-um-Marsoos against the enemy aggression," he added.

The President said, "I am proud of our Armed Forces who responded to Indian provocation with precision, professionalism, and strength. I am glad that the world witnessed and acknowledged Pakistan's patience and restraint as well as the operational effectiveness that compelled the enemy to cease its aggression. We stood firm. We stood united. And we emerged victorious with dignity."

"Pakistan is a peace-loving country and does not

harbour aggressive design against any country. However, let there be no doubt: Pakistan will never compromise on its sovereignty, territorial integrity, or its core national interests. Any aggression against our homeland will be met with full force," he added.

The President said, "We seek peace in our region. Our commitment to regional peace and stability must never be mistaken for weakness. We reject any unilateral suspension of the Indus Water Treaty as there is no such provision in the Treaty. Pakistan will utilize all elements of national power to protect its water rights at all costs." "To our brave soldiers—those who stood their ground, who risked and sacrificed their lives—we offer them our eternal gratitude," he remarked.



KARACHI: Senior Sindh Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon presenting shield to PPP leader Faryal Talpur at a ceremony.

Modi is a mentally ill person: AJK Minister

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information Minister Mohammad Mazhar Saeed Shah has said that the entire nation played an excellent role by becoming Bunyan Al Marsoos (pillar of unity). "When India attacked Pakistan, we issued instructions to the citizens near the Line of Control to evacuate the area. Attacks were being carried out in this area from a distance of only 30 kilometers, but the Kashmiri citizens did not leave their homes during the war, but came out with weapons and said that we will participate in the war against the enemy side by side with our army." He expressed these views during a press conference at the Press Club on Thursday.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information Minister further said that India carried out a false flag operation in Pahalgam, which has now become clear to everyone. "Pahalgam is 80 kilometers from Srinagar, 2,000 to 3,000 tourists come here daily, and the entire Indian military unit is present in Pahalgam. Police check posts are another matter. The widow of an Indian army officer killed in the Pahalgam incident said that her husband was struggling for an hour and a half but no army or police reached the scene. Where was the Indian agency RAW? The Indian government has not appointed a Home Minister in occupied Kashmir because the army is directly responsible for security there. Where was the Indian army when the Pahalgam incident happened?"

He stated that DG ISPR Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry presented Pakistan's position in a very solid and effective manner to the international media and exposed Indian lies. A total of

32 people were killed in the Indian attack in Azad Kashmir. Innocent Hadiya was martyred in Baspur, two children were martyred on the LoC, a 40-day-old infant was martyred in Khoirata, 12-year-old Ehtesham was martyred in Kotli, 6-year-old Muhammad Omar was martyred in the mosque, 2-year-old Hawa Bibi, 9-year-old Muhammad Bin Zubair and 14 women were martyred, to whom Modi said that after the Pahalgam incident, he killed more than 100 terrorists in Pakistan, although these 32 martyrs were innocent children and civilians.

The Information Minister of Azad Kashmir further said that war was imposed on us, then the world saw how we changed the outcome of this war. "With the help of Allah, with our best trained forces, we convinced the world that we are a responsible and serious country and nation. We convinced the world that we know the secret of governing the world, are also aware of the rights of neighboring countries and international relations. When Army Chief General Syed Hafiz Asim Munir came to Muzaffarabad, he reiterated his resolve that he had fought three wars against India and would not relinquish his duty in the future."

He said that India is famous for its deceit. From the anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat to the Samjhauta Express and now Pahalgam, false flag operations have been carried out. The situation is tense in 7 states of India. The Indian government's rift is facing resistance in Manipur, Nagaland and occupied Kashmir. This year, the Waqf Bill was brought for illegal seizure of Muslim properties, which has caused great anger and resentment among Muslims living in India.

Journalist Biliri's attacked his family facing threats

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Renowned journalist and reporter Ali Biliri was attacked, and his family also faced violence. The unidentified attackers managed to escape. Journalists in Pakistan have always faced threats, and ensuring their safety remains a significant challenge for successive governments.

Ali Biliri was allegedly targeted for his fact-based reporting. He and his family had been receiving threats, which eventually led to an attack that left him with severe injuries.

His wife, Nazar Shamshir Ali Nazar, Zakir Ali Nazar, and their daughter, Aasman Nazar, also suffered greatly in the incident.

In 2018, his younger brother, Hayatullah, was subjected to an assassination attempt and succumbed to his injuries. Following that, their mother faced immense pressure and ultimately passed away due to a heart attack.

Despite presenting evidence to various institutions, the case remained unheard. Eventually, today, another journalist has been forced to leave his homeland and seek refuge in a foreign country along with his family.

This incident is yet another attack on press freedom, raising serious concerns about journalists' safety in Pakistan. Organizations advocating for journalists' rights have

strongly condemned the attack and urged the government to ensure the protection of Ali Biliri and his family.

Media workers in Pakistan have long been targeted by various elements. Many journalists have been murdered or subjected to violence due to their professional responsibilities. Human rights organizations have reacted strongly to this attack, demanding an immediate investigation and urging authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. Journalistic communities across the country are standing in solidarity with Ali Biliri and calling on the government to take necessary measures for the protection of media workers.

Dr. Afzal Haq congratulated



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Founder and Chairman of the Young Engineers Society Pakistan (YES-PAKISTAN), Engr. Abdul Haseeb Mansuri, extended heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Afzal Haq on his appointment as the Vice Chancellor of Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology (SSUET). He termed Dr. Haq's association with the university as Vice Chancellor a commendable and forward-looking decision for the institution.

Abdul Haseeb Mansuri also appreciated Chancellor Akbar Ali Khan for making this important appointment and recognized it as a significant step towards the university's progress. He highlighted that Dr. Afzal Haq has rendered notable services for engineers across the country.

Speaking to the media, Abdul Haseeb Mansuri further stated that the Young Engineers Society Pakistan (YES-PAKISTAN) is committed to collaborating with universities nationwide to initiate various programs for engineers. These initiatives will offer free short courses to young engineers and help create employment opportunities in the field.

Karachi braces for heatwave

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Karachi is expected to remain under the grip of a heatwave for the next five days from today (Thursday). As per details, PMD has issued a heatwave conditions alert for Karachiites from today.

Meteorologists have warned that humidity levels will remain between 70% and 80%, significantly increasing the discomfort index. Due to the high moisture content in the air, the temperature is likely to feel 4 to 6 degrees higher than the actual reading.

The PMD forecasts daytime temperatures to hover around 35°C, but the 'feels-like' temperature may reach up to 40°C in Karachi, posing potential health risks, especially for the elderly, children, and outdoor workers. Authorities have urged residents to take necessary precautions, stay hydrated, avoid direct sunlight during peak hours, and limit outdoor activities to minimize the effects of heat-related illnesses.

Keep cool: Use air conditioning or a fan, wear light and loose-fitting clothing, and keep skin wet, using a spray bottle or damp sponge and by taking cool showers. Stay hydrated: During days of extreme heat, keep drinking water before you feel thirsty, especially if outdoors or performing physical activity. Plan ahead: Cancel or reschedule activities for the coolest part of the day and avoid exercising and being outdoors in the heat.

Power sector reforms could save \$17 billion

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), under its flagship Green Zameen Fellowship Program, organized a policy dialogue on "Just Energy Transition in Pakistan," bringing together senators, energy experts, civil society representatives, and climate fellows to discuss critical reforms in the power sector.

Participants highlighted the transformative potential of the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contracts Market (CTBCM)-a reform initiative developed over the past 30 years to replace the single-buyer electricity model with a competitive market structure. This framework enables generators and large power consumers to engage in direct bilateral contracts, fostering competition and enhancing efficiency and transparency throughout the power value chain.

Senator Saifullah Niazyee emphasized the importance of forward-looking energy policy, stating, "Effective energy policy demands foresight. Pakistan's current crisis could have been avoided with accurate demand forecasting and prioritization of renewable, locally sourced fuels. We need strategic planning that minimizes costs and transmission losses while securing a sustainable energy future."

Experts and participants underscored the economic and environ-



mental benefits of transitioning over 7,967 MW from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, which could save Pakistan's economy up to USD 17 billion over the next decade. However, they warned that such a transition requires robust governance reforms.

Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director of CPDI, highlighted this challenge: "The transition of nearly 8,000 MW from fossil fuels to renewables is not only an economic imperative-potentially saving Pakistan USD 17 billion over the next decade-but also a governance challenge. We must reduce discretionary powers and institutionalize transparent, evidence-based planning to ensure accountability and prevent recurring losses."

He further stressed the need for energy efficiency beyond generation: "Energy efficiency must extend beyond generation to how we design our buildings. Adoption and enforcement of energy-efficient building codes, combined with incentives for insulation retrofits, are critical to managing peak demand and reducing

wastage."

Senator Abdul Qadir addressed the consequences of poor planning on economic sustainability: "Failing to integrate energy planning has burdened consumers with high costs and pushed industries toward unsustainability, contributing to circular debt. Immediate implementation of demand peak management is essential to control capacity charges and avoid inefficient investments that harm our economy." He also called for capacity building among key stakeholders, saying, "It is equally important to empower legislators, media, and civil society with a deep understanding of the energy sector to drive informed policymaking and prevent costly errors in the future."

The session concluded with consensus on the urgent need for coordinated action across federal and provincial governments to adopt energy-efficient building regulations and incentivize retrofits, alongside reforms in energy market governance to ensure a just and sustainable energy transition in Pakistan.

Tareen pays rich tribute to Pakistan armed forces

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Jahangir Khan Tareen has said that India, intoxicated by its power, launched an attack on Pakistan, but the Pakistani armed forces responded in a way that India will remember for centuries. He said there is no precedent in the world where baseless allegations are followed by military aggression against another country.

Speaking to the media during his visit to MTBC, Jahangir Khan Tareen stated that India attempted aggression under the illusion of its size and economic strength, believing it could teach Pakistan a lesson. However, driven by arrogance, it initiated an attack. He said that blaming another country for an act of terrorism without evidence is highly irresponsible.

Tareen further condemned India's destruction of mosques and the killing of unarmed civilians. He

paid tribute to the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, and its pilots, saying that Pakistan has exposed India's true face to the entire world — a remarkable achievement. He saluted the brave soldiers of the Pakistan Armed Forces who forced a much larger enemy to its knees within hours, and said the valiant pilots of the Pakistan Air Force have written an unforgettable chapter of courage. The entire nation stands in admiration and gratitude.

Suspected robber shot dead, 4 held

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In two separate police encounters, one suspected robber was shot dead and four others were apprehended in two separate incidents in Karachi.

Karachi police spokesman disclosed that the two operations took place in North Karachi's Shadman Town and Surjani Town near Bheas Colony, leading to the recovery of weapons and stolen items as well.

In the first encounter in North Karachi's Shadman Town, police engaged with alleged robbers, resulting in the death of Muzaffar Ali Magsi. Another suspect, Aijaz, was apprehended while injured. Officers recovered two pistols, ammunition, mobile phones, and a motorcycle from the scene. The injured suspect has been shifted to a hospital as investigations continue.

Meanwhile, in Surjani Town, police arrested three individuals following an exchange of gunfire. Among those detained were Mohammad Azeem and Javed, both injured, alongside Bilal Ahmed. Police recovered two pistols, rounds of ammunition, eight mobile phones, and a motorcycle. The injured suspects have been hospitalized, and further investigations are underway.

Armed men attack Lesco office

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Unidentified armed men attacked and fired on Nishtar Colony sub-division office of Lahore Electricity Supply Company (Lesci) on Thursday.

According to report, a Lesco team arrived at the office after taking an action against defaulters when two unidentified armed men chased the team to the office.

The road to equality: Women empowerment in Pakistan

Ayan Bin Rafai

WOMEN empowerment refers to allowing women to exercise their rights, pursue their ambitions, make informed decisions, contribute to social development and play a central role in shaping the future of the country. In a country like Pakistan, where gender inequality is prevalent as a mainstream issue, women empowerment has been continuously overlooked on a personal and governmental basis; Despite the small progress made, women are still not treated in the same way as in other countries like the USA and in Europe: True Equals.

Women empowerment, since it's directly linked to equality, is a key ingredient to achieving tangible national progress, internal stability and community satisfaction from all regions of Pakistan. Creating adequate opportunities for education, employment and leadership for women is significant for the society and its prosperity. Either being denied these opportunities based on stereotypical attitudes or a lack of adequate

opportunities to participate in, such scenarios are equally harmful for the country, both individually and communally.

One of the primary and most significant barriers to empowerment is the limited access to education for girls, particularly in rural areas of Pakistan. In some areas, schools don't accept girls as students or the parents are very reluctant to send their children to schools; instead remaining at home helping their mother seems more beneficial. Additionally, the more plausible case is that there are no schools and educational institutions in areas like Kohistan and Barkhan.

According to UNICEF, around 22.8 million children between the ages of 5 and 16 are out of school in Pakistan, and a significant portion of them are girls; this explains why Pakistani women are very behind economically. There's only one solution to this: Greater Range of Educational Opportunities. Educating women is like educating a family, which is equivalent to educating a society; it leads to a higher family income (when both the husband and

wife work), reduced child labour rates, and increased social mobility, which consequently opens up a wide array of job opportunities. This chain of events helps uplift underprivileged areas as women from these areas start to dominate jobs positions in the economic sector, contributing to greater economic resilience.

As evident by the Pakistan-IMF problems, Pakistan's economy is incredibly fragile as of this moment: increased interest rates on loans and a very low export to import ratio exacerbate this crisis. On the other hand, the inclusion of women into the industrial workforce in the primary and secondary sectors would reduce the dependency ratio in many areas around the country; less burden on men would mean their energies can be dedicated to more strenuous tasks and reduced economic disparity this way could mitigate the effect of loans and their interest rates. For example, to help further this idea, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Kashf Foundation (KF) provide financial aid to women from impoverished areas like Greentown in the form of microloans so that they can

transform extreme poverty into personal small business; this not only helps women individually and helps show them as an equally capable member of the workforce but also encourages a drastic shift in traditional attitudes to such schemes.

However, Pakistan still places immense importance on restricting women to work like men in similar jobs and capacities due to religious and cultural factors. Some communities in areas like Northern Sindh and Western Balochistan still believe that women empowerment will impact women and their place in Pakistani community adversely; it might challenge traditional gender roles, leading to a breakdown of the family unit. Therefore, it is believed that confining women to households is a better choice as too much independence given to women might disrupt family values, which is factually wrong and just solely based on traditional beliefs crafted by ancestors of such families.

There's also a new founded fear of some people regarding these empowerment programs: such enacted schemes might only benefit urban women or those already in good posi-

tions, often missing the whole point of the program and ignoring those in very under-privileged areas since that would require more dedication and money which the organisation might not be willing to give. This would aggravate the disparity, rather than heal it and yield negative results: this high level of disconnections between rural and urban women is what has led to the strong, rigid segmentation of Pakistani society into the rich and poor class.

Overall, the problem with such families is how they view and consider women empowerment: instead of taking it as a threat to tradition and cultural values, it should be seen as an opportunity to build a stronger, resilient society that prospers in all sectors, especially in the tertiary ones. The main problem is to help balance the severe cultural sensitivity which obstructs any program's success, which could be reduced through educational sessions in such areas because a lack of education makes them more inclined towards outdated traditions rather than new ideas. The educational infrastructure should be improved through collaboration with

organisations like the The Citizens Foundation (TCF), which has a separate program dedicated to building schools particularly for girls. These institutions that are built with the help of public-private partnerships can help uplift a women's standard of life, and subsequently their family's.

If a man and woman are both earning, then the household income is being doubled than if just the man was doing a job. This mitigates any financial hardships they face and ensures that the quality of life index rises for Pakistan's communal areas. Another possible addition is ensuring that safe work environments exist for women which can be done through spreading awareness regarding the topic in the forms of seminars and then introducing legal constraints for such issues. Finally, women can be included in more pertinent matters, and both men and women alike can be educated on the issue of gender disparity. An example is the work currently being done by the Aurat Foundation who are making sure that no such differences remain and women can assume higher managerial roles as well.



KPIC takes action against departments over delay in data provision

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) has initiated proceedings against several government departments over their failure to provide requested information to citizens under the Right to Information law.

Chaired by Chief Information Commissioner Farah Hamid Khan, with Commissioners Muhammad Irshad and Arshad Ahmad, the hearing was held here at the Commission's office.

Public Information Officers (PIOs) from vari-

ous departments including Police, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), Elementary and Secondary Education, Administration, and Local Government appeared before the Commission.

During the hearing, the CTD and Police Department requested a three-day extension to furnish inquiry reports requested by citizens Muhammad Naeem Jan and Muhammad Iqbal.

The Commission ordered that the information must be submitted within three days, warning that failure to comply would require the AIG

(Legal) to appear in person.

In another case, Javed Khattak from Kohat had requested details regarding vacant teaching positions and appointments in higher secondary schools of Tehsil Lachi from the Elementary and Secondary Education Department.

The department's PIO assured the Commission that the required data would be submitted within five days.

In a complaint filed by Shahid Khan from Khyber district concerning documents and payments related to land ownership involving the Public

Health Engineering Department, the department claimed the matter fell under the DC Office's jurisdiction.

The Commission instructed that an update on the matter be provided within five days.

Meanwhile, the Health and Local Government Departments also requested three days to supply the requested information.

The Commission emphasized the importance of timely transparency and accountability, urging departments to adhere to legal obligations under the Right to Information Act.



PESHAWAR: Chief Information Commissioner Farah Hamid Khan chairing a meeting on complaints by citizens.

CS reviews April Anti-Polio drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a post-campaign review meeting of the April Anti Polio (NID) campaign. The meeting was attended by Coordinator Provincial EOC, Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, District Health Officers and other relevant officials.

During the meeting, a detailed presentation was given based on analytical figures and data.

The Chief Secretary emphasized the importance of using lessons learned from the April campaign to improve the upcoming May campaign.

He stressed the need for micro-plans, community engagement, and thorough pre-campaign preparations.

The Chief Secretary linked performance evaluation of officers to polio eradication efforts, emphasizing accountability to enhance campaign quality.

The meeting noted a decrease in missed children and an increase in households and Union Councils (UCs) covered compared to the February 2025 campaign. Priority UCs reduced from 276 in February 2025 to 166 in April 2025, showing progress in vaccination efforts.

The Chief Secretary emphasized the need to further improve access to

communities and prioritize routine immunization. He also highlighted the importance of quality in anti-polio campaigns and directed special focus on areas where the virus is circulating. A plan was presented to bridge gaps in campaign quality by improving access, strengthening oversight, and training staff.

The government remains committed to eradicating polio with community support, and influencer-led models are being implemented in various areas. Notably, a 100% house-to-house campaign was conducted in Upper South Waziristan after a gap of two years.

UNICEF, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Government Pledge to Strengthen Partnership for Health, Education, and Climate Resilience

UNICEF's Chief of Field Office Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Radoslaw Rzehak, met with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah. The Chief Secretary appreciated UNICEF's collaboration with the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and discussions covered key areas including health, education, water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), and climate resilience. They agreed to further strengthen the strategic partnership and enhance future cooperation between UNICEF and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Secretary Information visits itla'a cell section



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary Information Muhammad Khalid visited the Itla'a Cell of the Directorate General Information, where he awarded certificates of appreciation to the staff for their exemplary performance during emergency duties amid the recent Pakistan-India tensions.

Deputy Director and In-Charge of the Itla'a Cell, Nisar Muhammad, was also present on the occasion. Commending the performance of the Itla'a Cell, the Secretary Information said

that the team remained active and responsive during the emergency, playing a crucial role in timely and accurate dissemination of information to the public and senior officials.

He stated, "The professionalism and dedication shown by the Itla'a Cell during the emergency situation is commendable. Their efforts deserve the highest praise.

The Secretary further noted that the Itla'a Cell remained operational 24/7 and significantly contributed to effective communication at the national

and provincial level. He added that his acknowledgment had further boosted the morale of the staff, who are committed to maintaining and enhancing their performance in the future.

On this occasion, Nisar Muhammad expressed his gratitude to Secretary Information Muhammad Khalid, stating that his encouragement had greatly uplifted the team's morale. He assured that the Itla'a Cell would continue to carry out its responsibilities with even greater efficiency and dedication.

KMU organizes International Nurses Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Institute of Nursing Sciences organized a vibrant celebration of International Nurses Day to pay tribute to the invaluable services of nurses. The day is observed annually around the globe in honor of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. Florence Nightingale, a British nurse, revolutionized the field of nursing through her dedicated service to wounded soldiers during the Crimean War (1853-56).

The event's chief guest was VC KMU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, while other distinguished guests included Mr. Fazal Maula, Member of Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ms. Akhtar Bano, Director Nursing at DGHS KP, Prof. Dr. Dildar Muhammad, Dean of Nursing Sciences at KMU, and Dr. Najma Naz, Director Institute of Nursing Sciences.

Speaking at the occasion, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq stated that according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the ideal doctor-to-nurse ratio should be 1:4. However, in Pakistan, this ratio is currently 1:1, reflecting a severe shortage. He shared that KMU, in collaboration with the Pakistan Nursing Council, has established over 100 nursing institutions across the province, with more than 10,000 students currently enrolled. These institutes will play a key role in improving the healthcare system in the coming years.

Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq emphasized that KMU is committed not only to increasing the number of nursing professionals but also to maintaining high standards in nursing education. He termed the establishment of a dedicated Faculty of Nursing at KMU as a major milestone and congratulated Dr. Dildar Muhammad on his appointment as Dean of the faculty.

He added that nurses are ambassadors of their noble profession, and their dedication, hard work, and passion are the keys to success. He also cautioned that granting affiliations to non-professional institutions may compromise the quality of nursing education. Only professional universities like KMU have the capacity to meet modern healthcare challenges while ensuring academic excellence.

Other speakers highlighted the theme of International Nurses Day 2025: "Our Nurses. Our Future." They emphasized that investing in nursing education and training is critical for improving patient care and building a healthy nation.

They stated that nurses are the backbone of any healthcare system, and there should be no compromise on the quality of their education. For a country like Pakistan with a population exceeding 240 million, at least one million nurses are required, while currently only 70,000 are serving across the nation—an enormous gap and a pressing challenge. Speakers also stressed the importance of specialized nursing and the need for training aligned with international standards, given the high global demand for Pakistani nurses.

Dissemination of accurate news on social media era a challenge: PHC registrar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Registrar Muhammad Zeb Khan has emphasized that it is the responsibility of media to ensure the dissemination of accurate and timely information to the public, on Thursday.

This he said while talking with court reporters at Peshawar High Court in

informal session and highlighted the challenges of delivering accurate news in the era of social media, where numerous issues have emerged.

He emphasized the need for journalists to ensure accuracy of the news they disseminate to the public.

PHC's Registrar noted that court reporting is a technical form of journalism that requires careful consideration of various

aspects. He stressed the importance of maintaining regular contact with court reporters to prevent misreporting and ensure accurate coverage of court proceedings.

The Registrar urged journalists to prioritize good and accurate reporting for the betterment of society. He emphasized the need for journalists to adhere to high standards of professionalism and ethics in their

reporting.

PHC registrar Muhammad Zeb Khan listened to the concerns of court reporters and assured them that efforts would be made to address the challenges they face.

He directed the Additional Registrar, Adil Majeed, to conduct a comprehensive review of the issues and prepare a detailed report to facilitate final decision-making.

Toru administers Empower Youth Parliament Oath

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru, attended the oath-taking ceremony of the Empower Youth Parliament as the chief guest and administered the oath to the newly elected members. The ceremony was held in Peshawar and aimed to promote youth leadership, confidence, and socio-political engagement.

Addressing the gathering, Zahir Shah Toru stated that youth are the true asset of any nation, and only

through their proper guidance and empowerment can a prosperous and progressive future be achieved. The minister added that platforms like Empower Youth Parliament provide young people with the opportunity to raise their voices, take on leadership roles, and contribute to the resolution of social and political issues.

Shah encouraged the youth to adopt a positive approach towards societal improvement and to excel in educational and social sectors. He reaffirmed the

commitment of the KP government to support youth development initiatives and create opportunities for the young generation to play a meaningful role in society.

During the event, the newly elected youth parliamentarians expressed their resolve to work actively in areas such as social service, environment, education and health.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Toru congratulated the elected members and extended his best wishes for their future endeavors.

ANP organizes APC on KP Mines and Minerals Bill

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A district all-parties conference was held on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill 2025 at Bacha Khan Markaz Peshawar under the auspices of Awami National Party District Peshawar.

The all-parties conference was held under the chairmanship of District President Arbab Muhammad Tahir Khan Khalil. All political parties, traders, organizations, lawyers, community, and teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were invited to attend the meeting.

Except for Tehreek-e-Insaf, all parties participated. Razaullah Khan of the PPP, Rashid Mahmood Khan of the PML-N, Maulana Miskin Shah of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Hafiz Hashmat of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Salim Khan Chamkani of the Qaumi Watan Party, Muslim League (N) Rashid Mahmood Khan of K. Maulana Miskin Shah of

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Hafiz Hashmat of Jamaat-e-Islami, Salim Khan Chamkani of Qaumi Watan Party, Muhammad Bilal Muhammadzai of Muslim League (Q), Inamullah Khan of Pakhtoonakh Milli Awami Party, Fazal Muqem Khan of Chamber of Commerce, Rafiq Momand from the lawyers community participated along with their respective delegations.

All the leaders expressed their detailed views on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill 2025 and assured the meeting on behalf of their political parties that full effort and cooperation were assured to protect the proposed bill and the interests of the province.

The proposed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bill 2025 was rejected outright and it was said that any compromise on the interests of the province is not acceptable. This is a matter of life and death for our future generations.

All the leaders thanked the Awami National Party District Peshawar for uniting all the political parties on this important issue and bringing them to a platform. At the end of the meeting, ANP District Peshawar President Arbab Muhammad Tahir Khan Khalil read out the joint declaration.

The meeting was attended by the party's central secretary, human rights advocate Khushdil Khan, provincial spokesperson Arsalan Khan Nazim, district Peshawar general secretary Ghazanfar Ali, party leaders Sagib Khan Chamkani, Yasin Khan Khalil, Ashfaq Khan Khalil, Haji Siddique Afridi, Malik Naseem, Arbab Allah Yar, Liaquat Khan (Burj) Metropolitan President Arbab Rashid Khan, General Secretary Haji Rehmat Shah, ANP Peshawar District Cabinet and presidents, secretaries and workers of all teshils of Peshawar District participated in full.

KP to observe May 16, 2025, as 'Youm-e-Tashakur'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In recognition of Pakistan's successful defensive strategy in the face of recent Indian aggression, the bravery of the armed forces, and the exceptional unity and resilience of the Pakistani people, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced that Friday, May 16, 2025, will be observed as "Youm-e-Tashakur" across the province.

The day will serve as a tribute to the sacrifices of Pakistan's armed forces and to honor the steadfast spirit and solidarity of the

nation.

Special prayers and Qur'an Khwani will be held in central mosques after Fajr prayers, where prayers will be offered for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks and for national security. Flag-hoisting ceremonies will take place at all government offices and key public venues following the morning prayers. At 10:00 AM, a one-minute silence will be observed in all government offices and institutions as a symbol of unity and respect.

Through the Department of Aqaf, Friday sermons across the

province will focus on themes of national unity, sacrifice, and gratitude.

Special ceremonies will be held to pay tribute to the martyrs and their families. These will include visits to the graves of the martyrs, floral tributes, and special prayers. Visits to the mausoleums of recipients of Nishan-e-Haider and other national honors will also be arranged to acknowledge their heroism.

District administrations and departments, including educational and other relevant institutions, have been instructed to organize solemn and dignified events in accordance with

the spirit of the day. Educational institutions will host flag-hoisting ceremonies, recitations of the national anthem, and competitions in speeches and essay writing on the themes of national unity and patriotism.

The Department of Information & Public Relations will launch a special media campaign through local and social media platforms. National flags and banners bearing messages of gratitude and national pride will be displayed at district headquarters, major intersections, and public spaces throughout the province.

KP Food Authority seizes 1,500kg of adulterated tea

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority on Wednesday raided on a production unit in a residential house in the suburban area of Phandu Road, Peshawar, and seized 1,500 kilograms of fake, substandard, and hazardous tea being manufactured under unhygienic conditions.

According to spokesper-

son of the Food Authority, the operation was carried out by food safety teams, following a tip-off received through confidential sources. The counterfeit, substandard and hazardous tea was being produced using chickpea husk, artificial colouring agents, and used cooking oil, posing serious health risks to consumers. The adulterated product was being packed in branded packaging and

supplied across various localities on the outskirts of Peshawar. The spokesperson further told that legal proceedings have been started under the KP Food Safety Act against those operating the illegal unit.

Lauding the successful operation, KP Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru said that there would be no leniency for those playing with the lives of citizens by supplying hazardous and

substandard food. "Such enemies of public health deserve no concession and will be dealt with an iron hand," he asserted.

Shah further stated that the provincial government is fully committed to ensuring the provision of safe and quality food to the public and that the Food Safety Authority is conducting daily monitoring and enforcement actions across the province.

Introductory meeting of Parliamentary Population Forum held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An introductory meeting of the Parliamentary Population Forum was held in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly under the chairmanship of Forum Chairman MPA Iftikhar Ullah Jan. The meeting focused on the future course of action and the role of the forum as per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and UNFPA.

On this occasion, Chairman Iftikhar Ullah Jan stated that the purpose of the Parliamentary Population Forum is to adopt a comprehensive strategy for the welfare, development, and prosperity of the province population. He expressed his gratitude to UNFPA and the relevant departments for their participation, which added strength to the forum. The meeting emphasized planning for population welfare, population control programs, and strong teamwork and coordination for the province development. The Chairman added that in future meetings, members of the Provincial and National Assemblies would also be engaged to further strengthen the forum.





In brief

Army Martyr lid to rest F.P. Report

OKARA: Soldier Abdullah from Okara was martyred in the line of duty and was laid to rest with military honors. Soldier Abdullah was part of the Pakistan Army's Infantry Force. According to details, the martyred soldier Abdullah was injured during an operation in Balochistan while confronting terrorists. After being under treatment for several months, he passed away. The funeral prayer for the martyr was attended by military officers, soldiers, local residents, and the martyr's relatives. On this occasion, army officers stated that they stand with the family of martyr Abdullah in this difficult time. They described Abdullah as a brave and fearless young man who sacrificed his life fighting against terrorism. The local residents and the bereaved family chanted slogans in favor of the Pakistani forces and paid tribute to Abdullah's sacrifice by offering prayers.

Developmental projects reviewed F.P. Report

KARAK: Commissioner Kohat Syed Motasim Billah Shah has visited Karak district to review the ongoing developmental activities, law and order situation and public welfare projects. Deputy Commissioner Karak Shakeel Ahmed Jan and senior officers of various departments were also present on this occasion. During his visit, Commissioner Kohat reviewed the overall law and order situation in the district, progress of the anti-polio campaign, performance of health and education departments, condition of the national highway and various ongoing developmental schemes including the Nashpa project in detail. He also visited various important areas of the district including Tehsil Banda Daud Shah where ongoing developmental projects were inspected on the spot. He on this occasion, issued directions to the authorities concerned to ensure quality, transparency and timely completion of developmental works at all costs. Commissioner declared that the provincial government is giving top priority to the public welfare and all possible steps are being taken for the quality and timely completion of all developmental projects. He assured the people that the government is playing a full role at all levels to solve their problems and provide facilities.

Admn seized sub-standard rice F.P. Report

BANNU: The district administration seized a large quantity of sub-standard rice from a warehouse in Bannu. "After receiving complaints that a trader is involved in selling substandard rice labeled as a quality product, deputy commissioner Muhammad Fahim Khan ordered immediate action", said an official. The official said that additional AC Adnan Haider Malooki along with assistant director industries and other concerned officials raided a warehouse and seized 71 bags of sub-standard rice from the place. He said that the substandard commodity was packed in the bags with the label showing it a quality product of renowned brands and companies. "The warehouse was sealed and a legal action was initiated against the dealer", maintained the official, adding that the traders involved in illegal practices will not be spared at all.

KUST holds seminar on “challenges facing Muslim Ummah”



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The Department of Islamic Studies at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), in collaboration with ORIC and with the support of the United Ulama Council of Kohat Division, organized a one-day seminar on the topic “Challenges Facing the Muslim Ummah and the Role of Muslim Youth.”

The seminar's chief guest was renowned religious and political leader and former Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan, who also serves as the patron of the Save Gaza Campaign. In his keynote address, he emphasized that the Muslim Ummah is a unified entity beyond race, ethnicity, and geography—founded on the obedience to Allah and adherence to the Quran and Sunnah. He urged Muslim youth to be intellectually, ideologically, and practically prepared to face the global challenges confronting the Ummah.

Referring to recent Indian aggression, Mushtaq Ahmed Khan highlighted Pakistan's strategic defense response through "Operation Banyan Marsous" and the successful launching of "Fatah" missiles, calling it a befitting reply to the enemy—one that is a source of pride for both the nation and the entire Muslim world.

Pro Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin voiced strong support for the oppressed people of Palestine and urged the international community to stand with them. President of the United Ulama Council Kohat, Mufti Abdul Hameed, along with prominent religious scholar Mufti Muhammad, also addressed the gathering. They shed light on the need for unity, awareness, and intellectual independence in the Muslim world.

ADC stressed religious harmony:

Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) held an important meeting on interfaith, religious harmony, brotherhood and tolerance at his office. The meeting beside the District Khatib Kohat was also attended by the representatives of the Christian, Sikh and Hindu communities.

Addressing the meeting, Additional Deputy Commissioner said that the Ulema in Kohat district are playing a key role in maintaining an atmosphere of peace and brotherhood by promoting interfaith, religious harmony and tolerance. He said that in the current scenario, there is a dire need for interfaith, unity and religious harmony because the internal and external enemies of our country and nation want to spread chaos through their nefarious intentions and conspiracies, which we all have to thwart together. He said that Islam is a religion of peace and security which teaches the protection of the rights of the followers of all religions.

KUST to establish AI Lab: A high-level delegation from MindHYVE.ai called on the Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), Professor Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, to discuss the establishment of an AI-based educational laboratory. The delegation included CEO Bilal Farooqi and Vice President of Operations Maliha Hassan. Dr. Saima Hassan, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Computing, represented KUST during the meeting.

The discussions focused on setting up an Artificial Intelligence lab at the university and exploring opportunities for joint research and training initiatives. The Vice Chancellor appreciated the efforts of MindHYVE.ai and termed the collaboration a significant step forward for the university in advancing digital innovation and academic excellence.

Wana at the verge of chaos: Tribesmen fears

F.P. Report

WANA: The historic town of Wana at South Waziristan Lower in stands on the edge of chaos. A surge in internal conflicts and long-standing personal enmities has transformed the area into a battleground where blood spills not from terrorism alone but from intensifying land disputes and violent clashes.

From the rugged terrains of Tehsil Birmal to the troubled regions of Toi Khulla, Tiarza, Shakai, and Wana itself, lawlessness reigns supreme. Local sources reveal that while conflicts spiral out of control, the district administration and police forces watch from the sidelines, their silence bordering on criminal neglect. The cost of this apathy is paid in blood by innocent residents, caught in the crossfire of feuds that have

only deepened with time.

If this negligence continues, warned a community elder, "we will soon witness chaos that may be impossible to contain." Such concerns are not mere speculation; they echo the frustrations of communities abandoned to settle scores without the safeguard of law and order.

Public appeals for intervention have grown louder, with calls for security forces to extend their role beyond counter-terrorism operations. Tribal elders and community leaders are demanding action to defuse deadly land disputes and rivalries before they escalate further. "It's not just about fighting terrorism anymore," remarked another resident. "We need peace within our own tribes."

Amidst the turmoil, sharp criticism is directed

at the district administration and police force, accused of rampant corruption, nepotism, and deceit. Locals argue that while these officials excel in personal profiteering, they have utterly failed in their primary duty of maintaining peace and security. "They are masters of manipulation but mere spectators when it comes to restoring order," a tribal elder lamented.

Political parties have not been spared from scrutiny either. Activists and community leaders criticize them for focusing solely on anti-terrorism narratives while conveniently ignoring the explosive tribal conflicts brewing under their watch. Appeals are mounting for political leaders to step up and mediate in what many describe as an unfolding humanitarian crisis.

Kohat be turn into model district: Shehryar Afridi

F.P. Report

KOHAT: An important meeting regarding the development projects of Kohat district was held under the chairmanship of the former Federal Interior Minister Shehryar Afridi MNA in the office of Deputy Commissioner on Thursday.

The meeting reviewed in detail the progress on proposed, new and ongoing projects of public welfare and certain important decisions were made in this regard. The meeting beside others, was also attended by the Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafiuallah Jan MPA, Chairman Tehsil Gumbat

Sajid Iqbal, Chairman Lachi Ehsanullah Khan, Officers of the District Administration and line departments.

The meeting thoroughly debated upon the proposed, new and ongoing projects in health, education, clean drinking water, construction of roads, electricity, gas and other important sectors. The participants of the meeting presented useful and viable suggestions to ensure transparent use of funds and timely completion of the projects.

Addressing the meeting, Shehryar Afridi said that Kohat will be made a model district in all respect

keeping in view transparency, public consultation and priorities in developmental projects. Concrete measures will be taken at all levels for the welfare of the people and no negligence or leniency will be tolerated in this regard, he added.

At the end of the meeting, a special prayer was offered for the elevation of the ranks of the brave Jawans who embraced martyrdom in the war with the Indian Army in the defense of the beloved country, while paying rich tributes to them, their valuable sacrifices were acknowledged and termed it a great asset of the country.

Awareness seminar held

F.P. Report

LARKANA : University of Larkana, in collaboration with National Highways and Motorway Police, organized a road safety awareness seminar to create awareness among students and teachers about traffic laws and respon-

sible road behavior.

In this, SPO Shahzad gave a briefing on Motorway Police and Road Safety and Traffic Law and gave information about important strategies to reduce road accidents. He said that wearing seat belts while driving,

avoiding the use of mobile phones and timely maintenance of vehicles can prevent road accidents.

Therefore, students should follow the given instructions, which can save their lives and reduce road accidents to a great extent.

Pabbi press club to observe Day of Gratitude F.P. Report

PABB: Tehsil Press Club Pabi, Muhammad Ilyas, has announced that the club is organizing a "Day of Gratitude" event to express appreciation for the Pakistan Air Force's successful strikes against Indian military installations and the country's brave response to the enemy.

A grand rally will be held after Asr prayers on May 16th, starting from the Pabi Press Club. The event aims to acknowledge the special blessings of Allah Almighty, the support and assistance of the Pakistan Armed Forces, and the prayers and solidarity of the nation. The rally invites participation from political, religious, and civil society representatives, traders, laborers, farmers, students, cultivators, landlords, and trade union representatives.

The President of the Press Club has appealed to scholars, Imams, and respected Khatibs in Tehsil Pabi and Pabi city to organize special prayers after Fajr prayers for the country, nation, Armed Forces, martyrs of the Armed Forces, and martyrs of the nation.

Services of Arshad Masih lauded F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: To acknowledge significant contribution for promoting interfaith harmony, the district administration awarded appreciation certificate to Christian community Chairman Arshad Masih here in Khyber House, Peshawar last day.

Arshad Masih, a minority chairman has been involved in various initiatives since long to bridging gap between Muslims and Christians in Khyber besides advocating for the rights community. In this connection, a simple gathering was held where on behalf of Deputy Commissioner (DC), Khyber, Additional DC Arshad Mohmand (relief) and Additional DC Ihsanullah (general) awarded Arshad Masih the appreciation certificate.

Speaking on the occasion Chairman Arshad Masih thanked the administration for admitting his service for promoting peaceful and harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians. He vowed that along with Muslims colleagues efforts will be made to create a society where people of different religions coexist without any fear and discrimination.

Two killed in rivals' firing F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: At least two people were killed and one sustained injuries in an exchange of fire between rival groups in the Dusera Azizabad area of Charsadda district within the jurisdiction of Sardheri Police Station.

Police said on Thursday that a fierce exchange of gunfire took place between rival parties, resulting in the loss of two lives. One person was also injured in the incident. Area police reached the scene promptly, took the bodies into custody and later shifted them to the District Headquarters Hospital for further procedures. An investigation into the incident has been initiated.

One killed in Lakki F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A man was killed and his brother received bullet injuries when an armed rival attacked them in the Dallokhel area of Lakki Marwat district.

Police said that the shooting occurred over a murder enmity between the victims and killer's families. They said that the killer escaped the scene after the incident. The deceased identified as Naseeb Ullah, 30, and his brother Matiullah, 42, were going to fields on their motorcycle when their rival Naseer opened fire on them with his AK 47 assault rifle", they maintained, adding that both of them fell on the ground after being hit by bullets and later Matiullah succumbed to injuries on the spot.

Dir residents pile up complaints against depts during an open forum

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Local citizens during an open forum organized by the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat piled up complaints against federal and provincial governments department and sought its immediate redressal. Following the directives of the Federal Ombudsman, the Malakand Regional Office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat organized an open kachari at the district assembly hall in Upper Dir here on Thursday to raise awareness about public grievance redressal mechanisms.

The event was jointly presided over by former secretary health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regional Head Peshawar, Muhammad Mushtaq Jadoon, and Sanaullah Khan, commissioner Malakand region. Local citizens, deputy commissioner Naveed Akbar Yousafzai, District Police Officer, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, representatives from federal and provincial departments, local chairmen of village councils, media personnel, and members of the public attended the gathering.

This was the first ever event of its kind in the region, where citizens were given a platform to voice their concerns directly in the presence of officials from relevant federal departments. Attendees highlighted grievances related to the National Highway Authority (NHA), PESCO, Immigration and Passport Office, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA), and the Public Health Engineering Department.

Addressing the forum, Mr. Sanaullah Khan directed the concerned federal agencies to address the public's complaints on

priority and to ensure improved service delivery. He emphasized that the Federal Ombudsman's Office functions as a "poor man's court," where no legal counsel or fee is required to file a complaint. Citizens can lodge complaints via WhatsApp, telephone, or online platforms. Once filed, complainants are kept informed throughout the redressal process, which concludes within 60 days, followed by implementation within 30 days.

Participants welcomed the initiative and appreciated the efforts of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat. They urged that such forums be organized regularly to raise awareness and provide accessible grievance redressal avenues for the public.

AKF meat packages: President of the Al-Khidmat Foundation Pakistan, Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman, has announced that the Foundation will sacrifice 1,000 cows in Egypt on Eid ul Azha and distribute the meat among oppressed Palestinians. The meat will be preserved to remain consumable for up to two years.

Speaking at the oath-taking ceremony of Fazal Mahmood as the newly elected president of AKF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North), at Gulabad here on Thursday, Dr. Hafeez said Alkhidmat is not just an organization but a movement aimed at building an Islamic welfare state.

He said the Foundation serves humanity globally without discrimination and has taken responsibility for the education of Palestinian students in Pakistan. He praised Fazal Mahmood's leadership, expressing confidence in his ability to deliver results. The ceremony at Aghosh Centre, Gulabad, was also addressed by Jamaat-e-Islami KP (North) chief Inayatullah Khan.

Hate posts: Police identified social media IDs

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Distrust in the public on social media and raids have been launched to arrest the accused by registering cases against eight individuals for a hate posts against the Pakistan Army, on Thursday.

According to the police report, the current situation in Pakistan and the tension with India, the people's distrust and a hate posting against the Pakistan Army, the City police station have traced various ids of social media Facebook including Fawad Ahmad resident of Lund Khwar, Noman Khan residents of Ganderi Garhi Kapora, Sardar Azam of Garhi Dolatza, Roman Shah resident Sharif Abad, Takhtbhai Muhammad Anwar of Chena Rustam, Khalil ur Rehman of Darshan Shahbaz Gari, Hazrat Hussian of Gujrat Bakhshali, Anwar Shah resident of Katlang Road Baja-Kaly Under the PECA Act and other cases have begun to arrest the accused.

AWKUM secures research award: A research award ceremony was organized by the Higher Education Department

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in which Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan has once again won the field

and won the highest number of five research projects worth Rs 12.3 million.

The recipients of research projects include Dr. Syed Karim Shah Physics 2.5 million, Dr. Ayaz Ahmed Biotechnology 2.5 million, Dr. Hazir-ur-Rehman 2.5, Dr. Anwar Hussain Botany 2.48 million, and Dr. Hussain Ali Sociology 2.4 million. On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmed said that Abdul Wali University Mardan will utilize all resources for research because due to the quality of research will Pakistan soon join the ranks of developed countries, while Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan said on this occasion that research should be used for practical purposes. Due to research, the country's economy will be strengthened and unemployment will be eliminated. He added that the value of the research award will be increased and transparency and merit will be ensured in all research awards.

Project Planning and Management seminar held: The Institute of Business Studies and Leadership (IBL), Abdul Wali Khan University

Mardan, recently organized a guest lecture for BBA students (Batch 2022-2026) as an part of their coursework in the subject Project Planning and Management.

The primary objective of the session was to provide students with practical insights into real-world project management practices, bridging the gap between academic theory and industry experience. The keynote speaker for the session was Engr. Haris Khan, currently serving in the Planning and Development Department of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan. He presented a detailed case study on the project titled "Strengthening of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan", a major initiative valued at Rs. 2062 million.

During his lecture, he emphasized the significance of equipping future professionals with up-to-date knowledge and relevant industry skills. The session was highly interactive, with students actively participating and posing questions on various aspects of project planning and management. The event concluded with a vote of thanks to Engr Haris for his valuable time and meaningful contribution.

Public outcry against PRs line graveyard dire condition

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: The centrally located and historically significant railway line graveyard in Hafizabad is currently in a dire state of neglect, sparking outrage and sorrow among the local population. Once a solemn and respected final resting place for thousands of departed souls, this cemetery now presents a heart-wrenching picture of decay and disregard, with its boundary walls crumbling and large sections completely missing, leaving it exposed to severe desecration.

This graveyard holds immense emotional and spiritual significance for the people of Hafizabad. It has long been the final resting place for loved ones from all walks of life and every corner of the city. Families regularly visit the site to offer Fati'a and remember their deceased relatives. However, the deteriorated condition of the cemetery has made these visits increasingly distressing.

Reports from residents reveal that stray dogs and other animals now freely roam the cemetery, both during the day and night. In some deeply disturbing incidents, these animals have attempted to dig up graves, and on occasion, they have disrupted funeral processions, a behavior that residents describe as profoundly disrespectful and traumatic.

Beyond the damage to the physical environment, the sanctity of this sacred space has been gravely compromised. Loiterers and unauthorized individuals are frequently found within the cemetery premises due to the lack of protective barriers.

The absence of a proper boundary wall has essentially turned this place of rest into an open ground, making it vulnerable to continuous misuse and irreverence. Speaking to this correspondent, multiple residents expressed deep anguish and anger over the prevailing situation. "This is not just a matter of civic neglect, it's a matter of faith and emotional pain," said Muhammad Tariq, a local schoolteacher whose parents are buried in the graveyard. "Seeing dogs running across the graves and hearing of attempts to dig up the earth, it breaks your heart. This would never be tolerated in any civilized or religious society."

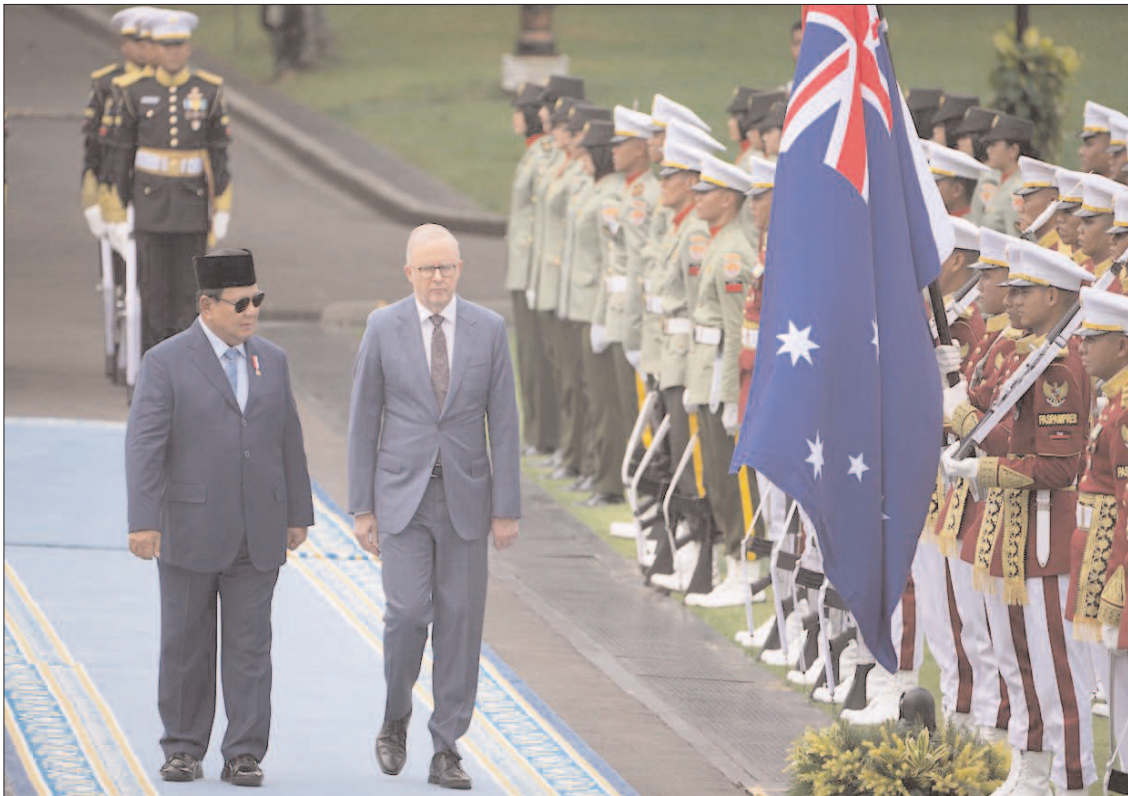
The public has made an impassioned appeal to the Deputy Commissioner of Hafizabad, Abdul Razaq, urging him to take immediate and comprehensive action. The demands include: complete reconstruction and repair of the graveyard's boundary wall to prevent the entry of animals and unauthorized individuals, installation of

strong and secure gates at all entry and exit points of the cemetery, establishment of regular monitoring and maintenance protocols to uphold the sanctity and cleanliness of the site.

Many residents have also suggested that the local administration collaborate with community members, NGOs, and religious institutions to create a sustainable model for cemetery upkeep. They propose the establishment of a dedicated cemetery management committee, regular cleanliness drives, and installation of surveillance cameras to prevent further violations.

The people of Hafizabad await swift and decisive action from the district administration. The condition of the railway line graveyard is not merely an infrastructure issue; it is a deeply human and moral concern that touches upon the emotions, faith, and dignity of an entire community. The restoration of this cemetery to its rightful state of respect and sanctity is not just a demand, it is a duty owed to the deceased and their families.

D&CA general secretary passes away: Khalid Akhtar, Secretary-General of the Druggist and Chemist Association and a well-known social entrepreneur of the district, passed away on Alipur Road near the National Savings Office following a sudden heart attack.



JAKARTA: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese walking with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto while inspecting an honor guard before their meeting at Merdeka Palace in Indonesia.

US military zones on Mexico border sow legal confusion

TEXAS (Reuters): Cases of migrants caught in new military zones on the US-Mexico border have been stalled over legal confusion, and lawyers and a US senator raised concerns over whether people actually know when they are entering the zones.

The US Army starting last month set up the zones in New Mexico and Texas as part of President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration. Troops are allowed to detain trespassers. Defense lawyers say migrants are unaware they are entering the zones and locals fear being charged for trespassing in desert areas popular with hikers, mountain bikers and hunters.

On May 1 a US judge asked New Mexico's US attorney to explain his legal basis for charges against migrants caught in the so-called National Defense Areas. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said in a May 9 social media post that migrants faced combined charges of up to 10 years in prison when they crossed the border illegally into a military zone. At issue is whether migrants, or US citizens, know they are trespassing in a military zone,

which in New Mexico spans a 180-mile-long strip of border.

In a letter to Hegseth, US Senator Martin Heinrich, a Democrat of New Mexico, said the military zones raised public access issues for people who use the area for outdoor recreation and ranching. He asked whether the Army would install signs to mark the New Mexico zone's boundaries, if the entire 110,000-acre (44,515 hectare) area was not open to the public. Over 300 people have been reported detained in the New Mexico military area, according to Heinrich. "I have deep concerns that the Trump Administration is bypassing due process for individuals who either intentionally or unintentionally enter this newly restricted area," Heinrich wrote. The Department of Defense did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Ray Trejo, a New Mexico hunter, is among citizens worried about the new zones. Trejo, a Luna County Commissioner, wondered if he could go ahead with hunting in an area of Chihuahuan desert now under Army control.

"I'm out there, in my hunting gear,

which is camouflaged, and I've got my rifle with me, do I have to fear that I might get shot from somebody?" he said. Hegseth in his social media post said the Army had put up over 1,300 signs around the areas saying entry was prohibited.

New Mexico's US attorney, Ryan Ellison, said in a May 5 court filing that a migrant who knowingly crossed the border illegally could also be prosecuted for entering an adjacent military area, even without seeing a sign. A defense lawyer said migrants' attorneys had delayed plea deals while they waited for the judge's ruling on the novel charges. "We can't move forward with these cases without knowing how these judges are going to interpret the law," said Barbara Mandel, branch supervisor of the Office of the Federal Public Defender in Las Cruces. Chief US Magistrate Judge Gregory Wormuth is expected to rule next week on evidence required to prosecute migrants caught in the areas. "The government must establish that a defendant possesses the requisite mens rea," Wormuth wrote in his May 5 order, using the legal term for the intention or knowledge of wrongdoing.

Poland to choose between pro-EU and MAGA paths in presidential vote

GARWOLIN, Poland (Reuters): Poles vote in a presidential election that the pro-European government in Warsaw says can revive its stalled democratic drive and its nationalist opponents see as a chance to set Poland on a path inspired by US President Donald Trump.

Opinion polls show the liberal Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, 53, an ally of the ruling coalition, as a probable winner, although most likely only after a runoff due on June 1.

Polling second to replace nationalist ally Andrzej Duda after his two terms, is amateur boxer and conservative historian Karol Nawrocki, 42, who is backed by the nationalist opposition Law and Justice (PiS) party. Far-right candidate Slawomir Mentzen, 38, is third. Both are allies of Trump, with his Make America Great Again movement, and their anti-immigration stance and a crusade against "woke" liberal values.

The election coincides with a runoff presidential vote in Romania, where hard-right Trump admirer, George Simion, is favoured to win amid a surge of

nationalism in Central Europe fanned by concerns over living costs, migration and security threats from Russia. In Poland, Trzaskowski looks likely to beat back nationalist rivals, in part thanks to his shift towards the right in a bid to win over more conservative voters. If he does, he has pledged to work with the government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk to undo changes to Poland's judiciary under PiS that critics in the European Union and at home said had eroded democratic checks and balances.

PiS lost its majority to Tusk's centrist coalition in an October 2023 election after nearly a decade in power, amid a wave of popular anger over its record on women's and minority rights. But Duda has used a presidential veto to block much of Tusk's reform efforts. "The stakes in this election are as high as they were on October 15," Tusk said in parliament last month. "So I am hoping for mobilisation ... It's hard to govern alongside a hostile president, with all those vetoes." In Poland, the president has the right to veto legislation and serves

as a commander in chief, but has limited executive powers.

With the war in neighbouring Ukraine entering possibly a final stage after more than three years of fighting, Trzaskowski, Nawrocki, and Mentzen have all touted their credentials as wartime leaders. All three promise to continue supporting Kyiv militarily but have differed on how much help should be given to refugees from Ukraine. Nawrocki and Mentzen also oppose NATO membership for Ukraine, and emphasize that Poland's security interests lie with Washington, while Trzaskowski seeks a bigger role for the EU in handling the conflict and safeguarding Europe's security. "We support Ukraine ... in its efforts to defeat post-Soviet Russia. That's obvious," Nawrocki said during a televised debate. "It is in the strategic interest of Poland to repel the neo-imperialist threat from Russia."

"As president ... I will build the Polish-American alliance and I will not agree for the EU to become a NATO substitute." Echoing Trump's language and tapping into growing fatigue

Pro-Palestinian student ordered released from US custody

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A Georgetown University student from India whom the Trump administration detained over his pro-Palestinian activism must be released, a US federal judge ordered. The Trump administration wants to deport Badar Khan Suri, a postdoctoral fellow at the Washington, D.C., university. He was detained in March by immigration authorities, accused of spreading Palestinian militant propaganda and antisemitism.

Trump has targeted foreign citizens including Suri who participated in protests in support of Palestinians and against US ally Israel's war in Gaza. Civil rights and immigrant advocacy groups accuse the administration of unfairly targeting political critics. US District Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles, who previously barred Suri's deportation, ordered his release on personal recognizance to Virginia from detention in Texas, a court filing showed.

He is not to be redetained without a 48-hour notice to the court and his lawyers, Giles added. Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said Suri has close connections to a senior adviser to Hamas and has actively advocated violence against Jewish people. "When you advocate for violence and terrorism your privilege of studying in America should be revoked," she said in a statement. Suri, who was on a US student visa, is married to an American citizen. Secretary of State Marco Rubio revoked his visa in March, citing potential harm to US foreign relations, according to The Washington Post. In a statement, Suri's wife, Mapheze Saleh, said the ruling brought her to tears.

"I truly wish I could give her (the judge) a heartfelt hug from me and from my three children, who long every day to see their father again," she said. Other similarly detained students, including Mohsen Mahdawi and Rümeyza Öztürk, have also been released on court orders. "Today's ruling adds to mounting losses for the Trump administration," the Center for Constitutional Rights said in a statement. Trump has alleged pro-Palestinian protesters are antisemitic. The activists say their support for Palestinian rights is wrongly conflated with antisemitism by their critics.

Russia jails head of election watchdog

LONDON (Reuters): The head of Russia's only independent election watchdog was sentenced to five years in a penal colony after being found guilty of working with an "undesirable organisation".

Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of the Golos movement, was arrested in August 2023. He pleaded not guilty at his trial. Human rights campaigners say the case against the 44-year-old is part of a wider crackdown on civil society that has intensified since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

News outlet Mediazona said Melkonyants called out to supporters in the courtroom and urged them not to be downhearted over the verdict. Golos, which means both "voice" and "vote" in Russian, first angered the authorities by publicising evidence of what it said was fraud in a 2011 parliamentary election that led to opposition protests, and then in the presidential vote that returned Vladimir Putin to the Kremlin for a third term in 2012. The charges against Melkonyants were based on his alleged involvement with the Montenegro-based European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations, which links watchdogs in former communist countries in Europe and Central Asia. ENEMO did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Golos says it has had no interaction with ENEMO since Russia banned the latter as "undesirable" in 2021. "This absurd case (against Melkonyants) and is ready to hold meetings on the sidelines, the Ukrainian leader's chief of staff Andriy Yermak told Reuters.

End of nuclear in Taiwan fans energy security fears

BANGKOK (AFP): Taiwan will turn off its last nuclear reactor, fuelling concerns over the self-ruled island's reliance on imported energy and vulnerability to a Chinese blockade. The island, which targets net-zero emissions by 2050, depends almost entirely on imported fossil fuel to power its homes, factories and critical semiconductor chip industry.

President Lai Ching-te's Democratic Progressive Party has long vowed to phase out nuclear power, while the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party says continued supply is needed for energy security. Ma'anshan Nuclear Power Plant in southern Pingtung county is being closed as China intensifies military activity around Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory and has vowed to bring under its control one day. During large-scale military drills around Taiwan in April, China simulated strikes on key ports and energy sites as well as blockading the island. Ma'anshan has operated for 40 years in a region popular with tourists and which is now dotted with wind turbines and solar panels. More renewable energy is planned at the site, where state-owned Taipower plans to build a solar power station capable of supplying an estimated 15,000 households annually. But while nuclear only accounted for 4.2 percent of Taiwan's power supply last year, some fear Ma'anshan's closure risks an energy crunch. "Taiwan is such a small place and currently there's no other better and more efficient natural energy source that can replace nuclear power," said Ricky Hsiao, 41, who runs a nearby guesthouse. "The reality is that

TSMC and other big companies need a lot of electricity. They would leave Taiwan if it's not stable," he told AFP, referring to chip-making giant Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company. But mother-of-two Carey Chen fears an accident like the 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdown in Japan, which like Taiwan is prone to earthquakes. "If we can find other stable power sources, I support a nuclear-free homeland for everyone's safety," Chen, 40, told AFP. At its peak in the 1980s, nuclear power made up more than 50 percent of Taiwan's energy generation, with three plants operating six reactors across the island. Concerns after the Fukushima disaster saw a new plant mothballed in 2014 before it was even finished. And two plants stopped operating between 2018 and 2023 after their operating permits expired. Most of Taiwan's power is fossil fuel-based, with liquefied natural gas (LNG) accounting for 42.4 percent and coal 39.3 percent last year. Renewable energy made up 11.6 percent, well short of the government's target of 20 percent by 2025. Solar has faced opposition from communities worried about panels occupying valuable land, while rules requiring locally made parts in wind turbines have slowed their deployment.

Lai insists Taiwan's energy supply will be stable even as AI technology boosts demand, with new units in existing LNG and coal-fired plants replacing Ma'anshan's output. The KMT and Taiwan People's Party, which control the parliament, amended a law enabling nuclear plants to extend their operating life by up to 20 years. "Nuclear power is not the most perfect way to generate electricity," KMT lawmaker Ko Ju-chun told AFP. "But it is an option that should not be eliminated when we are developing technology, defence, and strengthening national security." Taiwan's reliance on imported fossil fuels is of particular concern given the risk of a Chinese blockade. The island has enough LNG and coal reserves to last just 11 and 30 days, respectively, government data show.

Taiwan's centralised electricity grid also leaves swaths of the island at risk of major power outages in case of a single fault. Without nuclear, "our energy security cannot be guaranteed, and national security will be affected", said Yeh Tsung-kuang, an energy expert at Taiwan's National Tsing Hua University. Environmental activists argue renewables are the best way to bolster Taiwan's energy resilience. "If every community has solar panels on its roofs, the community can be (more) self-sufficient", said Tsui Shu-hsin, secretary-general of Green Citizens' Action Alliance. But others note Taiwan's break-up with nuclear is at odds with global and regional trends.

Even Japan aims for nuclear to account for 20-22 percent of its electricity by 2030, up from well under 10 percent now. And nuclear power became South Korea's largest source of electricity in 2024, accounting for 31.7 percent of the country's total power generation, and reaching its highest level in 18 years, according to government data. Yu Shih-ching, chief of Hengchun town where Ma'anshan is located, said the plant had brought jobs and boosted the local economy.

Australian leader visits Indonesia seeking deeper ties

JAKARTA (AP): Australia's newly reelected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, in a visit aiming to strengthen his country's economic and defense ties with its closest major neighbor. Albanese arrived in the capital, Jakarta, a day after his new government was sworn in, to promote the importance of building stronger ties with Southeast Asia's largest economy.

"That is ... a signal to our region of the importance that we place on this region. We will be in the fastest growing region of the world in human history," Albanese said in an interview last week with the Australian Broadcasting Corp. He described Subianto as a "good friend of mine" and hailed the two countries' close relations. Albanese's center-left Labor Party won a second three-year term in an emphatic election victory May 3. He was welcomed by Subianto in a ceremony at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta where he was escorted by dozens of motorized troops and cavalry while about 3,200 schoolchildren waved the

flags of both countries along the streets, according to Indonesia's presidential office.

The two leaders' talks are expected to "produce several concrete agreements that could bring direct benefits to the people of both countries," the office said. Albanese's two-day visit is an indication of the countries' strategic closeness. Their discussions will also include food security, energy, trade and other bilateral priorities, Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement. Newly elected Australian prime ministers typically make their first bilateral visit to Asia, usually Indonesia. In his first visit to Indonesia after his inauguration in 2022, Albanese also visited Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi province with close ties to Indigenous Australians. Albanese's second visit to Jakarta comes amid global economic upheaval sparked by US President Donald Trump's "reciprocal tariff" trade policy.

Australia was hit during its election campaign with a global-minimum 10% tariff on exports to the US despite trading with the bilateral free trade partner

at a deficit for decades, while Indonesia is subject to 32%. The two countries have for the past month negotiated with Washington for a better trade deal. Media reports said last month that Russia told Jakarta it wants to base long-range warplanes in Papua, the most eastern Indonesian province, a plan that was raised as a security issue during the Australian election campaign. Indonesia has told Australia that no such Russian base would be allowed. Given their geographical proximity, Indonesia and Australia have traditionally maintained close ties with each other, including in matters of security and defense, despite the fact that each country has chosen to respond differently to the rivalry between the US and China in the region. The two neighbors last year signed a historic Defense Cooperation Agreement that will allow more complex joint activities and exercises. Canberra hailed the agreement as the "deepest and most significant" defense deal in the two countries' bilateral ties. Albanese will head on to Rome to attend the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV.

US appeals court curtails key avenue to enforce voting rights law

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A federal appeals court foreclosed one of the main remaining means by which civil rights activists could enforce a landmark voting rights law's protections against racial discrimination in seven mostly Midwestern states. The 2-1 panel of the St. Louis-based 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that private plaintiffs cannot use an 1871 civil rights law as a means to enforce protections enshrined in the Voting Rights Act.

The court reached that conclusion as it reversed a judge's ruling finding that Republican-led North Dakota's 2021 legislative redistricting plan unlawfully diluted the voting power of Native Americans. Lawyers for the plaintiffs said the ruling, if allowed to stand,

would weaken voters' ability in Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota to challenge unfair voting maps. Those states are within the jurisdiction of the 8th Circuit, which had already severely restricted the ability of their voters to file lawsuits challenging voting maps when it held in 2023 that only the government and not private plaintiffs can pursue cases enforcing Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

Two members of the US Supreme Court's 6-3 conservative majority have suggested in past cases that private plaintiffs do not have a right to pursue such cases, even though the vast majority of Voting Rights Act lawsuits for decades have been filed by private parties, not the US

Department of Justice. Against that backdrop, civil rights advocates last year opted against appealing the 2023 ruling to the Supreme Court, citing the availability of an alternative mechanism for plaintiffs to still pursue voting rights cases. That avenue was Section 1983, an 1871 law enacted in the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era, which gives people the power to sue in federal court when state officials violate their constitutional or statutory rights. A federal judge in North Dakota relied on it when he sided with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, the Spirit Lake Tribe and three voters in holding that the state's 2021 redistricting plan unlawfully diluted Native Americans' voting strength.

Pope Leo says he will make 'every effort' for world peace

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Leo XIV, the first American to head the global Catholic Church, pledged to make "every effort" for peace and offered the Vatican as a mediator in global conflicts, saying war was "never inevitable".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who spoke to the Pope soon after his election, welcomed the Pontiff's offer and repeated that Kyiv backed all efforts to end his country's war with Russia.

Leo, elected last week to succeed the late Pope Francis, has already made repeated calls for peace. His first words to crowds in St Peter's Square were "Peace be with all of you". He returned to the issue while addressing members

of the Eastern Catholic Churches, some of which are based in conflict-ridden places such as Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq and often face persecution as religious minorities. "The Holy See is always ready to help bring enemies together, face-to-face, to talk to one another, so that peoples everywhere may once more find hope and recover the dignity they deserve, the dignity of peace," Leo said.

"War is never inevitable. Weapons can and must be silenced, for they do not resolve problems but only increase them. Those who make history are the peacemakers, not those who sow seeds of suffering," he added. Pope Leo warned against the rise of simplis-

tic narratives that divide the world into good and evil. "Our neighbours are not first our enemies, but fellow human beings," he said. The pontiff called for an "authentic and lasting peace" in Ukraine; a ceasefire in Gaza and release of all Israeli hostages held by militant group Hamas; and he also welcomed the fragile ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

Zelenskyy, writing in English on the X social media platform, said he was grateful to Pope Leo "for his wise words about the Holy See's willingness to play a mediatory role in restoring global peace". "We appreciate the Pontiff's insightful statement and reiterate our commitment to advancing meaningful peace efforts, including a full ceasefire

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Peace momentum must be sustained

ON announcing in April 2023 that a special representative of the Chinese government on Eurasian affairs was to visit Ukraine and other countries to conduct in-depth communication with all parties with the aim of promoting a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis, President Xi Jinping stressed that dialogue and negotiations are the only viable way to end the conflict.

As a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Wednesday, China has been committed to promoting talks for peace since day one of the conflict. It supports resolving the crisis through dialogue and negotiation, and calls on all parties to create conditions for the resumption of direct talks between Russia and Ukraine.

Beijing has therefore welcomed the news that high-level delegations from Russia and Ukraine met in Istanbul, Turkiye, on Thursday in what was their first direct talks in three years, opening up the prospect of a potential ceasefire as well as a path forward for resolving the Ukraine crisis through dialogues and negotiations.

The talks, attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and observed by high-ranking officials from the United States including US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and US President Donald Trump's special envoy to Ukraine Keith Kellogg, have raised hopes that further steps could be taken that lead to a breakthrough that can help end the Ukraine crisis. Given that the last known direct talks between Kyiv and Moscow took place in Turkiye and Belarus in the spring of 2022, the current positive momentum is both hard-won and worth cherishing. Both the belligerent parties and the influential players involved should show good faith and flexibility so as to pave the way for the talks to yield positive results.

The direct talks were made possible after an array of diplomatic overtures from Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Zelensky over the past few days. After the Ukrainian leader, backed by his European allies, called for Russia to agree to an immediate 30-day ceasefire last week, the Russian leader proposed direct negotiations with Ukraine in the Turkish city.

Trump, who is on a three-nation tour in the Middle East, indicated at first that he might also show up in Istanbul, but later announced he wouldn't. Although the attendance of only Zelensky may make those looking for dramatic scenes disappointed, even without the participation of Putin and Trump, the meeting is still significant.

As the first direct communication between the two belligerents in three years, the meeting provides a much-needed opportunity for the two parties to talk face-to-face to explore ways to resolve their conflict.

The White House may try to claim credit for the seemingly positive development since it has been pushing and nudging both sides to talk after making major policy shifts since the new incumbent took office. Yet there is no getting away from the fact that the conflict has been a proxy war instigated by the US with the aim of weakening Russia in preparation for the US' switch of focus from Europe to the Asia-Pacific. Nor from the fact that other members of the international community have also contributed by constantly urging the belligerent parties to resolve the crisis through political means. On Tuesday, China and Brazil issued a joint statement on the Ukraine crisis, welcoming Putin's proposal to open peace talks and Zelensky's positive response.

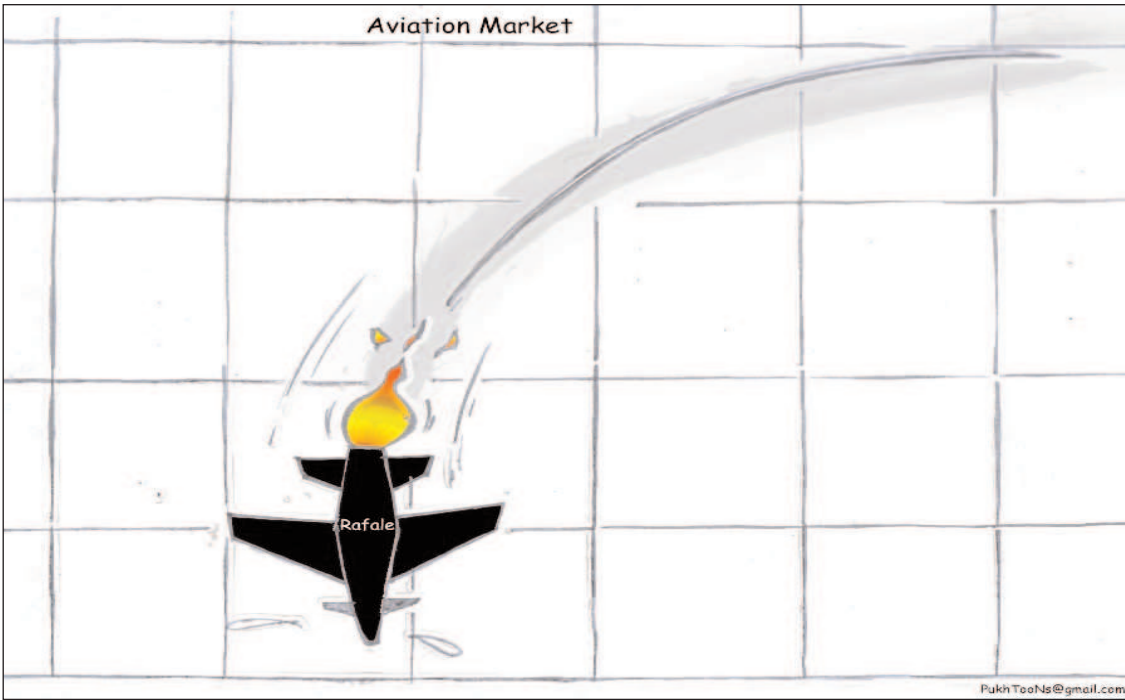
The two countries put forward a six-point proposal aimed at promoting a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis based on direct dialogue as the only way to end the conflict. To that end there should be no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party.

China stands on the side of peace, and its core stance is to facilitate peace talks. That has always been and remains China's position. China did not create the Ukraine crisis, nor is it a party to the crisis. All it does is aboveboard. Any attempts to portray China's stance and actions otherwise are ill-intentioned, and meant to belie the facts and its endeavors to promote peace with the politicized intention of undermining its principled position.

It is to be hoped all the efforts that have been and are being made for the resumption of direct peace talks between Russia and Ukraine will now start to bear fruit. A fair, lasting and binding peace deal arrived at through dialogue and negotiation is the only way to realize a sustainable settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Important Notice

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Decoding Trump's historic Riyadh speech

Faisal J. Abbas

THE words "historic" and "ground-breaking" are probably used far too often by pundits. Sometimes, they are awfully misplaced, such as when used in contexts like that of former US President Barack Obama's Cairo speech of 2009.

However, there is no doubt that President Donald Trump's Riyadh speech of May 13, 2025, will go down in the history books as a turning point — not just for Saudi-US relations, but for the whole region as well.

In fact, Trump's Riyadh address brought so much energy that one could almost say he got a rockstar reception. His words resonated deeply, marking a significant juncture in US-Arab relations.

There were three main points that made the speech historic: Trump's statesman's overture; his acknowledgment of previous US mistakes; and his celebration of regional triumphs, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

Firstly, Trump extended an olive branch to Iran, signaling a potential shift in the region's dynamics. He addressed the Syrian crisis by lifting US sanctions on Damascus and expressed a commitment to improving conditions for Palestinians. Furthermore, he pledged support for rebuilding Lebanon, showcasing a comprehensive approach to regional stability. He also thanked Saudi Arabia for its efforts in mediating between Russia and Ukraine.

Secondly, in a candid acknowledgment, Trump

addressed the missteps of past US foreign policy. He criticized the interventionist strategies of both neo-conservatives such as George W. Bush and liberal administrations such as Obama's for burdening the region with added challenges.

From Bush's 2003 invasion of Iraq, which Saudi Arabia strongly warned against, to the disastrous results of the so-called Arab Spring, which was passionately encouraged by Obama's "mis-adviser" Ben Rhodes and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he correctly identified the errors made by America in its policy toward the region this century.

In the run-up to the US invasion of Iraq, we recall how Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal had raised serious concerns.

"What's going to happen to them (Iraqi soldiers and officials), especially since the army was disbanded and the government fired? And who's going to rule Iraq if you have that?" he asked.

"Saddam Hussein had perhaps 2 million people controlling Iraq. The US and its allies have close to 150,000. How do you make that work?"

The debate at the time was not over whether or not Saddam's regime was evil, but whether or not the US had a plan for the day after — as it turned out, it didn't, yet the invasion went ahead anyway.

"In the end, the so-called nation-builders wrecked far more nations than they built

and the interventionists were intervening in complex societies that they did not even understand themselves. They told you how to do it, but they had no idea how to do it themselves," Trump said.

"Peace, prosperity and progress ultimately came not from a radical rejection of your heritage, but rather from embracing your national traditions and embracing that same heritage that you love so dearly."

Trump went on to set the stage for a profitable new era working alongside the forward-looking countries of the Middle East.

"Before our eyes," he said, "a new generation of leaders is transcending the ancient conflicts and tired divisions of the past and forging a future where the Middle East is defined by commerce, not chaos. Where it exports technology, not terrorism. Where people of different nations, religions and creeds are building cities together, not bombing each other out of existence."

"And it is crucial for the wider world to note this great transformation has not come from Western interventionists, flying people in beautiful planes, giving you lectures on how to live and how to govern your own affairs. No. The gleaming marvels of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi were not created by the so-called nation-builders, neo-cons or liberal nonprofits, like those who spent trillions and trillions of dollars failing to develop Kabul and Baghdad, so many

other cities."

Thirdly, Trump lauded the achievements of the Gulf Cooperation Council, with particular emphasis on Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. He reaffirmed American support for these states' ongoing transformations. The Kingdom, in particular, has undergone a dramatic transition in the nine years since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled the Vision 2030 plan that is revolutionizing all aspects of the Saudi economy and society.

"The birth of a modern Middle East has been brought by the people of the region themselves; the people that are right here, the people that have lived here all their lives, developing your own sovereign countries, pursuing your own unique visions and charting your own destinies, in your own way," Trump said. "It is really incredible what you have done."

Additionally, he renewed the 80-year US commitment to defending Saudi Arabia. However, he clearly indicated that the relationship goes far beyond security and that the US is a firm believer in the Kingdom's leadership.

"The transformation that has occurred under the leadership of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed has been truly extraordinary," he said. "I've never seen anything at that scale happen before."

Of the crown prince, he added, "I really believe we like each other a lot," telling him: "You achieved a modern miracle the Arabian way."

The Philippines is even more polarised after the midterm elections

Richard Javad Heydarian

WEDNESDAY's midterm elections having split the Philippine Congress, politics in the country has taken an unexpected but interesting turn. How the resulting polarisation affects governing, and by extension the outcome of the 2028 presidential election, remains to be seen.

Midterm elections in the Philippines are usually a straightforward affair. Just as in the US, which established the current political system in the South-East Asian nation when it was an American colony, the midterms serve as a referendum on the sitting president. Where the Philippines diverges, however, is the generally strong performance of incumbent candidates, largely thanks to backing from state institutions.

In a country with few legitimate political parties or movements, it is often those candidates who are aligned with the establishment or with ruling dynasties that dominate elections both local and national. And so, just weeks before the current midterms, almost all major polling agencies projected a strong performance for candidates allied to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, who is heading into the legacy years of his single, six-year term in office. And yet there were major surprises in store.

The most notable take-away was the impressive performance of candidates backed by former president Rodrigo Duterte, winning four of the 12 senatorial seats up for grabs and clinching several mayoral contests across the country. They dominated all the

local races in the Duterte family's home turf of Davao City in southern Philippines, while scoring major upsets in metros across central Philippines and in the capital, Manila.

Just as surprising was how well the long-marginalised liberal forces of Philippine politics performed. Former senator Paolo Benigno Aquino, the scion of a once-powerful dynasty that used to rival Mr Marcos Jr's family, tasted victory — as did the progressive Akbayan party in a number of tightly contested congressional races that have historically gone to traditional, centrist politicians and regionalist forces. There were several other shocking results, including defeats for prominent celebrities in national as well as local races, that might reflect interesting shifts in voting patterns across the country. This, of course, isn't to say that allies of the Marcos family did not fare well: they won half of the senatorial seats as well as the bulk of the congressional and gubernatorial races across the country. Martin Romualdez, who is Mr Marcos Jr's first cousin, is expected to retain his position as Speaker of the House of Representatives after his win.

The upshot to these results, however, is that the Philippines is left with an even more polarised and uncertain political landscape. There are now three major political forces — pro-Marcos, pro-Duterte and the so-called "liberal opposition" — and they will all be jockeying for influence in the corridors of power with an eye on the next

presidential election, which is still three years away.

The final outcome, with votes still being counted, appears to be a reflection of the high-stakes political drama that played out between the country's two biggest dynasties — the Marcoses and the Dutertes — particularly so close to the midterms.

For background, the two dynasties had forged an alliance of convenience ahead of the 2022 presidential election. But almost immediately after their victory, fissures began to appear between Mr Marcos Jr and vice president Sara Duterte, the daughter of Rodrigo Duterte. The ensuing, very public power struggle — that even included Sara Duterte issuing a death threat to Mr Marcos Jr — culminated in her resignation.

Tensions escalated in the thick of the election campaign, when Rodrigo Duterte was arrested and handed over to the International Criminal Court over his alleged "crimes against humanity" in connection with his controversial "war on drugs" while in office.

The development galvanised the Dutertes' base, with many seeing this is a politically motivated move on the part of the Marcoses, with the former president securing a landslide victory in the mayoral race for Davao — even if he is likely to spend the rest of his life in detention in faraway Europe.

Another factor that contributed to setbacks for Mr Marcos Jr was how effectively the liberal opposition forces campaigned on alleged anomalies in the

current administration's fiscal practices. They accused the incumbent and his allies of corruption and the manipulation of the national budget to bankroll the campaign of pro-Marcos candidates during the midterms. It also didn't help the Marcoses that the liberals and the Dutertes mostly abstained from criticising the other, thus creating a de facto tactical coalition.

Mr Marcos Jr made mistakes on the campaign trail, too. The conflict-averse President ignored criticisms from both camps, but his studied silence — based on the assumption that he had the advantage of being a sitting president — may have been a tactical error.

Going forward, a less co-operative Congress may be less inclined to work with the President. A more combative Senate is likely to stall his agenda. It will probably also drag its collective feet over the question of whether to convict Sara Duterte, who was impeached by Congress this year on charges of corruption and abuse of power.

The resulting stalemate in both chambers of the legislature will give the liberal opposition politicians outsized influence on a number of issues. This "third force" in Philippine politics is likely to steer clear of building a full-fledged alliance with either of the two dynasties. But it is expected to push through a progressive agenda that could then create momentum for itself in 2028.

How the future pans out is anyone's guess, but the midterm results have undoubtedly added plenty of intrigue to the already drama-filled Philippine political landscape.

‘Adolescence’ is right: We’re failing both young men and women

Joyce Hayden

IN 2014, I was teaching English to undergraduate freshers at a university in Massachusetts. A student in class, behind on his work, grew angry with a new assignment we were working on. He picked up a chair and threw it past an aisle of students and across the room.

He then sat down as if nothing had happened. The chair did not strike anyone, but several students had to duck their heads. As someone who struggles with (post-traumatic stress disorder) PTSD and dissociation as a result of childhood abuse and domestic violence, I found myself frozen in front of my classroom, momentarily flashing back to previous violent incidents with a former partner.

I recalled this scene with my former student when I recently rewatched the four-part series Adolescence on Netflix. The series explores the consequences that befall a 13-year-old boy, his family, and community after he kills a female student who has bullied him online. As the police question Jamie, the main character, he continually denies his involvement. Eventually, a video of the murder is shown with Jamie stabbing the teenage girl.

To me, the fact that a boy could kill a girl and convince himself that he had done nothing wrong points to a major societal failure. Boys are taught that acting on anger is acceptable. We have normalised it.

When I was 25, I had been dating a man for several months. A friend of his was visiting and asked me if I was ready to go on an outdoor adventure with the two of them. In the spirit of the day, I said, "I was born ready." My boyfriend misinterpreted this as a sexual innuendo and immediately slapped me hard across the face. No one said a word, and

My student's behaviour frightened me to the point that afterwards, I did not feel confident that I could keep the other 20 class students safe in his presence. I approached my supervisors, who suggested I contact both campus security and our on-campus learning disabilities centre, which offered services for students with physical or cognitive issues. I had expected campus security to have a conversation with the student and to document the chair event, so a paper trail could exist should further acts or threats of violence continue. Instead, campus police said no one had been hurt, so there was no incident to report. The learning disabilities centre could tell me that the student was in their programme, but that they could not share any information with me about the student or how best to handle him. Addressing these issues in young boys is critical to preventing serious violence in their behaviour when they grow older. We are failing our children and stand at a crossroads with increased violence in boys and young men that will only escalate if viable solutions are not found. My abusive former partner did not have a healthy male role model as he grew up. According to my abuser and his mother, he was not taught to curb his temper or monitor his anger.

The day proceeded as if nothing had happened. My boyfriend's friend never reached out to me after the incident. He never did or said anything that suggested that he thought the violence was unwarranted. That taught me that the violence was normal, acceptable behaviour.

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male role model as he grew up. According to my abuser and his mother, he was not taught to curb his temper or monitor his anger.

I believe that awareness must begin with parents and at an early age.

Frustration and anger must be recognised, named and confronted. If young people can be taught to identify the actions that trigger their defensive or even uncontrollable responses, escalation can be prevented. When parents can acknowledge the child's behaviour and point it out, solutions and alternatives to acting out can be offered.

"Time out" at home and school should not be used as a punishment but as an opportunity to step back, take a breath, and re-evaluate the situation. The process must be repeated and reinforced to become a new pattern of response. Encouraging boys to identify and express their feelings, whether they be anger, sadness, or frustration, can be a huge step forward in teaching them to become aware of those feelings, rather than just acting on them.

Once children enter school, discussions regarding feelings and appropriate actions must become a regular part of class instruction. A new definition of "time out" can offer students a practice in self-care, a healthy alternative to acting out anger. A time out in a school therapist's office or with a guidance counselor, or other trained staff, can become a safe place to calm down and discuss alternative responses to acting on anger.

In classroom instruction, role-play situations can help students learn and practise alternative responses to anger and aggression when they are confronted with upsetting stimuli. This type of practice and reinforcement can become a new automatic

Embarrassment and shame can be significant triggers for both boys and girls, and in Adolescence, did in fact lead Jamie to fatally stab the girl who bullied him online. Shame and anger are normal human responses to certain situations, but addressing these feelings from a very young age can assist children in learning healthy and safe ways of coping rather than lashing out against others. My abuser was also experiencing shame when he assumed my response to his friend was sexual.

As a society, we teach boys and men that anger is acceptable. TV commercials and movies portray men as both physically and mentally strong to the point where any expression of vulnerability makes them weak and inferior.

It is time we teach boys and men that they are stronger, not weaker, when they are aware of and comfortable with their emotions.

Until men and boys can identify and switch emotional gears instead of acting on anger, we will never be able to create a society where all human beings — boys and men, girls and women — are able to interact with mutual respect and safety.

— Aljazeera

AI could help hire the right person for the job

ANYONE who's had a hand in hiring and recruiting knows that finding the right person for the job is often difficult and expensive. Typically, organisations assess candidates using a combination of interviews and static tests, such as those that evaluate logical and verbal reasoning or behavioural traits. This process takes up significant time and resources.

Moreover, studies suggest that without careful structuring and design, these hiring methods can suffer from low validity and fail to correctly distinguish between candidates who will ultimately be successful on the job and those who will not.

The consensus is that the hiring process should be as close as possible to

viewers to roleplay a situation is unlikely to be realistic, as interviewers are not professional actors. All this limits how effective traditional hiring processes can be.

Despite substantial investments in AI, many companies struggle to identify optimal use cases for the technology. One use case may exist in the hiring process. AI-based simulations can put candidates in realistic and dynamic workplace scenarios that require real-time, on-the-spot decisions. Such simulations can achieve the goal of creating an interview environment that is credible and close to the job environment while avoiding the substantial time investment required from human interviewers.

How does this work?

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The problem is that asking candidates to imagine a scenario is a far cry from experiencing real workplace situations. Similarly, asking interviewers to roleplay a situation is unlikely to be realistic, as interviewers are not professional actors. All this limits how effective traditional hiring processes can be. Despite substantial investments in AI, many companies struggle to identify optimal use cases for the technology. One use case may exist in the hiring process. AI-based simulations can put candidates in realistic and dynamic workplace scenarios that require real-time, on-the-spot decisions. Such simulations can achieve the goal of creating an interview environment that is credible and close to the job environment while avoiding the substantial time investment required from human interviewers. How does this work? One example comes from Athena, a company that hires and trains executive assistants for clients who are entrepreneurs or executives. Its hiring process involves culling through thousands of applicants from several countries. On top of a battery of static tests on critical thinking, written communication and computer skills, Athena recently added AI simulations customised to the on-the-job tasks that executive assistants must perform. These simulations include a chatbot that plays the part of a demanding new client, and one that exchanges emails with the candidate who's been assigned the goal of organising an upcoming workplace event for a client. In another simulation, candidates are presented with an inbox and must decide how to respond to emails that range from a cancelled flight to a major business crisis. These AI simulations not only administer scenarios but also evaluate the candidates' output based on criteria such as critical thinking and attention to detail. For instance, in a preliminary sample of over 550 Athena candidates who did both the AI simulations and the static tests, 83.4 per cent of them were rejected by both tools. Disagreements between the AI tools and the static tests could either mean that the AI or the static tests are mistaken. A company could test which instrument yields better outcomes by hiring candidates who passed either instrument, and subsequently tracking their performance on the job. It should be noted that all candidates did undergo one final interview with a human to ensure compatibility, which ended up practically never changing the original decision. AI simulations can be tailored to all manner of business contexts, such as trading simulations for investor candidates, negotiation simulations for sales candidates, conflict simulations for HR candidates, and so on. Thus, at least theoretically, the applicability of AI in the hiring process is widespread. Other well-known companies are incorporating AI into their hiring journeys, including Amazon, Unilever, Delta Airlines and Siemens, among others. These organisations use AI in various ways including for analysis of video interviews and candidate resumes.

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the experience of the actual job. This is why many organisations try to design interviewing protocols and written assessments that attempt to mirror on-the-job tasks.

For example, interviews for HR specialists should include scenarios that ask candidates how they would handle conflict between employees, while interviews with marketing professionals should include discussions of marketing decisions.

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Nadav Klein and Eliot Gattegno
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Disagreements

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Other well-known companies are incorporating AI into their hiring journeys, including Amazon, Unilever, Delta Airlines and Siemens, among others. These organisations use AI in various ways including for analysis of video interviews and candidate resumes.

In addition, new start-ups are providing AI as a service to larger firms to help them improve their hiring processes, be it by harnessing AI-powered interactive simulations to better assess a candidate's skills or using the

types of tasks of their employees perform on a regular basis. Like any hiring method, AI simulations require ongoing monitoring and testing to ensure that introducing them into the hiring process leads to comparable outcomes relative to previous methods. The technology is relatively nascent, and the vast majority of companies have not yet caught on to using AI for hiring in an optimal way, which is both an opportunity and a constraint.

At this early point, it is very likely that creating AI simulations, building assessment criteria and establishing monitoring outcomes requires specialised AI capabilities that can be better provided by a third-party vendor rather than left to in-house employees. In other words, your company will have to open its hiring practices and partner with AI experts to implement this.

Having said this, there are also distinct advantages, such as versatility, cost savings, realism, explainability and accuracy. AI simulations can be created and adjusted based on the needs of different companies and roles. They can reduce the necessity of humans to get involved in the hiring process until the final interview phase. This can save time and reduce the notoriously high costs of hiring. It holds the potential to mimic real-life situations that candidates would face as employees in a credible way. This can help with testing hard-to-measure soft skills.

AI simulations provide written explanations for each candidate that they reject or accept, creating a trail of arguments that can aid with retrospective analysis (and possible litigation concerns, should they arise).

These simulations should become more accurate over time as more and more candidates complete them. Moreover, this could potentially uncover talent that traditional assessments might miss, simply because people respond differently to static computerised tests vs. dynamic AI-based simulations, which are closer to real-life, on-the-job situations.

Few would dispute the broad potential of AI. However, it is a longer and more uncertain task to identify scalable use cases in organisations. At this early stage, hiring seems to be a promising one.

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Trump's jet envy outrage obscures a larger issue

ON Capitol Hill, a growing number of lawmakers from both parties support banning themselves from holding stock while in office. But as for the White House – the president's initials are literally a stock ticker.

The fact that President Donald Trump has a family business, currently run by his son Eric, almost feels normal at this point, but the potential gift of a 747 by Qatar for him to use as Air Force One has renewed questions about the legality and propriety of a president getting things from foreign countries.

The plane would be for official use, but the questions come at a time when the Trump family businesses were already expanding their imprint overseas.

One reason the idea of Qatar giving the Pentagon a jet for Trump to use as president is getting so much attention is that even many Republicans are unwilling to endorse the idea.

"I think we ought to have a big, beautiful jet, but I'd like it to be made in the United States of America," said Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, appearing Wednesday on CNN's "Inside Politics."

GOP lawmakers who control Capitol Hill don't really like the idea of Qatar's gift, but for now they seem willing to accept it. The Trump administration insists the gift would be above board based on an as-yet-unseen-by-the-public memo from former lobbyist for Qatar and current US Attorney General Pam Bondi.

Hawley, while gently disagreeing with Trump, was more critical of Qatar, arguing there are more valuable things the country could do than give the US president a jet.

"Like, for example, quit harboring Islamic Jihadist terrorists who are trying to kill Americans everywhere they can get their hands on them," he said, perhaps referring to Hamas. "That would probably be at the top of my list."

Such criticisms could be extended to Saudi Arabia, whose Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was found by a US intelligence assessment to have OKed the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Now, the Saudi leader has triumphantly welcomed Trump, whose US golf courses host tournaments for the Saudi-owned LIV tour.

Zachary B. Wolf

Trump justified accepting the jet as "a gimme," a golf term for a free putt.

As CNN Investigates documented, Trump has a portfolio of real estate deals centered on the Middle East and the countries he visited during the first major foreign trip of his second term.

Trump's son Eric now leads the family business, which is working on plans for developments and golf courses in Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar. The CNN report also notes that an Emirati-backed investment firm agreed to use a cryptocurrency launched by Trump's crypto company for a \$2 billion investment in crypto exchange Binance. The Trump-linked company, World Liberty Financial, was cofounded by Zach Witkoff, the son of Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy to the Middle East.

The New York Times reported this week that an obscure Chinese company announced investment in a meme coin that benefits Trump. Trump has offered invitations to a special appearance at his Virginia golf club and a White House tour to people that invest the most, drawing the attention of foreign investors.

The Trump family's involvement with crypto should be setting off alarm bells, according to Eswar Prasad, an economist at Cornell University.

"You have a government official, no less than the leader of the free world, essentially creating and promoting a rampant vehicle for financial speculation and then using his office to promote it and directly profit from it," Prasad told CNN's Jake Tapper on "The Lead" Wednesday.

With little oversight from a Congress controlled by Republicans and Trump in charge of the financial regulators, Prasad said there are few checks on what Trump can do.

"The question is who is going to restrain Trump and his family from doing this, and as president of the United States, it's not obvious there is anybody who can stop him," Prasad said.

Hawley pointed to Trump's announcement of deals for the foreign countries to invest in the US as worth the trade. "I think nobody believes that Donald Trump can be bought," Hawley said. "I mean, what does Donald Trump need more money for?"

"It's great that these other countries now want

to get close to America again," Hawley added, arguing Trump should be allowed to do what's in the country's interests, like pursue promises made by Gulf nations for hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of investment in the US.

One person who does seem to think Trump can be bought is Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy.

"The president is in the Middle East, in order to collect tribute from these countries," Murphy said on CNN Tuesday night. "He went to Qatar, and the Emiratis, and the Saudis, because they are willing to pay him money."

"It's frankly ridiculous that anyone in this room would even suggest that President Trump is doing anything for his own benefit," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters last week in preparation for the trip.

One of Trump's closest associates, Elon Musk, was able to pair personal business with government business when he tagged along for the trip.

Appearing on a stage with Saudi Communications and Information Minister Abdullah Alswaha, Musk thanked the kingdom for approving Starlink, the Internet provider owned by his company SpaceX. Alswaha hinted that Tesla robotaxis could soon come to the kingdom after the car maker started selling vehicles there in April, according to CNN's report.

Back in the US, Democratic lawmakers demanded a corruption investigation of Musk, citing a Washington Post report this month that Lesotho specifically approved Starlink as part of its strategy to negotiate tariffs with Trump.

Hawley has been a leader on Capitol Hill in calling for new restrictions on how lawmakers can benefit from their positions.

He wrote the PELOSI Act, which is short for Preventing Elected Leaders from Owning Securities and Investments and nods at stock trades made by former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband, Paul, a venture capitalist.

The legislation would bar lawmakers from holding or selling stock outside of a blind trust while in office. House Speaker Mike Johnson endorsed the idea this week.

But it would not affect Trump, whose family business appears to be booming.

Securing the Middle East in the age of cyber threats

THE threat of cyberattacks looms larger than ever before. Recent global intelligence assessments and cybersecurity industry reports have warned that the frequency, sophistication and scale of cyberattacks are expected to rise dramatically in the coming years.

Governments, corporations and even small businesses are increasingly becoming targets as cybercriminals leverage artificial intelligence, machine learning and automation to penetrate digital systems. In a report released last week, the UK's National Cyber Security Centre explicitly highlighted the emerging risks of AI-powered cyberattacks, warning that as societies integrate more digital tools into everyday life, vulnerabilities multiply.

This trend is not limited to Western powers or Asia; it has far-reaching implications for every region of the world. Among the most affected — and increasingly exposed — is the Middle East, a region undergoing vast digital transformation amid complex geopolitical realities.

The Middle East's vulnerability to cyber threats is heightened by a confluence of strategic, economic and technological factors. This region is home to some of the world's most important oil and gas reserves,

financial institutions and government infrastructures. Simultaneously, it is also a region experiencing some of the world's fastest economic growth and technological advancement.

As nations in the Gulf Cooperation Council, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar, pivot away from hydrocarbon-dependent economies toward knowledge-based and digitally integrated systems, they also become increasingly exposed to cyber risks. These developments make the cybersecurity landscape in the Middle East not only a national concern but a regional and even a global issue.

Over the past decade, Gulf nations have embarked on ambitious economic transformation plans, such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the UAE Centennial 2071. These initiatives aim to diversify income sources, attract foreign investment and modernize economies by leveraging advanced technologies, infrastructure and human capital. This economic momentum is tangible in the massive construction projects, expanding financial sectors and burgeoning tech ecosystems across the region. Yet, with rapid growth comes increased exposure to cybercrime, intellectual property theft, financial fraud and digital espionage.

Parallel to economic expansion is the sweep-

ing digital transformation reshaping the Middle East. Across government ministries, oil fields, banks, healthcare systems and educational institutions, digital tech-

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Over the past decade, Gulf nations have embarked on ambitious economic transformation plans, such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the UAE Centennial 2071. These initiatives aim to diversify income sources, attract foreign investment and modernize economies by leveraging advanced technologies, infrastructure and human capital. This economic momentum is tangible in the massive construction projects, expanding financial sectors and burgeoning tech ecosystems across the region. Yet, with rapid growth comes increased exposure to cybercrime, intellectual property theft, financial fraud and digital espionage. Parallel to economic expansion is the sweeping digital transformation reshaping the Middle East. Across government ministries, oil fields, banks, healthcare systems and educational institutions, digital technologies are being adopted at an unprecedented rate. Smart cities like NEOM in Saudi Arabia and Masdar City in the UAE are being built on digital foundations, employing AI, Internet of Things, blockchain and big data analytics. Governments are introducing e-services, digitizing healthcare records and automating judicial systems to improve efficiency and transparency. The banking sector is also rapidly moving toward mobile banking and fintech solutions, while energy companies are incorporating automated control systems to optimize production and distribution. These transformations — while necessary and laudable — open the door to sophisticated cyberattacks. It is precisely because of this intersection between economic ambition and digital vulnerability that countries in the Middle East must act with urgency.

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Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

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It is precisely because of this intersection between economic ambition and digital vulnerability that countries in the Middle East must act with urgency. Investment in cybersecurity infrastructure, education and governance must not be treated as an afterthought but as an essential pillar of national development. Several countries have begun to take meaningful steps.

Saudi Arabia, for instance, has positioned itself as a regional leader in cybersecurity preparedness. The Kingdom established its National Cybersecurity Authority to govern and standard-

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ize cybersecurity frameworks across both the public and private sectors. It has implemented the Essential

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Cybersecurity Controls, a comprehensive framework that requires government and critical infrastructure institutions to meet strict cybersecurity standards. These efforts are complemented by a national cybersecurity strategy that integrates threat detection, emergency response capabilities and long-term strategic planning.

In recognition of its progress, Saudi Arabia was awarded a perfect score in the UN Global Cybersecurity Index in 2024 and named a "role model" country.

Several industries in the Middle East are par-

ticularly vulnerable to cyberattacks. Government institutions are a prime target, with about 25 percent of cyberattacks in 2024 being directed at public

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sector systems. These attacks often aim to steal sensitive information, disable services or project political messages. The energy sector is another high-risk domain. Oil and gas companies rely on a vast network of digital controls, sensors and operational technology that, if compromised, can cause operational shutdowns or even physical damage. Financial institutions, which increasingly rely on mobile platforms and digital transactions, face threats ranging from phishing scams to data breaches.

Telecommunications companies are also under

constant pressure, especially as they form the backbone of national connectivity. With the expansion of 5G and satellite internet in the region, the attack surface has broadened, making it easier for hackers to access critical data and communication streams.

To counter these escalating threats, Middle Eastern nations must take a multilayered approach to cybersecurity readiness. First and foremost, there must be sustained investment in cybersecurity infrastructure — firewalls, encryption protocols, endpoint protection and real-time monitoring systems. Governments must mandate the implementation of security standards across all sectors, ensuring that digital adoption does not outpace cyber defense capabilities.

Just as important is the human element. There is a growing demand for skilled cybersecurity professionals across the region.

Educational institutions should establish specialized programs, scholarships and training centers to build a robust pipeline of talent. Additionally, the private sector must be engaged as a key partner.

Another vital strategy involves regional cooperation. Cyber threats do not respect borders and, therefore, nations must collaborate — sharing intelligence, coordinating emergency responses

and developing regional cybersecurity norms. Public-private partnerships can also foster innovation in the field, incentivizing the development of indigenous cybersecurity startups and solutions tailored to regional needs.

Moreover, attention must be paid to supply chain security. With many institutions relying on third-party vendors for hardware, software and services, it is essential to implement rigorous vetting and monitoring processes to prevent vulnerabilities from being introduced indirectly.

In conclusion, the threat of cyberattacks is a present and growing danger, and the Middle East is particularly vulnerable given its pace of transformation and strategic importance. The region's ongoing digital and economic revolutions, while promising immense benefits, also necessitate an equally aggressive approach to cybersecurity. Countries such as Saudi Arabia have already taken exemplary steps by investing in infrastructure, cultivating local talent and creating governance frameworks. Other nations would do well to follow suit, recognizing that cybersecurity is not a luxury — it is a necessity for stability, prosperity and sovereignty. The cost of inaction is too high and the window for preparedness is closing.



SCCI EC calls for withdrawal Tax (amend) Ordinance 2025, SRO-709

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Executive Committee of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry unanimously adopted a resolution, calling for immediate withdrawal of SRO-907 (112025, meant for e-invoicing and integration of sales transactions to all categories of taxpayers (corporate and non-corporate).

The EC committee also raised serious concern over the promulgation of the Tax Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, terming it a direct violation of business autonomy and a blow to investor confidence.

Another resolution unanimously passed in the meeting, paying rich tribute to the Pakistan Armed force over the success of the Operation 'Bunyan-Al-Marsoos'. The meeting was held under chairmanship of the SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan here at the chamber house on Thursday.

The chamber senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, vice president Shehryar

Khan, executive members Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Aftab Iqbal, Saifullah Khan, Abbas Fuad Azeem, Shamsul Rahim, Nadeem Rauf, Adnan Nasir, Ishfaq Ahmad, Mujeibur Rehman, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan, along with Businessmen forum leader and former FPCCI president Ghazanfar Bilour, FPCCI regional chairman KP and former president Haji Muhammad Afzal, former presidents Malik Niaz Ahmad, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former vice presidents Shuja Muhammad, Haris Mufti, and Monawar Khurshid, Hasnain Sheraz, Fazal e Wahid, Faiz Rasool, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Rashid Iqbal, Aqeel Kayani participated in the meeting as observer.

Participants described the recent amendments made through Presidential Ordinance to the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 as dangerous for the business community.

The meeting was informed that the extraordinary powers granted to the

Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) through this ordinance threaten private business autonomy, civil liberties, and the stability of the economy.

The forum expressed grave concern over the newly added Section 3A in the Income Tax Ordinance, which allows immediate tax recovery based on a High Court or Supreme Court decision, bypassing the due legal process.

Similarly, the meeting informed Clause 6A added to Section 140 empowers the FBR to freeze a taxpayer's bank account and withdraw funds without any prior notice or legal proceedings, which he declared unacceptable.

The newly inserted Section 175C authorizes the FBR to appoint its officer in any business premises to monitor production, services, and stock—an act considered a direct breach of business confidentiality and a blatant intrusion into private enterprise, the meeting said.

Granting powers of checking and confiscation

to other departments could undermine the constitutional jurisdiction of central authorities, it added.

Participants emphasized that enforcing such an ordinance under Article 89 of the Constitution without parliamentary approval goes against democratic norms. They urged the government to immediately review the ordinance and move forward with legislation only after taking all stakeholders into confidence.

The forum expressed serious concern over delay in clearance of commercial containers at Azakel Dryport, faceless custom assessment, imposition of two percent provincial cess on export from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, barring entry of private vehicles of Custom clearing agents in Peshawar dryport on pretext of security concerns, called for immediate steps to address all aforementioned issues, hampering trade and export and adding to difficulties of business community and revenue loss for the national exchequer.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan presiding over a meeting of Executive Committee at Chamber's House.

Oil prices tumble on hopes for Iran N-deal

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Oil prices sank Thursday on hopes for an Iran nuclear breakthrough after Donald Trump said a deal was "getting close" and US media reported Tehran had indicated it could be open to curbs on its atomic programme.

The remarks from the US president came after the two sides on Sunday held their fourth round of talks that began last month and represented the highest-level contact since Trump in 2018 pulled out of a three-year-old deal.

Speaking in Qatar as part of his multi-day tour of the Gulf, Trump voiced optimism at avoiding a military strike on Tehran's nuclear sites.

"We're not going to be making any nuclear dust in Iran," he said. "I think we're getting close to maybe doing a deal without having to do this."

Both main crude contracts sank more than three percent.

The commodity had already been falling Thursday on signs Iran could agree to certain demands.

An adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Wednesday that Tehran could accept far-reaching curbs on its atomic programme in exchange for sanctions relief, according to NBC News.

In an interview with NBC News, Ali Shamkhani said Iran could agree to never develop nuclear weapons, give up stockpiles of highly enriched uranium and allow inspectors to nuclear sites -- among other steps - if economic sanctions were lifted.

Shamkhani said "yes" in response to a reporter's question on whether his country would be willing to sign an agreement with Washington if sanctions were lifted "immediately".

Meanwhile, equity markets stuttered as investors await fresh developments in trade talks, with US partners looking to reach deals to avoid Donald Trump's tariff blitz.

With excitement from the China-US detente running out of legs, the search is on for fresh catalysts to drive a rally that has pushed markets back above the levels seen before Trump's April 2 "Liberation Day" bombshell.

News that Beijing was suspending some non-tariff countermeasures on US entities for 90 days following the superpowers' weekend truce did little to inject much more enthusiasm.

With the tariffs crisis calmed for now, dealers can turn their attention to hard economic data, hoping for an idea about the initial impact of Washington's trade policies.

After figures Tuesday showing US inflation came in a little below forecasts in April, eyes are on wholesale prices and retail sales due later Thursday, as well as earnings from retail giant Walmart.

However, analysts pointed out that the real impact would not be seen until May's figures are released and warned that there were still plenty of bumps in the road ahead.

"The trade truce may hold for now, but the tariffs announced -- many still around 30 percent -- are not disappearing," said Charu Chanana, chief investment strategist at Saxo.

PSX turns bullish, gains 1,425 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 1,425.39 points, a positive change of 1.20 percent, closing at 119,961.91 points as compared to 118,536.53 points on the last trading day.

A total of 698,965,992 shares were traded during the day as compared to 609,063,142 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs39.089 billion against Rs41.913 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 458 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 312 of them recorded gains and 107 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 39 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pakistan Refinery with 50,818,876 shares at Rs 33.82 per share, Cnergyico PK with 47,570,881 shares at Rs 7.85 per share and K-Electric Ltd. with 40,246,546 shares at Rs 4.45 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 1,029.56 per share closing at Rs 11,325.15 whereas

runner-up was Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited with Rs 209.99 rise in its share price to close at Rs 9,201.27.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 104.90 per share price, closing at Rs 3,155.10, whereas the runner-up was Bata Pakistan Limited with Rs 46.18 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,550.00.

Rupee gains 10 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.61 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.71.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.20 and Rs 283.70, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs0.58 to close at Rs 315.35 against the last day's closing of Rs 315.93, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs 1.93, whereas a decrease of Rs1.75 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was

traded at Rs 373.66 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 375.41.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 and 03 paise to close at Rs 76.67 and Rs 75.08, respectively.

Gold prices decrease Rs6,700 to 335,200 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.6,700 on Thursday and was sold at Rs.335,200 against its sale at Rs.341,900 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat came down by Rs.5,745 to Rs.287,379 from Rs.293,124 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat declined by Rs.5,266 to Rs.263,440 from Rs.268,706.

The rates of per tola silver witnessed a decrease of Rs.105 to Rs.3,377 and ten gram silver also decreased by Rs.90 to Rs. 2,985 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market also decreased by \$67 to \$3,168 from \$3,235 whereas that of silver decreased by \$1.05 to at \$31.95, the Association reported.

Federal Minister presides high-level meeting at BOI



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A high-level meeting was convened at the Board of Investment (BOI) Karachi Office, presided over by the Federal Minister for BOI Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh. The meeting was also attended by Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Business Council, the Special Secretary of Industries from Punjab, the Secretary of the Sindh Investment

and Trade Department, and representatives from the Sindh Investment Board.

The primary agenda of the meeting centred on enhancing the ease of doing business in Pakistan and reviewing the progress of the Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative across various provinces. During the meeting, representatives from both Punjab and Sindh presented updates on ongoing reforms and initiatives aimed at improving the reg-

ulatory environment for businesses.

The Secretary of Investment from Sindh elaborated on the province's one-stop service initiative, highlighting its positive impact on business facilitation. This initiative aims to streamline procedures and reduce the bureaucratic hurdles faced by entrepreneurs, thereby fostering a more conducive environment for investment. Discussions during the meeting also under-

scored the critical importance of eliminating overlapping regulations, enhancing coordination between federal and provincial government bodies, and strengthening the efficiency of digital platforms designed for business operations.

Participants advocated for the harmonization of laws across provinces, the provision of support for small businesses, and the promotion of skill development through partnerships with technical institutions.

The Minister expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders and reaffirmed the government's commitment to holding regular consultative meetings. This initiative aims to ensure that all provinces and representatives from the private sector remain actively engaged in the reform process, thereby fostering a more efficient and inclusive business environment in Pakistan.

FFC organizes event on 'Int'l Farmers' Day' in Larkana

Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: The country's famous agri Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC) organized an event on the occasion of International Farmers' Day at "Sona Center" in Larkana, in which special guests were Asad Solangi, Director of Agricultural

Extension Department, Larkana, FFC's agronomist Muhammad Waqas, and a large number of farmers and cultivators. On this occasion, FFC's agronomist Muhammad Waqas highlighted the importance of farmers in the country's economy on the occasion of International Farmers' Day.

On the other hand, the in-charge of Sona Center Larkana Saeed Ahmed has introduced the farmers about Sona Center and said that Fauji Fertilizer Company is providing great facilities to the farmers of Larkana and surrounding areas, which includes timely supply of quality fertiliz-

ers at controlled prices and crop insurance.

The event was organized by the Director of Agricultural Extension Department, Larkana, terming the facilities of FFC's Sona Center as a good service to the farmers and cultivators and also appreciated their services appreciated.

Mobilink Bank, Fatima Fertilizer enter into a strategic partnership



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Mobilink Bank and Fatima Fertilizer, a leading player in Pakistan's agricultural sector, have entered into a strategic partnership to digitally empower Pakistan's underserved farming communities through enhanced access to finance and financial technology. The collaboration aims to uplift the country's agri-community by digitizing the agricultural supply chain and providing targeted financial solutions through the integration of Mobilink Bank's 'Dost App' and Fatima Fertilizer's 'Sarsabz Pakistan' platform.

This partnership brings

together two leaders in their respective sectors, with a shared commitment to transforming rural livelihoods. The alliance will unlock new opportunities for the farming community, and agri-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by combining Mobilink Bank's inclusive financial products with Fatima Fertilizer's strong grassroots presence in order to drive social mobility.

As part of this collaboration, farmers will be able to access a wide range of Mobilink Bank's financial products and services, including agri tubewell financing, input lending, passbook financing, as well as digital banking through

the seamless integration of the Dost App with the Sarsabz Pakistan platform.

In addition, the partnership will also focus on equipping farmers with essential financial literacy skills to help them make informed financial decisions. These offerings will be delivered not only through digital channels but also via on-ground engagements, including joint farmer community gatherings with Mobilink Bank and Fatima Fertilizer designed to raise awareness, generate leads, and encourage the adoption of financial tools.

"Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy, and its progress is vital to

our national prosperity," said Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, President and CEO of Mobilink Bank.

"This strategic integration of our Dost App with the Sarsabz Pakistan App by Fatima Fertilizer is a leap toward building a future-ready, digitally inclusive agri-ecosystem. By simplifying access to finance for agri-inputs, we're not just digitizing lending; we're empowering farmers, strengthening rural economies, and paving the way for sustainable growth."

Also sharing his thoughts, Asad Murad, Chief Operating Officer, Fatima Fertilizer Company Limited, added, "At Fatima Fertilizer, we are deeply committed to enhancing the lives of farmers through innovation, accessibility, and collaboration. Our partnership with Mobilink Bank reflects a shared vision to drive financial inclusion and strengthen the agricultural ecosystem. By integrating digital finance with our Sarsabz Pakistan platform, we are not only bridging critical gaps in agri-input financing but also enabling long-term socio-economic growth in rural communities."

State Life and JS Bank sign an agreement



F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC), the nation's largest and most trusted life and health insurer, has entered into a strategic partnership with JS Bank, one of the fastest growing banks in Pakistan, to offer a range of insurance products under its bancassurance model.

The move brings together the scale of Pakistan's public institutions with the agility of its private banking sector, enabling wider access to insurance solutions for individuals and families through JS Bank's branch network.

Through this collaboration, JS Bank customers

will gain access to SLIC's insurance offerings directly through the Bank's network, enabling them to plan and protect their futures with greater convenience.

Speaking at the signing ceremony held at JS Bank's Head Office in Karachi, Mr. Shahid Iqbal Baloch, Executive Director at SLIC, stated, "This partnership unites two of Pakistan's leading institutions with a shared commitment to financial inclusion and protection across all segments of society while advancing Pakistan's economic resilience."

Sharing his thoughts at the signing ceremony, Atif Malik, Chief Operating Officer at JS Bank, said "At

JS Bank, we view financial protection as an essential part of overall financial wellbeing. Our collaboration with State Life enables us to extend this philosophy by making insurance more accessible to the communities we serve."

State Life leverages its legacy and market expertise to bring valuable strength to this partnership. By partnering with JS Bank, it actively expands its customer reach through a modern banking platform. Together, both institutions demonstrate a firm commitment to delivering integrated financial solutions that combine banking, savings, and protection-advancing financial inclusion and security.

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves \$15.61b

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan increased to US\$ 15,613.8 million while the reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan also rose to \$ 10,403.1 million as of May 09, 2025.

"SBP reserves increased by US\$ 71 million to US\$ 10,403.1 million" during the week ended on May 09, 2025, the central bank Thursday reported in its weekly statement on liquid

foreign reserves position.

It is pertinent to mention that SBP has received the 2nd tranche of \$ 1,023 million from the IMF under EFF program on May 13, 2025 but it is not included in the reserve position for the mentioned week. According to the central bank, the amount will be reflected in SBP's foreign exchange reserves for the week ending on 16th May 2025.

Meanwhile, the net foreign reserves held by com-

mercial banks also inched up to \$ 5,210.7 million, the breakup of the foreign reserves for the period under review shown.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on May 02, 2025, were \$ 15,482.6 million.

Among them the central bank held foreign reserves recorded as \$ 10,332.5 million while reserves of \$ 5,150.1 million were held by the commercial banks.



Shoaib Malik quits as PCB mentor citing other ‘commitments’

L A H O R E (ESPNCricinfo): Shoaib Malik has quit his position as one of five mentors appointed by the PCB for domestic competitions, citing other commitments. Malik, who said he submitted his resignation to the board two weeks ago, said he would fulfill his remaining contractual obligations, but would not be a mentor for the next season. The other mentors are Misbah-ul-Haq, Saqlain Mushtaq, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Waqar Younis.

"This was not an easy choice, but after reflecting on my commitments, I realised that juggling multiple responsibilities would prevent me from giving my best - both to Pakistan cricket and to my other professional and personal priorities," Malik said. "To ensure fairness to all, I believe this is the right

time to transition. Working with some of Pakistan's most talented cricketers has been an immensely rewarding experience, one I will always cherish."

Malik's departure as mentor comes at a time of increasing speculation about the fate of all of the mentors. The day Malik made his resignation public, media reports suggested the PCB had decided to let go of all five mentors as they look to scale down what was an unprecedentedly busy domestic season last year.

It is not certain that the Champions Cup, promoted as the jewel in the crown of the domestic season last year, which saw players pulled away from Test preparation ahead of the England series, will take place at all.

However, a spokesperson at the PCB said an offi-

cial decision had not been communicated by chairman Mohsin Naqvi to the board. ESPNCricinfo spoke to three of the four other mentors, each of whom said they had not been informed about any changes to their role. All five mentors were appointed on three-year contracts running until 2027.

The appointment of the mentors in August last year was controversial, particularly when reports of their financial remuneration came to light. Each of the five are believed to be on three-year contracts, earning in the range of PKR 5 million (approx. USD 18,000) per month. Those salaries have raised eyebrows because they are higher than what is paid to all but the most elite Pakistani cricketers - the category A players Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah

Afridi and Mohammad Rizwan, in the central contracts pool.

Besides, the vague nature of their job descriptions left the question of what they would actually do unclear. Initially appointed as mentors for each of the sides in the Champions Cup, the roles are separate from coaching. Each side had a separate coaching set-up - and the mentors did not require coaching qualifications.

In a statement to ESPNCricinfo last year, the PCB had said that it "as a responsible organisation, never discusses in public salaries of its staffers and consultants, which remain a matter between the employer and the employee".

The PCB has not yet announced a replacement for Malik, or whether they intend to replace him.



YORK, ENGLAND: Oisín Murphy riding Tropical Storm (yellow cap) win The British Stallion Studs EBF Westow Stakes at York Racecourse on Thursday in York, England.

George Munsey joins Karachi Kings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Karachi Kings have bolstered their squad ahead of the resumption of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 10 with the signing of George Munsey, the hard-hitting top-order batter from Scotland.

Munsey, renowned for his aggressive stroke play and match-winning capabilities in T20 cricket, will

join the Kings immediately for the remainder of the tournament, said a press release.

Munsey, a seasoned campaigner in global T20 leagues, brings his exceptional expertise against spin bowling and firepower to the Kings' batting lineup.

Known for his fearless approach and ability to dis-

mantle bowling attacks, the left-handed batter has been a standout performer for Scotland and in leagues worldwide. His explosive style aligns perfectly with Karachi Kings' strategy to dominate the powerplay and accelerate in crunch moments.

The Kings currently sit second on the HBL PSL 2025 points table with 10

points, firmly in contention for a playoff berth.

Their next fixture is a clash against Peshawar Zalmi on May 19 at Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi, a match that could solidify their standing as qualifier contenders. Munsey's inclusion adds depth and versatility to the squad as they aim to maintain their momentum.

WTC final-bound South Africa players to miss IPL 2025 playoffs

L O N D O N (ESPNCricinfo): The eight South African players who are part of the World Test Championship (WTC) final squad will return to home by May 27 and, as a result, miss the IPL 2025 playoffs.

The eight players, Kagiso Rabada (Gujarat Titans), Aiden Markram (Lucknow Super Giants), Marco Jansen (Punjab Kings), Tristan Stubbs (Delhi Capitals), Lungi Ngidi (Royal Challengers Bengaluru), Wiaan Mulder (Sunrisers Hyderabad), Ryan Rickelton and Corbin Bosch (both Mumbai Indians) will leave for the United Kingdom with the rest of South Africa's WTC final squad on May 30, to prepare for a warm-up

game against Zimbabwe from June 3 at Arundel.

ESPNCricinfo has confirmed that Cricket South Africa (CSA) has concluded negotiations with the IPL about the early release of these players, given the importance of the WTC final, which will be played on June 11 at Lord's against Australia.

All other South African players not part of the WTC final will remain at the IPL until its conclusion. The IPL resumes on May 17 after it was suspended for just over a week in the wake of the India-Pakistan cross-border tensions. RCB will take on Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the first game, with Ngidi expected to be a part of the fixture, in case

Josh Hazlewood does not recover in time from a shoulder niggle.

Out of the seven teams which have the WTC final-bound South Africa players, SRH are out of contention. GT have played a chunk of the season without Rabada, the last being on March 29 against MI and are just one step away from sealing a playoffs spot. MI will be most affected with their South Africa contingent departing after the league stage. With 336 runs in 12 innings, Rickelton is MI's second-highest run-getter, while Bosch has played useful cameos and bowled decently in the three games he's played.

Jansen's departure will also worry PBKS, who

need two wins in their last three games to confirm a playoff spot. Jansen is PBKS' third-highest wicket-taker with 11 wickets in as many games. Stubbs, meanwhile, has been DC's designated finisher and is their third-highest run-getter this season with 259 runs in ten innings at a strike rate of 151.46.

Markam has 348 runs in 11 innings for LSG and is their third-highest run-scorer so far. LSG are currently placed seventh on the points table and need to win all their remaining fixtures, and even that might not be enough for them to make it to the playoffs.

The league phase ends on May 27, while the playoffs begin on May 29, with the final on June 3.

Zheng says too much respect for Sabalenka hampered her in the past

ROME (Reuters): Zheng Qinwen finally got her first win over Aryna Sabalenka at the seventh attempt to reach the Italian Open semi-finals on Wednesday and the Olympic champion said she had perhaps shown the world number one too much respect in their prior meetings.

The Chinese 22-year-old had gone down tamely in all but one of her previous six encounters with

Sabalenka, including in the 2024 Australian Open final, but she delivered a clinical 6-4 6-3 win over the off-colour Belarusian in Rome.

The win will come as a huge boost for Zheng as she continues her preparations for the French Open, which begins on May 25.

"The few times I faced her in the beginning, I gave her too much respect," Zheng told reporters.

"I didn't face her like a normal player. I remember I was going to see her in the 2017 China Open ... My father was saying 'Oh, you need to learn about her forehand, her backhand'."

"I think this kind of respect, it takes a while to treat her like a normal player."

Sabalenka had been on a nine-match winning streak on clay but Zheng said she was in her com-

fort zone on the surface.

"This is the first time we've played on clay," she said.

"I guess when I play on clay, I'm more comfortable because I've got great experience on clay."

"I was more patient. I'm happy with my performance and happy to make the step forward to beat the world number one."

Zheng plays world number three Coco Gauff for a place in the final.

Paolini becomes first Italian in 11 years to reach Rome final

ROME (Reuters): Jasmine Paolini became the first Italian woman in more than a decade to reach the final of her home Italian Open when she beat American Peyton Stearns 7-5 6-1 on Thursday.

Paolini is the first Italian to advance to the final in Rome since her doubles partner Sara Errani lost to Serena Williams in 2014.

Paolini had found herself a set and 4-0 down to Diana Shnaider in her quarter-final tie before storming to victory and once again the world number five had a slow start in

the opening set before mounting a comeback.

"I am very happy. I don't know what to say! It's a dream to be here, it's a dream to play in Italy, it's a dream to be able to play the final," the 29-year-old said.

Any hopes of a quick start for Paolini were put to rest when Stearns jumped into a 3-0 lead amid muted applause from the home crowd as the Italian soon found herself 4-1 down.

The American looked comfortable and poised to take the opening set before Paolini clawed her way back as she saved set points

to level it at 5-5, pumping her fist with a triumphant scream that got the crowd roaring again.

The comeback was complete when Paolini, having won four games in a row, took the opening set after more than an hour of play.

The momentum was firmly with Paolini as she broke Stearns for a fifth time to go 4-1 up in the second set and the dejected American had no answer as the Italian's winners whizzed past her.

Stearns fired a forehand wide on match point as the crowd erupted and Paolini

raised her arms in celebration.

"You (the crowd) gave me a boost because today it was a bit of an uphill start and I struggled at the beginning, thank goodness you were there," she added.

"We won this match together. Point after point I managed to fight, to turn it around, even if at the beginning I did not have a good feeling. But I am happy with the way I managed to turn this match around."

Paolini will face either Zheng Qinwen or Coco Gauff in Saturday's final.

Celtics beat Knicks to keep play-off hopes alive

BOSTON (BBC): The Boston Celtics kept themselves in the NBA play-offs with a win against the New York Knicks as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Golden State Warriors to reach the Western Conference final.

The Celtics, the reigning NBA champions, were 3-1 down in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semifinal and missing star player Jayson Tatum, who went off injured in game four and has had surgery on a ruptured Achilles.

However, they earned a convincing 127-102 win at TD Garden thanks to Derrick White's 34 points,

and 26 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds from Jaylen Brown.

Game five will take place in New York on Friday at 20:00 local time (Saturday 01:00 BST).

"We made winning plays on both ends of the floor," said Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla. "They made enough plays to win - gave us another chance to play."

The Timberwolves beat the Warriors 121-110 to secure a 4-1 Western Conference semi-final play-off series win.

Julius Randle scored 29 points and Anthony Edwards contributed 22 points and 12 assists for the

Timberwolves at Target Center in Minneapolis.

The Timberwolves will play the Oklahoma City Thunder or the Denver Nuggets in the Western Conference final, with the former leading their series 3-2.

"It's great," said Randle. "We've had a season full of adversity. Coach (Chris Finch) said at the end of the regular season that we didn't do anything as far as trades or firing coaches. We just stuck together and we got through it together."

"I'm super proud of our team, everybody that stepped up in some type of way this year. We've got to

keep going."

The Warriors did not win a game since losing star player Stephen Curry to a hamstring injury in game one.

"Injuries are part of the play-offs," said coach Steve Kerr. "I learned a long time ago that the play-offs are really about health and then just guys stepping up and making some big shots, big plays in key games. That's what decides every series."

"We've been on both ends of that. There's no sense in dwelling on it, and I don't want to take anything away from what Minnesota just accomplished."

Led by Julius Randle, Wolves top Warriors to clinch series

NEW YORK (Reuters): Julius Randle scored 29 points on 13-for-18 shooting, and the Minnesota Timberwolves held on for a 121-110 win over the Golden State Warriors to clinch their Western Conference semifinal series on Wednesday night in Minneapolis.

Anthony Edwards finished with 22 points and 12 assists for Minnesota, which won the best-of-seven series in five games.

The Timberwolves advanced to the conference finals, where they will await the winner of the semifinal series between the Oklahoma City Thunder and the Denver Nuggets.

"It's great," Randle said of reaching the conference finals. "We've had a season full of adversity. Coach (Chris Finch) said at the end of the regular season that we didn't do anything as far as trades or firing coaches. We just stuck together, and we got through it together."

"I'm super proud of our team, everybody that stepped up in some type of way this year. We got

win No. 8 (in the play-offs). We've got to keep going."

Brandin Podziemski scored 28 points on 11-for-19 shooting to lead Golden State. Jonathan Kuminga added 26 points off the bench, and Jimmy Butler III chipped in 17 points and six assists.

"It was a fight," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "I'm really proud of our guys. They hung in there and they battled the whole way through."

"(It was) quite a turnaround in our season from where we were a few months ago to giving ourselves a chance and having a swing at the plate for some real chances to go deep. We were right there. Obviously it didn't go our way. The Wolves were great, they deserved it. But I'm very proud of our team."

The Warriors dropped their fourth straight game without Stephen Curry, who watched in street clothes from the bench. Curry injured his left hamstring in the series opener after leading Golden State to a first-

round playoff series win over the Houston Rockets.

Kerr said of the challenge of playing without Curry, "Injuries are part of the playoffs. I learned a long time ago that the playoffs are really about health and then just guys stepping up and making some big shots, big plays in key games. That's what decides every series."

"We've been on both ends of that. It's just part of it. There's no sense in dwelling on it, and I don't want to take anything away from what Minnesota just accomplished."

The Timberwolves led by as many as 25 points late in the third quarter. Randle dribbled the ball from one end of the court to the other and finished with a running layup to give the Timberwolves a 93-68 edge with 1:01 remaining in the third.

The Warriors made a determined push in the fourth quarter to cut the deficit to nine. Moses Moody drained a 3-pointer to bring Golden State within 99-90 with 7:11 to

play.

Edwards helped Minnesota regain a double-digit advantage moments later. He knocked down a 3-pointer to put the Timberwolves on top 102-90, and Jaden McDaniels increased the lead to 14 points with a steal and a layup with 6:36 remaining.

"The team has come together at the right time and is playing its best basketball," Finch said.

The Timberwolves led 62-47 at the half.

Golden State trailed 45-42 after Podziemski made a jump shot with 4:11 left in the half.

Minnesota closed the second quarter on a 17-5 run to grab a 15-point lead. Randle finished the first-half scoring with a three-point play after making a layup and drawing a foul.

The Timberwolves shot 62.8 percent (49 of 78) overall and 41.9 percent (13 of 31) from beyond the arc. The Warriors shot 43.3 percent (39 of 90) from the field and 28.2 percent (11 of 39) from 3-point range.



ROME, ITALY: Jasmine Paolini of Italy plays a backhand against Peyton Stearns of the United States during the Women's Singles Semi Final match on Day Eleven of the Internazionali BNL D'Italia 2025 at Foro Italico on May 15, 2025 in Rome, Italy.



In brief

SSP visits Blue Area

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Muhammad Shoaib Khan visited Blue Area on Thursday and met with members of the trader community to discuss their concerns and ensure enhanced security measures at commercial centers. An official told APP that SSP Shoaib issued directives to strengthen security in the area and reassured the business community that protecting their lives, property, and businesses remains among the top priorities of Islamabad Police. The SSP said Islamabad Police is utilizing all available resources to maintain peace and ensure the safety of citizens in the federal capital. He said no elements would be allowed to disturb the peace of the city under any circumstances. Shoaib said the traders appreciated the efforts of Islamabad Police in maintaining a secure environment and expressed their gratitude for the excellent security arrangements in the area.

Three drug peddlers held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Karachi Company police team has arrested three accused red-handed for their involvement in drug selling. A public relations officer told APP on Thursday that the accused were identified as Awal Sher, Sulman Shafique, and Zia Ullah. Police team also recovered 6,300 grams of hashish and 6,000 grams of heroin from their possession. He said that during preliminary investigation, the accused confessed to being involved in drug peddling activities within the jurisdiction of Karachi Company. Moreover, the Police teams are actively working to dismantle the broader supply chain linked to the accused. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq said that the crackdown against drug dealers involved in corrupting the youth will continue.

Seminar organized

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has started engaging with universities and food industry experts to promote better nutrition in the federal capital. In this regard, a seminar focusing on food fortification, especially the addition of nutrients in edible oil, was held at Hamdard University Islamabad. The event aimed to raise awareness about the role of fortified food in addressing health challenges linked to poor nutrition. Deputy Director of IFA Dr Tahira Siddique attended the session as a special guest. Speaking at the seminar, she said that the authority is adopting modern practices to deal with nutrition-related issues. Adding essential nutrients to everyday items like cooking oil and wheat flour can play a significant role in reducing malnutrition. Nutritionists and mill owners also addressed the participants. They discussed the current trends and the importance of fortifying food with vitamins and minerals. Experts suggested that steps like these could help improve public health, especially among low-income communities where access to balanced meals is limited. Dr. Tahira emphasized that mixing nutrients in staple foods such as flour and oil could significantly reduce the rate of malnutrition. She explained that these foods are consumed daily in most households, making them ideal for delivering essential nutrients like iron, vitamin A, and folic acid.

Minister chairs 59th BOD's meeting of PHA Foundation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, chaired the 59th Board of Directors (BoD) meeting of the Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation (PHAF) at the Ministry, on Thursday. The meeting agenda included the confirmation of minutes of the 58th BoD meeting and the waiver of delayed payment charges on the additional cost of B-Type Blocks 19 to 24 at the I-16/3 project in Islamabad, which was unanimously approved by the Board. On the matter of launching and constructing a commercial center at the PHAF Kuchlak Road project in Quetta, the Board directed the initiation of an Expression of Interest (EOI). This measure aims to assess commercial viability and ensure a rational funding decision without impacting the budget allocated for the residential component of the project. The Board also approved the shifting of funds from Silk Bank, in accordance with a previous BoD deci-

sion. This will be conducted through a transparent bidding process, inviting offers from multiple banks under open competition. Moreover, the Board approved the arrangement of short-term loan funding by reallocating resources from other projects to address the shortfall of funds for the I-12/1 project in Islamabad. The objective was to clear outstanding contractor payments for various infrastructure works. In addition to this, an update was presented on the ongoing development at PHAF's housing scheme in Surizai, Peshawar. It was informed that the temporary police station has been completed, enabling the deployment of police personnel to enhance security and assist in land acquisition and encroachment removal. Furthermore, the Board approved the appropriation of budgetary estimates for FY 2024-25, amounting to Rs. 5.8 million, as recommended by the Board's Finance Committee. The reallocation of surplus

funds across specific budget heads aims to ensure smooth financial operations. Regarding the adoption of the Joint Venture (JV) and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) policy by PHAF, the Board resolved to move forward with revising the Memorandum of Association (MoA) and Articles of Association. This step is intended to introduce a more flexible development model, particularly for commercial areas, making future projects financially viable and aligned with public welfare objectives. During the meeting, Minister Pirzada reaffirmed his zero-tolerance policy on disciplinary issues within the Ministry's subordinate organizations. He instructed departmental heads to maintain strict oversight and control, and directed the senior management of the Ministry to ensure accountability and full compliance in light of the Prime Minister's recent directive to strengthen ministerial governance.

Ambassador of German met Deputy Speaker

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Pakistan, Alfred Grannas, paid a courtesy call on the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, who also serves as the Convener of the Pakistan-Germany Parliamentary Friendship Group (PFG), on Thursday at Parliament House. The meeting focused on avenues for enhancing bilateral parliamentary cooperation. Ghulam Mustafa Shah emphasized the importance of establishing a counter-part Parliamentary Friendship Group in the German Bundestag to facilitate sustained engagement and mutual collaboration, said a press release.

Key areas of discussion included the promotion of climate partnerships, deepening people-to-people exchanges, and expanding cultural and economic ties. Deputy Speaker also proposed holding the next meeting of the Pakistan-Germany Parliamentary Friendship Group in June 2025, with the participation of the German Ambassador and PFG members, to further consolidate institutional linkages. Ambassador Alfred Grannas reaffirmed Germany's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and underscored the pivotal role of parliamentary diplomacy in advancing shared objectives. Deputy Speaker expressed gratitude for Germany's continued support at inter-

national forums, particularly in relation to Pakistan's GSP+ status. He also acknowledged Germany's substantial contributions to Pakistan's development sector, including academic scholarships and support for climate and energy initiatives. Both sides noted with satisfaction the positive momentum in Pakistan-Germany relations and agreed on the need to translate longstanding goodwill into a more robust political and economic partnership. They reiterated their resolve to further reinforce parliamentary, cultural, and economic cooperation, as well as people-to-people linkages, to achieve shared goals of sustainable development and climate resilience.

Intense heat wave grips Pakistan: PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mainly hot and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country, with very hot conditions prevailing in the plains during daytime. However, isolated areas in Kashmir and nearby hilly regions may experience partly cloudy weather with light rain, wind, or thunderstorms in the afternoon. An intense heat wave is expected to affect the country over the next three to four days as per forecast of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). In the upper half of the country including central and upper Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, day temperatures are likely to remain 5 to 7C above normal from May 16 to 19. In the southern regions, including Sindh, southern Punjab, and Balochistan, temperatures are forecast to remain 4 to 6C above normal from May 16 to 20.

In Islamabad, very hot and dry weather is expected, with chances of partly cloudy skies and gusty winds in the afternoon. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is likely to witness predominantly hot and dry weather, with very hot conditions in southern and central districts. Light rain or thunderstorms may occur in Mansehra, Abbottabad, Battagram, and Kohistan during the afternoon. In Punjab, severe heat wave conditions are expected across most districts. However, isolated areas such as Murree, Galliat, Rawalpindi, Talagang, Chakwal, Jhelum, Gujrat, Sialkot, Narawal, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, and Lahore may receive light rain and dust-raising winds in the afternoon. Sindh will continue to experience very hot and dry conditions throughout the province. Hot and dry weather is also expected in most parts

of Balochistan, with very hot conditions in the southern districts. Gusty winds are likely during the period. In Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, mainly dry weather is expected, though isolated areas in Kashmir may receive light rain, wind, or thunderstorms during the afternoon. Over the past 24 hours, hot and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, with very hot conditions in the plains. The highest temperatures recorded were 48 C in Dadu and Turbat, 47 C in Dera Ghazi Khan, and 46 C in Noor Pur Thal, Bhakkar, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalpur, and Nokkundi. The residents are advised to take necessary precautions against the extreme heat, stay hydrated, avoid sun exposure during peak hours, and look out for vulnerable individuals including children and the elderly.

CDA honors martyrs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday paid tribute to the martyrs of Operation Bunyan um Marsoos, with officials reaffirming the nation's unity and resolve against external threats. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, attended as the chief guest, alongside CDA board members, union representatives, and employees. The event honored those who sacrificed their lives in defense of Pakistan, with Randhawa declaring that the nation stands firmly with its armed forces to thwart any aggression. Randhawa stated that Pakistan had demonstrated unwavering solidarity during challenging times,

standing "shoulder-to-shoulder" with its military to defeat hostile designs. "The world witnessed how our nation, united like an iron wall, crushed the enemy's evil ambitions," he said. He emphasized that Pakistanis would never hesitate to sacrifice for their homeland, crediting the armed forces for their bravery and valor. The chairman announced that Youm-e-Tashakkur (Day of Gratitude) would be observed nationwide on Friday (May 16) to celebrate the armed forces' victory. "Through Allah's mercy and the nation's prayers, we defeated a much larger enemy," he said, acknowledging the role of law enforcement and civil institutions in safeguarding the

country. Randhawa issued a stern warning to any hostile forces, vowing that Pakistan would "pluck out the evil eye" of those targeting its sovereignty. He called for educating younger generations about the sacrifices made for Pakistan's security and independence. Praising the martyrs as "immortal heroes," Randhawa reiterated Pakistan's stance on Kashmir, demanding a resolution in line with Kashmiri aspirations. "The nation stands united against Indian aggression and is ready to sacrifice for Kashmir's cause," he said. The ceremony concluded with prayers for the martyrs' elevated status and Pakistan's continued security.



ISLAMABAD: Participants hold banners and placards with strong messages like "Say No to Tobacco" and "Protect Our Future" during an awareness walk.

Chairman directs uplift of parking facility

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is developing a new parking facility near the Pakistan Secretariat to resolve chronic parking issues for employees and visitors, utilizing its in-house resources to ensure cost efficiency and timely completion. During a surprise visit to the site on Thursday, CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa reviewed progress on the 133,729-square-foot parking area, which will accommodate over 1,000 vehicles. The project, executed by CDA's Machinery Pool Organization (MPO), aims to alleviate congestion around government offices and adjacent areas. Chairman Randhawa emphasized the importance of self-reliance, directing the MPO to maximize internal capabilities. "This initiative reflects CDA's commitment to efficiency and institutional capacity-building," he stated. "By leveraging our own resources, we can address public needs swiftly while reducing dependency on external contractors."

The officials confirmed that work is underway round-the-clock to expedite completion. The project aligns with CDA's broader vision to enhance urban management through internal expertise. "The MPO's proactive role sets a benchmark for other departments," Randhawa added, underscoring the goals of sustainability and improved public service.

ANF recovers over 860 kg of drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting nine operations across the country, recovered as many as 860 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 109.8 million and arrested 15 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday. He informed that one kg of ice and 800 grams of hashish were recovered from a suspect riding a motorcycle near a university area in Lahore. The arrested suspect confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions.

In another operation, 700 grams of weed were recovered from a parcel sent to Lahore at a courier office located on Spinney Road, Quetta. A total of 480 kg of hashish and 200 kg of ice were recovered from two vehicles near Bulida Cross, District Kech, and four suspects were arrested. As many as 84 kg of hashish were recovered from the hidden compartment of a vehicle near Sarwar Shaheed Toll Plaza, Multan and the suspect was arrested. Similarly, 49 kg of opium was recovered from a vehicle near Kuchlak-Zhob Highway, District Pishin, and the accused was arrested. A total of 18 kg of hashish was recovered from two vehicles near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, and four accused were arrested. During an operation, 15 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle near a hotel on the Quetta-Pishin Road, and the accused was nabbed.

FBR directed to disclose information

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Information Commission has directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to disclose detailed information regarding its enforcement actions against illicit cigarette trade. The directive was issued in response to an appeal filed by a citizen under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. During the hearing, senior officials from FBR including Syed Shahib Haider (Deputy Director), Zafar Iqbal (Second Secretary), Tariq Javed (Additional Director, I&I), and Obaid Ullah (Secretary, Customs) appeared on behalf of the department. The appellant had initially submitted an information request on September 6, 2024, addressed to the Secretary (Tax Education), PR Wing, FBR Islamabad.

The request sought information on several key points: the number of actions taken by the Inland Revenue Enforcement Network (IREN) against cigarette-related offenses since September 2019; the number of fake cigarette manufacturing companies banned since that date; the number of cases filed against cigarette manufacturers and smugglers along with copies of First Information Reports (FIRs) registered in these cases; and the quantity of confiscated cigarettes since September 2019, including certified copies of rules, regulations, policies, and SROs that provide guidelines for the destruction or auctioning of such confiscated items. FBR, upon receiving notice of the appeal, submitted a written response dated April 9, 2025, claim-

ing that the information requested did not fall within the scope of Section 6 of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. Additionally, the department sought exemption from disclosure under Section 16(1)(b)(ii) of the Act. The Commission emphasized that the information being sought is of significant public interest, and aligns with principles of economic growth, transparency, and good governance, as outlined in the preamble of the Act. In light of the above findings, the Commission rejected FBR's plea for exemption and allowed the appeal. Secretary (Compliance), who currently holds the role of Public Information Officer, has been directed to provide the requested information within ten days of receiving the order.

Ahsan urges civil servants to adopt modern skills

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday urged senior civil service officers to equip themselves with modern skills and embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform public sector governance. He asserted that rebuilding trust between the state and its citizens depended on adopting results-oriented governance, improving service quality, and basing decisions on performance metrics, which were essential to strengthen Pakistan's democracy. Ahsan Iqbal further stressed the urgent need for digital transformation in governance. He highlighted how AI, data analytics, and smart governance tools have become indispensable for understanding public needs, enhancing healthcare diagnostics, preventing crime, and ensuring efficient resource allocation. "Every government officer must master AI and data analytics," he said urging "because poor or unreliable

data can lead to flawed AI decisions. Therefore, producing accurate, timely data and leveraging it effectively is paramount." He emphasized that Pakistan's governance must transition fully to digital and smart platforms to meet modern challenges. The minister also reminded the officers that individual capability alone was insufficient; rather, institutional performance through teamwork, harmony, and shared objectives is the true foundation for sustainable national progress. This, he asserted, is the key to building a modern, effective civil service capable of visionary leadership. Beyond governance, Ahsan Iqbal paid tribute to Pakistan's armed forces on their exemplary response to recent threats, calling it a "solid foundation" of national strength. He praised the nation's unity, resolve, and organized capacity, affirming that true power lies not only in weapons but also in collective determination and coordination.

Emphasizing that innovation stems from creative thinking and the courage to question conventional approaches, the minister called for embedding a culture of continuous learning and out-of-the-box solutions within public service. He asserted that rebuilding trust between the state and its citizens depended on adopting results-oriented governance, improving service quality, and basing decisions on performance metrics, which were essential to strengthen Pakistan's democracy. Ahsan Iqbal further stressed the urgent need for digital transformation in governance. He highlighted how AI, data analytics, and smart governance tools have become indispensable for understanding public needs, enhancing healthcare diagnostics, preventing crime, and ensuring efficient resource allocation. "Every government officer must master AI and data analytics," he said urging "because poor or unreliable

Govt taking steps to modernize agri sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani said Thursday that the government is taking several measures and implementing a comprehensive plan to modernize and develop the Pakistan's agriculture sector. Addressing the session of the International Food and Agriculture Exhibition in Baku, Azerbaijan, Bilal Kayani said the major reforms introduced by the government, emphasizing that agriculture remains the backbone of Pakistan's economy. According to a press release received here, Bilal Kayani represented Pakistan at the prestigious international forum, which is being attended by delegates from 31 countries. He highlighted the longstanding and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, underlining the importance of expanding bilat-

eral cooperation, especially in the agriculture sector. The minister said that Pakistan's economy is on a positive trajectory, and the country has opened its doors for international business and investment. "A significant transformation is underway in agriculture through digitalization, adoption of modern techniques and use of advanced machinery," he said. Kayani also elaborated on the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which is offering targeted incentives in priority sectors including agriculture, minerals, IT and energy. He reaffirmed that agricultural development is a key priority of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government. The minister extended his gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Agriculture and the

exhibition organizers for their warm hospitality and for inviting Pakistan to participate. Following the session, Kayani visited various exhibition stalls showcasing agricultural innovations, accompanied by Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Sarvan Jafarov and Pakistan's Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Qasim Moinuddin. Earlier in the day, the minister paid tribute at the memorial of Azerbaijan's founding leader and former President Heydar Aliyev. He also laid a floral wreath at the Martyrs' Memorial, representing the sentiments of the Government and people of Pakistan. Bilal Kayani arrived in Baku on Thursday morning on the directive of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to represent Pakistan at this important international event.

Journalist’s release demanded

KABUL (Amu TV): Amnesty International has called for the unconditional and immediate release of journalist Hamid Farhadi, who was arrested by the Taliban last year and transferred to a high-security prison without prior notice. In a statement released on Thursday, the rights group said Farhadi, a contributor to an exiled Afghan media outlet, was detained solely for his peaceful human rights work and journalistic reporting on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Senator warns Taliban

WASHINGTON (Amu TV): In a rare exchange highlighting rising concerns over US aid flows to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, Washington State Senator Drew MacEwen warned that any financial support to the Taliban would be “a disaster for the people of Afghanistan and for global peace,” calling for an outright ban on such funding in a letter addressed to Amrullah Saleh, the former vice president of Afghanistan.

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

United Nations warns of midwife shortage

KABUL (TOLONews): Andrew Saberton, deputy executive director for management at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has expressed concern over the lack of access for girls to education beyond grade six and its devastating impact on the country’s health sector.

In a meeting with Islamic Emirate officials, including Noor Jalal Jalali, the acting Minister of Public Health, he emphasized that the continued closure of educational doors will lead to a future shortage of midwives.

In a statement about his six-day trip to Afghanistan, Saberton stated: “In each of those [meetings] I raised the issue particularly of the exclusion of girls from education and training as midwives and in health facilities and particularly highlighted the fact that if education is stopping at grade six for girls, there will then be no pipeline for when midwives get older, retire in the future

and the country and the services that were able to be provided will actually be catastrophically affected. I made this case and they understood this case, I’m not sure it will result in any particular action.”

“Our request to the Islamic Emirate is, first and foremost, to reopen the closed doors of education as soon as possible; we do not want to live in uncertainty anymore,” said Tafsir Siyahpoosh, a women’s rights activist.

Saberton also addressed the US aid cuts, noting that the US has suspended more than \$330 million in funding to UNFPA, \$102 million of which was allocated to Afghanistan.

He stated that in Afghanistan, a mother dies every two hours from preventable childbirth-related illnesses, and the budget cuts have deprived 6.3 million people of access to vital services.

According to the UN official, although 982

UNFPA centers were active in Afghanistan in 2024, only 418 health centers will remain by 2026.

Saberton said: “The US in its recent cuts has cut over 330 million in global funding to UNFPA to its cuts to its vital life-saving projects that were already underway or had been committed to be starting in the coming months. A third of those cuts were reflected in the Asia-Pacific region and Afghanistan was the hardest hit with cuts of 102 million. In Afghanistan this funding was mostly for the provision of family health houses and mobile health teams and psychosocial support services and now as a result of the cut 6.3 million people mostly women and girls are losing access to this life-saving care.”

“In the latest budget cuts, the United States has withdrawn over \$330 million from its global funding to UNFPA. These cuts have impacted critical life-saving projects either underway or scheduled to launch in the coming months. One-third of these reductions have been applied in Asia, with Afghanistan suffering the most—a \$102 million cut. This budget was primarily allocated for family health houses, mobile health teams, and psychosocial support services. As a result, 6.3 million people, mainly women and girls, have lost access to these essential services.”

The Islamic Emirate has called girls’ education an internal matter. Previously, officials from the Ministry of Public Health stated that over 30,000 midwives in the country are awaiting employment opportunities.

DACAAR announces investment in drinking water projects in Paktika

PAKTIKA (BNA): The DACAAR is set to significantly enhance access to clean drinkable water in Paktika province, committing over \$2.295 million to various projects across several districts.

The initiative aims to provide emergency assistance and improve the drinking water infrastructure in Gomal, Chahar Baran, Jani Khel, Khoshamand, Dela, Wazikha, and Shakin.

During a recent announcement, Mawlawi Abdul Khaliq Abed, the governor of Paktika, expressed appreciation to the DACAAR for its vital support. He emphasized that these projects not only address immediate water needs but also contribute significantly to the health and well-being of the local population.

Governor Abed urged other aid organizations to join in supporting the people of Paktika, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in various public benefit sectors.

Mother dies every two hours in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): Andrew Saberton, deputy executive director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has said that following recent US funding cuts, UNFPA has lost \$330 million in budget, with Afghanistan being the hardest hit.

Speaking at a press conference, Saberton said that due to the suspension of funding, UNFPA programs worth \$102 million in Afghanistan have been halted.

According to Saberton, the closure of these programs will leave 6.3 million people in Afghanistan, most of them women and children, without access to life saving support.

He pointed out that Afghanistan is among the countries with the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. “Afghanistan has already one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world with every two hours a mother dies from preventable pregnancy and childbirth complications,”



Saberton said, “During his visit to Afghanistan, he held discussions with officials of the Islamic Emirate, particularly raising the issue of girls’ education and their rights in the health sector.

In response to a question, he said: “I particularly highlighted the fact that if education stops at grade six for girls, then there will be no pipeline for when midwives get older and retire in the future. The country and the services that we’re able to provide will be catastrophically affected. I made this case, they understood this case.”

Saberton said that the Islamic Emirate officials expressed concern about the reduction in aid, but he reassured them that Afghanistan remains a priority for the United Nations.

Andrew Saberton visited Afghanistan from May 4 to May 9, during which he met with the acting minister of public health, the governor of Bamyán, the deputy minister of youth affairs at the Ministry of Information and Culture, and other officials of the Islamic Emirate.

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Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister to visit Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): Murat Nurtleu, Kazakhstan’s foreign minister, announced in a phone conversation with Amir Khan Muttaqi, acting foreign minister of Afghanistan, that he would soon pay an official visit to Kabul.

During the conversation, both sides emphasized the need to strengthen diplomatic relations and expand trade and transit ties between Kabul and Astana.

Zia Ahmad Takal, head of public relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: “The Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan called for increased engagement at the ministerial level and stated that he would soon visit Kabul officially.”

Kazakhstan’s foreign minister also expressed his country’s readiness to invest \$500 million in the construction of the Torghundi–Herat railway in Afghanistan.

Ahmad Firdaws Behgozin, an economic affairs expert, stated: “With the construction of the Torghundi railway, job opportunities in Afghanistan will also be created. Additionally, it will help foster good connections with several countries.”

Seyr Quraishi, another economic affairs expert, said: “The Torghundi–Herat railway project is expected to become a major transformation for Afghanistan, bringing substantial economic benefits such as increased trade, job creation, and infrastructure development. This project could be a positive step for the country.”

This comes as earlier, in early Sawr of this year (solar calendar), a high-level delegation from Kazakhstan, led by the deputy prime minister and minister of economy, visited Kabul and held discussions with officials from the Islamic Emirate about investment opportunities, expanding economic, trade, and transit cooperation, and railway projects between Kabul and Astana.

DABS, Ministry pursue energy cooperation with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

KABUL (TOLONews): Abdul Bari Omar, the CEO of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), stated in a meeting with Daler Juma, the minister of energy and water resources of Tajikistan, that the Islamic Emirate has always endeavored to establish good economic and political relations with all countries, especially neighboring and Islamic nations.

During his visit to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, he also discussed the CASA-1000 project and energy transmission from Tajikistan with the country’s officials.

The Tajik Minister of Energy expressed satisfaction with the joint cooperation with Afghanistan as a neighboring and Muslim country in the fields of energy transfer, stability, and security.

Eimal Shinwari, deputy technical director of the Breshna Company’s Programs Directorate, said: “There were detailed discussions and dialogues about the projects that are planned to be implemented in Afghanistan in the future.”

Meanwhile, the acting minister of energy and water, Abdul Latif Mansoor, during a meeting with several Afghan investors in



Tashkent, urged them to invest in energy production and water management in the country.

Matuallah Abid, spokesman for the Ministry of Energy and Water, said: “During the meeting, Mr. Mansoor asked Afghan investors to invest in the water and energy sectors of the country. He also mentioned that with the establishment of security, suitable opportunities for investment have been created.”

Nonetheless, some experts consider the high-level Afghan delegations’ visits to Russia,

Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan this week as beneficial for attracting investments, particularly in the electricity sector.

Mohammad Karim Azimi, an economic expert, said: “The discussions around the CASA-1000 project give us hope that its practical work will start soon and help meet Afghanistan’s energy needs.”

Mir Shakir Yaqoubi, another economic expert, said: “If Afghanistan’s capacities are accurately assessed and an appropriate mechanism is developed

for attracting investment in electricity production, the internal potential is very high, and we can reduce electricity imports.”

Afghanistan is among the countries that imports most of its electricity from Central Asia. In the meeting between the head of the Breshna Company and the Minister of Energy of Tajikistan, both sides, as neighboring and Islamic countries, reaffirmed their commitment to broad and comprehensive cooperation in the field of energy stability and development.

Over 170,000 Afghan migrants deported in just over a month

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations reported that more than 170,000 Afghan migrants were deported from neighboring countries between April 1 and May 12 of the current year.

According to the ministry, of this total, 128,000 were deported from Pakistan, over 43,000 from Iran, and 1,322 from Turkey.

Abdulmutalib Haqqani, spokesperson for the

Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, stated: “From April 1 to May 12 of the current year, 171,937 migrants returned to the country, including 128,048 from Pakistan, 34,752 from Iran, and 13,022 from Turkey.”

The spokesperson also said that more than 3,300 Afghan prisoners were released during this period from various prisons in Pakistan.

These Afghans were

mostly detained for lacking legal documentation and returned via the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossings.

Some experts have emphasized the need for the caretaker government to follow up on the status of citizens—especially detainees—in foreign countries. Mohammad Zalmai Afghan-Yar, a political affairs analyst, said: “When Afghan citizens are imprisoned in regional and extra-

regional countries, the caretaker government must use diplomatic channels to secure their release.”

In addition to neighboring countries, a number of Afghan citizens are also reportedly detained in some Arab nations for various reasons, including illegal residency. Previously, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported the release of nine Afghan nationals from prisons in Oman.

Herat community sends \$200k in aid to Gaza

KABUL (TOLONews): As violence and the humanitarian crisis continue in Gaza, a number of residents and philanthropists in Herat have donated nearly 200,000 US dollars to those in need in Gaza.

This amount has been delivered in cash in 38 phases and has been used for treating the wounded, providing clean drinking water, and supplying food.

Amir Mohammad Khadem, the coordinator of public aid in Herat, stated that the aid is regularly collected and sent to Gaza in packages of five to ten thousand dollars.

He said: “We have sent \$190,000 in total, mainly in phases of five thousand, eight thousand, and up to ten thousand dollars. We haven’t even counted smaller contributions like \$400, \$300, and \$200.”

According to statistics from the Palestinian Ministry of Health, dozens of people, especially children, have died from hunger in Gaza in recent months. Some Gaza residents, referring to the cash aid from Herat, have called for its continuation.

One Gaza resident said: “We are still helping to provide clean drinking water to people in Gaza. This is the third tanker we are distributing by God’s will to those in need. We thank you, people of Afghanistan, for what you have provided. May God reward you.”

Another resident of Gaza added: “We thank the organizers of this effort and ask them to do even more to help the displaced people in Gaza. May God bless and reward you for your kindness.”

Nearly all infrastructure in

Gaza, including hospitals, has been destroyed by Israeli attacks.

Due to Israel’s blockade and prevention of humanitarian aid delivery, Gaza’s people are facing extreme famine, with thousands especially children and the elderly at risk of death.

Abdul Jabbar Gholami, a Herat resident, told TOLONews: “It is our religious and moral duty to donate even ten Afghanis daily or monthly to our brothers in Gaza.”

Najibullah Mohammadi, another resident of Herat said: “Every Muslim, wherever they are and, in any language, should offer help to our Muslim brothers in Palestine if they can.”

More than a year and a half has passed since Israel began its military aggression in Gaza. According to the Palestinian Ministry of



Health, over 53,000 Palestinians mostly women and children have been killed, and nearly 160,000 injured.

In addition to Israeli attacks, poverty, extreme deprivation, and a lack of basic services have severely affected the lives of Gaza residents.

Use of plastic bags poses serious hazards

KABUL (Pajhwok): The rising use of plastic bags and other plastic products in Afghanistan is fuelling concerns over their harmful effects on public health and the environment.

The Afghanistan National Environmental Protection Authority (NEPA) says Kabul City alone accounts around four tonnes of polythene bags daily. Experts say this poses a serious environmental and health threat. Plastic bags and products are widely used across Afghanistan due to their low cost and easy availability.

However, their improper disposal, often without waste management systems, has resulted in widespread pollution of land and water sources, and harming wildlife.

Experts say the crisis is exacerbated by a lack of recycling infrastructure, limited public awareness of plastic-linked dangers, and weak enforcement of environmental laws.

They underline the urgent need for public education campaigns and the

promotion of eco-friendly alternatives, such as paper and cloth bags.

Severe health hazards

Dr. Sayed Farid Shah Rafi, a specialist in internal medicine, described plastic as a “silent killer for the environment and a serious threat to human health.”

He told Pajhwok Afghan News plastic items such as bags, bottles and disposable containers posed significant health hazards.

Plastic, he explained, was derived from petroleum and was non-biodegradable. Once discarded, it can remain in the environment for 200 to 1,000 years. When exposed to moisture, plastic becomes a breeding ground for microbes and contributes to disease transmission.

Dr. Rafi also warned about microplastics, the tiny fragments formed as plastic breaks down - could enter water, soil, and eventually the human food chain. “Research shows once microplastics enter the body, they can cause hormonal imbalances, inflammation and even various

cancers,” he pointed out.

Storing hot or carbonated food in plastic containers accelerates the release of these harmful particles, while burning plastic releases toxic gases that can damage respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

Dr. FaridullahAmiri, a trainer at Kabul’s National Infectious Diseases Hospital, said plastic contained dangerous chemicals such as carbon, hydrogen, sulfur and chlorine. These can cause cancer, hormonal disorders, growth delays in children and even mental impairment.

“Other research also links frequent plastic use to heart disease and pregnancy complications, including miscarriage,” he maintained.

Dr. Mohammad Arif Yaqubi described plastic as a widespread but underestimated threat. Many people use plastic containers daily without realizing they may lead to infertility and reduced hormone levels in men. When plastic breaks down into dust-like particles, these can be inhaled

and have been linked to cancer.

Dr. Esmatullah Tspanand, an internal medicine specialist, voiced his concern at the rising trend of storing food in plastic bags is concerning. “Contact with hot or acidic food causes the plastic to release toxic substances that can lead to heart disease and diabetes,” he warned.

Solid items like sugar or rice were safer to store in plastic, but ready-to-eat or hot foods should never be placed in plastic containers, he insisted.

Annual global use of plastic

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates more than 400 million tonnes of plastic are used globally each year, much of which ends up polluting the environment.

In late 2024, UNEP convened a conference in Busan, South Korea, where over 170 countries discussed drafting a legally-binding treaty to tackle global plastic pollution, especially in marine

ecosystems.

Environmental damage

Plastic pollution not only harms human health but also has far-reaching environmental impacts.

Dr. Mohammad Dawood Sherzad, dean of the Environmental Science Faculty at Kabul University, said plastic bags polluted soil and water because of their slow decomposition rate.

He added plastic waste endangered wildlife: as marine and land animals often mistook it for food, which could result in injury or death.

Microplastics, a product of degraded plastic, also infiltrate the food chain, ultimately affecting humans and animals. Burning or dumping plastic contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, worsening climate change.

Dr. Sherzad also noted plastic bags blocked soil pores and prevented rainwater from recharging groundwater reserves.

Municipality’s bid to curb plastic use

Cultural Affairs Advisor at Kabul Municipality

Niamatullah Barakzai admitted the use of plastic bag usage was extremely high in the capital.

He said: “When plastic is dumped, it takes hundreds of years to decompose. We’re now trying to raise public awareness about its consequences.”

Over the past two to three years, the municipality has conducted public campaigns and promoted cloth bags as an alternative. In addition, 400 sessions were conducted in Kabul schools last year to inform students about plastic-related hazards.

Barakzai called plastic use a cultural problem, whose solution required long-term behavioral change. While plastic cannot be entirely banned, he emphasized its responsible usage and proper management.

The municipality is currently in discussions with local and international firms to potentially convert waste into energy, tar or gas in the Guzargah landfill, Kabul’s main dumping ground for the past 15 years.

Tonnes of plastic bags used daily in Kabul

NEPA’s Director of Monitoring and Inspection Eng. Tofan Jibran acknowledged that plastic bags had created a major environmental issue in Kabul and beyond.

NEPA estimates four tonnes of polythene bags are used daily in Kabul. To address the situation, the agency has run awareness campaigns, restricted plastic bag imports and encouraged domestic production cuts.

Jibran said NEPA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was also promoting plastic recycling initiatives. Still, he warned plastic-related health risks remained significant and urged citizens to switch over to cloth bags.

Convenience over caution

Despite these efforts, Kabul’s streets, canals, drains and markets remain littered with plastic - a manifestation of deeper urban and environmental challenges.

Mohammad Fawad, a shopkeeper in the Kalola Pushta area, told Pajhwok he distributed 80 to 100 plastic bags daily, weighing around half a kilogram. While supporting alternatives like cloth and paper bags, he claimed no official had ever asked him for curbing plastic use.

“It’s not about price, it’s just a deep-seated habit,” Fawad remarked, recalling: “People largely used paper bags in the past.”

Jawed, a Kabul inhabitant, agreed plastic popularity stemmed from cost-effectiveness and easy availability. “If cheaper, safer options were available, we’d use them.”

But Nisar Ahmad, another resident, said he always carried a cloth bag, but most people don’t. “Media outlets and social platforms should step up awareness efforts,” he suggested.

As plastic-linked pollution continues to grow, the challenge lies in moulding the public opinion and implementing coordinated, sustainable solutions.



ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed looks on as his US counterpart Donald Trump is welcomed at the presidential terminal.

Talks with S Arabia on Reko Diq plan underway

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary Mian Khan Bugti informed the National Assembly on Thursday that discussions are currently ongoing regarding Saudi Arabia's potential investment in the Reko Diq mining project. So far, two meetings have been held between the concerned parties, but no final agreement has been reached.

Responding to a question by MNA Mirza Ikhtiar Baig during the question hour session, Bugti said that negotiation teams from both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are engaged in dialogue, and the matter is progressing. "Once the talks reach a conclusive stage, the House will be duly informed," he assured. In response to a supplementary question by Shagufta Jumani, he clarified that no specific timeline has been set yet for the investment process. However, he informed that the project is in Pakistan's national interest and efforts are being made to expedite the completion of the investment phase.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed in the National Assembly that the global ranking of the Pakistani passport has plummeted to 103, granting its holders visa-free access to only 35 countries. The decline has been linked to illegal travel and the use of counterfeit Pakistani documents by Afghan nationals.

The Foreign Ministry presented a crucial report regarding the status and challenges of the Pakistani passport, commonly known as the Green Passport in the assembly secretariat. The report cited the Henley Passport Index 2025, which placed the Pakistani passport near the bottom of the global rankings. Currently, holders of Pakistani passports can travel to only 35 destinations without requiring a visa.

The report highlighted several key issues behind the declining status, including the country's political and economic instability, illegal immigration, and misuse of passport documents. It further stated that the use of fake Pakistani documents by Afghan citizens has intensified the problem, damaging Pakistan's international reputation and diminishing travel freedom for its citizens.

To address these challenges, the government has taken steps such as digitizing passport services and launching strict actions against the issuance of fake passports. The Foreign Ministry emphasized that the Interior Ministry must adopt a long-term strategy aimed at improving Pakistan's global standing and enhancing the credibility of its passport.

It is important to note that on April 10, 2025, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced that new passport issuance requirements would act as a deterrent against beggary and illegal immigration. While chairing a meeting during his visit to the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports in Islamabad, he directed officials to complete all legal formalities related to the new requirements on a priority basis. He further instructed that full implementation be ensured on the directive to block passports of deported individuals.

54 people killed in airstrikes on Gaza

GAZA (AP): Multiple airstrikes hit Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis overnight into Thursday, killing more than 50 people in a second consecutive night of heavy bombing, while another airstrike in the north of the Palestinian territory left more than a dozen people dead, authorities said. The strikes come as US President Donald Trump visits the Middle East, visiting Gulf states but not Israel. There had been widespread hope that Trump's regional visit could usher in a ceasefire deal or renewal of humanitarian aid to Gaza. An Israeli blockade of the territory is now in its third month.

An Associated Press cameraman in Khan Younis counted 10 airstrikes on the city overnight into Thursday, and saw numerous bodies taken to the morgue in the city's Nasser Hospital. It took time to identify some of the bodies due to the extent of their injuries. The hospital's morgue confirmed 54 people had been killed. The dead included a journalist working for Qatari television network Al Araby TV, the network announced on social media, saying Hasan Samour had been killed along with 11 members of his family in one of the strikes in Khan Younis.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the strikes. It was the second night of heavy bombing, after airstrikes Wednesday on northern and southern Gaza killed at least 70 people, including almost two dozen children. Another strike in Jabaliya in northern Gaza hit a complex including a mosque and a small medical clinic, killing 13 people, said the Civil Defense, a first responder agency operating under Gaza's Hamas-run government.

Mourning for the dead in Khan Younis In Nasser Hospital, Safaa Al-Najjar, her face stained with blood, wept as the shroud-wrapped bodies two of her children were brought to her: 1 1/2-year-old Motaz Al-Bayyok and 1 1/2 month-old

Moaz Al-Bayyok. The family was caught in the overnight airstrikes. All five of Al-Najjar's other children, ranging in ages from 3 to 12, were injured, while her husband was in intensive care.

One of her sons, 11-year-old Yusuf, his head heavily bandaged, screamed in grief as the shroud of his younger sibling was parted to show his face. "I gave them dinner and put them to sleep as usual, it was a normal day. Suddenly I don't know what happened, the world went upside down," she said as others tried to comfort her. "I don't know, I don't know ... what is their fault? What is their fault?" Outside the hospital, mourners gathered to pray as the dead, laid out in rows in white body bags, were loaded onto a truck to be taken for burial.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed earlier in the week to push ahead with a promised escalation of force in Israel's war in the Gaza Strip to pursue his aim of destroying the Hamas militant group, which governs Gaza. In comments released by Netanyahu's office Tuesday, the prime minister said Israeli forces were days away from entering Gaza "with great strength to complete the mission ... It means destroying Hamas."

International rights group Human Rights Watch said Thursday that Israel's stated plan of seizing Gaza and displacing hundreds of thousands of people "inches closer to extermination," and called on the international community to speak out against it. The war began when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people in an Oct. 7, 2023 intrusion into southern Israel. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 53,000 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many were combatants. Almost 3,000 have been killed since Israel broke a ceasefire on March 18, the ministry said.

KP CM pays tribute to armed forces of Pakistan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has paid rich tribute to the Armed Forces of Pakistan for giving a strong and effective response to Indian aggression. He stated that the Armed Forces and the entire nation deserve congratulations for this remarkable victory against India.

Addressing the 32nd meeting of the provincial cabinet held here on Thursday, the Chief Minister said, "We salute those who were martyred as a result of Indian aggression and express heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyrs." The Chief Minister announced a relief

package for the martyrs and injured ones from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in this conflict. According to the package, the families of the martyrs will receive Rs. 5 million each, while the injured will receive Rs. 1 million each. He directed the concerned members of the provincial assembly to coordinate with local administration's officials to ensure the prompt delivery of this relief package by visiting the homes of the affected individuals.

On this occasion, Ali Amin Gandapur also welcomed the action taken by NAB (National Accountability Bureau) against the alleged financial irregularities reported in Kohistan, and noted that it is encouraging that some

recoveries have already been made in this case. He added that the provincial government will fully support NAB in this matter and will provide any documents required for the investigation on a priority basis.

He emphasized that strict action must be taken against all individuals and institutions involved in this case. The Chief Minister reiterated that the provincial government in line with the vision of the founding chairman, is adhering to zero-tolerance policy against corruption. He further stated that the provincial government itself will take stricter action against those involved in this corruption case than any other institution.

CM Punjab's theatrics resume after ceasefire: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has strongly reacted to a recent statement made by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, accusing her of resuming her political theatrics following the ceasefire.

In his statement, Barrister Dr. Saif remarked that both Maryam Nawaz and her father, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, owe the nation an explanation for their silence during the war. "The nation has recognized their true faces, and these political dramas will no longer be tolerated," he said. He further said that while Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was targeting the people of Punjab, the Chief Minister Punjab chose to remain silent.

He criticized their post-war rhetoric, saying, "Now they wave their fists as if they brought down a Rafale jet with a punch." He added that their silence during critical times was due to their longstanding ties with Modi. "If loyalty is to be learned, it should be from Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz, who, due to their friendship with Modi, chose to keep their lips sealed," he said.

PHC extends Saif protective bail till June 3

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Acting Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Muhammad Ijaz Khan has extended the protective bail of Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Information Barrister Saif and restrained the authorities from arresting him, on Thursday.

The court has also issued notices to the federal government and relevant authorities to provide details of the cases registered against him. PHC extended Barrister Saif protective bail till 3rd June and directed him to appear before the relevant courts.

Similarly, PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Fazal Subhan extended Faisal Javed's protective bail till 29th May and sought a response from the provincial government.

Barrister Saif stated that Pakistan has given a befitting reply to Indian aggression and now there is a threat from internal enemies. He emphasized the need for political unity and said that the PTI founder chairman's cases are not being heard in courts.

This he said while talking to media personnel at PHC and criticized the government for trying to take credit for the military's successes and said that the government should focus on releasing the founder chairman.

PHC dispose off contempt of court plea: PHC's divisional bench comprising of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Fahim Wali has disposed of the contempt of court petition filed by PTI leader Azam Swati after the federal government removed his name from the Exit Control List (ECL).

The counsel argued that Azam Swati's name was placed on the ECL despite his bail in all cases, and he was willing to appear before the courts.

The Additional Attorney General informed the court that Azam Swati's name had been removed from the ECL, and he was now free to travel abroad. PHC disposed of the petition after the federal government removed Azam Swati's name from the ECL.

Azam Swati criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that he is worse than Hitler and that his adventure was met with a befitting reply while talking to media after his appearance before PHC. Azam Swati praised China's President, saying that China has fulfilled its friendship obligations and that he salutes him from the bottom of his heart. He demanded that the Army Chief release PTI founding chairman and other innocent PTI workers, saying that he will not rest until his leader is released.

US close to nuclear deal with Iran

UAE keen to work with US on regional peace, Al-Nahyan tells Trump

DUBAI (Reuters): The United Arab Emirates is keen on continuing to work with the United States to achieve peace and stability in the region, President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan told US President Donald Trump on Thursday during a meeting in Abu Dhabi.

Trump visited the UAE's capital city on Thursday, the last stop of a tour of Gulf states, after visiting Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The UAE president told Trump that the relationship between the two longtime security allies had taken "a significant leap forward" since Trump took office.

He added that the UAE, which in March committed to a 10-year, \$1.4 trillion investment framework in the United States, was keen to expand the friendship for the benefit of both countries. The UAE and the United States finalized a technology framework agreement expected to be signed later on Thursday that could give Abu Dhabi expanded access to advanced artificial intelligence chips from the United States, a source with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that the United States was getting very close to securing a nuclear deal with Iran, and Tehran had "sort of" agreed to the terms. "We're in very serious negotiations with Iran for long-term peace," Trump said on a tour of the Gulf, according to a shared pool report by AFP.

"We're getting close to maybe doing a deal without having to do this... there (are) two steps to doing this, there is a very, very nice step and there is the violent step, but I don't want to do it the second way," he said. An Iranian source familiar with the negotiations said there were still gaps to bridge in the talks with the United States.

Fresh talks between Iranian and US negotiators to resolve disputes over Tehran's nuclear program ended in Oman on Sunday with further negotiations planned, officials said, as Tehran publicly

insisted on continuing its uranium enrichment. Though Tehran and Washington have both said they prefer diplomacy to resolve the decades-long nuclear dispute, they remain divided on several red lines that negotiators will have to circumvent to reach a new deal and avert future military action.

Iran's president reacted to Trump's comments on Tuesday calling Tehran the "most destructive force" in the Middle East. "Trump thinks he can sanction and threaten us and then talk of human rights. All the crimes and regional instability is caused by them (the United States)," Masoud Pezeshkian said.

"He wants to create instability inside Iran." US officials have publicly stated that Iran should halt uranium enrichment, a stance Iranian officials have called a "red line" asserting they will not give up what they view as their right to enrich uranium on Iranian soil. However, they have indicated a willingness to reduce the level of enrichment.

Iranian officials have also expressed readiness to reduce the amount of highly enriched uranium in storage—uranium enriched beyond the levels typically needed for civilian purposes, such as nuclear power generation. However, they have said it would not accept lower stockpiles than the amount agreed in a deal with world powers in 2015 — the deal Trump quit.

The Iranian source said that while Iran is prepared to offer what it considers concessions, "the issue is that America is not willing to lift major sanctions in exchange." Western sanctions have severely impacted the Iranian economy. Regarding the reduction of enriched uranium in storage, the source noted: "Tehran also wants it removed in several stages, which America doesn't agree with either." There is also disagreement over the destination to which the highly enriched uranium would be sent, the source added.

Pakistan shattered India's dream, says Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon declared today a very significant day.

According to the directives of President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Ms. Faryal Talpur, Sindh government and Pakistan Peoples Party are observing Victory Day and Thanksgiving Day across Sindh. He said that this success will be remembered by future generations for how our soldiers defeated India. It will be recorded in history in golden letters.

Addressing a ceremony held in Karachi to mark Thanksgiving Day and Victory Day, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the brave soldiers of Pakistan's Navy, Air Force, and Army inflicted a decisive defeat on India. He stated that Pakistan has shattered India's dream of becoming an Asian Tiger. A clear

message has been sent to the world: if there is a true super tiger in Asia, it is Pakistan.

He said that this war was won not only by our brave armed forces but also by the entire Pakistani nation. While the Indian media continued to spread false propaganda and the Indian government imposed restrictions on Pakistani channels, vloggers, and YouTube streams, the role played by the Pakistani media remains unforgettable.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that this war was also fought by the Bhutto family. India not only engaged in conflict but also feared that Pakistan might press the nuclear button. It was none other than the Leader of the People, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who made Pakistan a nuclear power. During this war, we also remembered Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto-she, too, was symbolically present,

as it was she who provided Pakistan with missile technology. The Supreme Commander of Pakistan, President Asif Ali Zardari, played a leading role, and the third generation of this family, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, also stood at the forefront in this war.

He said that the way Bilawal Bhutto Zardari represented Pakistan's cause in front of the international media is unparalleled. This is the same Bilawal who, at the United Nations, called Modi the Butcher of Gujarat and the Butcher of Kashmir. The Bharatiya Janata Party retaliated by placing a bounty on Chairman Bilawal Bhutto's head. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari still went to India and dared to advocate the case of Kashmir there as well.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said, "I salute not only our brave armed forces but also the courageous members of the Pakistan Peoples Party."

Naval Chief visits CMH, meets injured troops

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, visited Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Rawalpindi to inquire about the well-being of soldiers and civilians injured during Operation Bunyanum-Marsoos.

During the visit, the Naval Chief personally interacted with each injured individual and paid tribute to their unwavering bravery, indomitable spirit, and steadfast commitment to duty.



While speaking with the injured, Admiral Naveed Ashraf emphasized the unified resolve of the nation and the armed forces,

affirming that any future misadventure by the adversary will be met with the same determination and vigour.

KP to present Rs180b surplus budget: Muzammil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on finance Muzammil Aslam has said that a surplus budget of Rs. 180 billion will be achieved in the current fiscal year, whereas the province had set a target of a Rs. 100 billion surplus budget. Making a budget is easy, but implementing it properly and managing it well is a difficult task.

These views were expressed by Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Advisor Muzammil Aslam while addressing the pre-budget consultative session 2025-26 held at a private hotel in Peshawar, organized by SNG, UK International Development, and Oxford

Policy Management. In his address, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Advisor Muzammil Aslam said that Rs. 65 billion are spent monthly on salaries and pensions of government employees, while over 700,000 employees are working. Muzammil Aslam said that until current expenditures are reduced, large development projects cannot be initiated because the province's current expenditures are too high.

He said that jobs are provided by the private sector, while the government delivers services. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Advisor Muzammil Aslam said that the current provincial government has significantly increased tax and non-tax revenue, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Revenue Authority (KPRA) has performed excellently by collecting more revenue than its target, for which a great deal of credit goes to KPRA Director General Fauzia Iqbal.

Muzammil Aslam said that women empowerment is very important, but he does not strongly believe in the quota system, while women should be given equal opportunities and should also participate in the general elections.

The event was attended by Finance Secretary, Additional Secretary Finance, Additional Secretary Finance, Dr. Sumaira Shams, Rakhs-handa Naz, SNG Advisor Waqas Paracha, along with officers from various departments and representatives from civil society.