

Dar to visit China

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the invitation of the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, Wang Yi, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM) Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will undertake an official visit to Beijing from 19 to 21 May. "During the visit, the Foreign Minister will hold in-depth discussions with Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the evolving regional situation in South Asia.

Curfew imposed in SW  
F.P. Report

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: A day-long curfew has been imposed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan district due to heightened security concerns, local authorities confirmed. According to a notification issued by the district administration, the curfew will remain in effect on Sunday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.



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GAZA STRIP: Palestinians carry the bodies of their relatives killed in an Israeli army airstrike, during their funeral in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip on Sunday.

## After military victory over India Pakistan aims for economic glory: Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar credited the Pakistan armed forces for their bravery in a historic military victory over India and urged the nation to now focus on defeating the enemy on the economic front through collective efforts.

Speaking at a large public gathering in his electoral constituency on Sunday, Tarar congratulated the people of Pakistan, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff General Hafiz Syed Asim Munir, and the armed forces for their triumph.

He paid tribute to the Army, Air Force, and Navy, emphasizing their globally recognized valor. He recounted that following India's cowardly attack, "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif authorized a decisive military response, resulting in a humiliating defeat for India on the battlefield. Concurrently, Pakistan's political leadership outmaneuvered India diplomatically, exposing their aggression on interna-

tional forums," he added.

Highlighting historical parallels, he recalled Pakistan's six nuclear tests on May 28, 1998, under Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, which established the nation's strength. Similarly, on May 10, 2025, Pakistani forces shot down six Indian warplanes, avenging the 1971 war and reaffirming their superiority. Our civil and military leadership upheld the nation's honor, defeating India on all fronts, he maintained.

The minister praised the Pakistani media and social media activists for countering Indian propaganda and exposing their falsehoods. He also paid homage to the civilian and military martyrs, noting the sacrifices of brave mothers who send their sons to defend the nation. "No force can defeat a nation ready to sacrifice with shrouds on their heads," Tarar said, drawing inspiration from the Battle of Badr, where divine support led to victory despite numerical odds. He criticized India's rejection of a fair investigation into the Pahalgam

incident, which led to their nighttime attack on Pakistani civilians. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, he noted, effectively highlighted India's aggression globally, contributing to their diplomatic isolation. The minister also lauded Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) workers for their role in shaping the narrative on social media, noting that India's public is now questioning their government and media amid national mourning.

Reiterating Pakistan's commitment to peace, the minister warned that India mistook this for weakness, a miscalculation corrected by the armed forces' decisive response. He expressed gratitude to allied nations, including China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, the UAE, and Azerbaijan, for their support during the conflict.

The event, addressed earlier by Tarar's mother, Sajida Tarar, concluded with a massive PML-N rally led by the minister to express solidarity with the armed forces.

## Iran says ready to rebuild 'mutual trust' with Europe

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran's top diplomat said Sunday his country was ready to rebuild trust with European powers considering whether to reimpose UN sanctions on the Islamic Republic under a 2015 nuclear deal.

"Iran is ready, should it observe genuine will and an independent approach from the European parties, to begin a new chapter in its relations with Europe," said Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

"If Europe possesses the necessary will to rectify this path, Iran sees no obstacle to rebuilding mutual trust and expanding relations," he told a diplomatic forum in Tehran.

On Friday, senior Iranian diplomats met with counterparts from Britain, France and Germany for talks on the status of US-Iran nuclear negotiations.

Tehran has held four rounds of Oman-mediated nuclear talks with Washington, the highest-level contact between the two foes since the US abandoned a 2015 nuclear accord.

US President Donald Trump effectively torpedoed the deal in 2018 during his first term, by unilaterally pulling out and reimposing sanctions on Iran's oil exports and banking sector. A year later, Iran began rolling back its commitments to the agreement, which had offered sanctions relief in return for UN-monitored restrictions on its nuclear activities.

The three European powers — party to the 2015 accord — are weighing whether to trigger "snapback" mechanism, which would reinstate UN sanctions in response to Iranian non-compliance. That option expires in October.

Araghchi earlier this month warned of "irreversible" consequences if Britain, France and Germany moved to reimpose sanctions.

# If Indus River flow is blocked India to face consequences, warns DG ISPR

### E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General (DG) Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has warned that if India blocks the flow of the Indus River, it will lead to consequences lasting for decades.

In an interview with private news outlet, Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry cautioned that any attempt by India to implement its recent threats of reducing Islamabad's share of the Indus water system would result in 'consequences' extending over generations. "I hope such a time never comes, but if such actions are taken, the world will witness the results, and we will have to fight for years and decades. No one should dare to stop Pakistan's water."

He stressed that if India uses water as a weapon, Pakistan will not remain silent. He added, "Only a madman could think of cutting off water from a nation of over 240 million people."

Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, in his conversation, reiterated that the Pakistan Armed Forces are professional and adhere strictly to their commitments. "We fully comply



with the directives of the political leadership, honouring their resolve," he added.

Regarding Pakistan's stance on the ceasefire, he mentioned that it would be upheld easily by the Pakistan Army, with confidence-building measures in place. He added, "If violated, our response will be prompt and precise, targeting only the positions that breach the ceasefire."

An ISPR spokesperson confirmed that sixth aircraft shot down was a Mirage 2000. "We only targeted aircraft. We could have carried out further actions, but we

exercised restraint."

He highlighted the failure of India's policy of oppression in Kashmir. "As long as India refuses to address the Kashmir issue, the problem will remain unresolved."

It is pertinent to note that last month, India accused Pakistan of being behind a shooting incident at the popular tourist destination of Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir, which resulted in several deaths. Following the attack, India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and took several measures, including halting the shar-

ing of water.

Islamabad immediately condemned the Pahalgam attack and denied the Indian allegations.

After the Pahalgam incident, tensions remained high between Pakistan and India along the Line of Control (LoC) and diplomatic fronts. On May 6, 2025, India launched attacks on several locations in Pakistan, claiming to target alleged militants' hideouts in Pakistani territories.

In response, Pakistan initiated Operation Bunyanum Marsoos during the night of May 9 and 10, carrying out retaliatory strikes on Indian military installations.

According to official Pakistani figures, 40 civilians were killed in India's recent attacks, including 22 women and children. In retaliation, Pakistan targeted 26 Indian military objectives.

On May 10, with US mediation, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire.

However, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced this week that India would stop the flow of water to Pakistan, a move that Pakistan has already declared as a direct act of war against its survival.

## Sindh CM hosts federal govt-industrial meeting to resolve power issues

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here on Sunday hosted a forum to bring together federal ministers and industrialists' leadership to discuss the issues of shifting from Captive Power Plants to

DISCOS, which, as per the cabinet decision, is mandatory.

The meeting decided that all proposals and reservations expressed by the industrialists would be submitted to the Prime Minister for his final

decision, a CM House Sindh statement said.

It also decided that the Prime Minister would also be requested to constitute a committee to determine the transitional period regarding the imposition of levies.

The Chief Minister categorically stated that the gas withdrawn from the Captive Power Plant after the transfer of industrial units to the national grid must remain within the province.

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## Saif for NFC meeting before budget

### E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has called on the federal government to immediately convene a meeting of the National Finance Commission (NFC) and ensure the transfer of the constitutional share of funds allocated for the merged districts to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government before the announcement of the budget.

Barrister Saif said the federal government is commit-

ting grave injustice by withholding funds meant for the merged districts in clear violation of the Constitution. He stressed that the arrears of net hydel profit must also be paid to the province before the budget to help the province manage its financial affairs effectively. "The KP government intends to provide relief to the merged districts in the upcoming provincial budget, but this cannot be achieved without financial support from the federal government," he said.

Dr. Saif noted that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has formally written multiple

letters to the Prime Minister regarding these critical matters, but no response has been received so far.

He underscored that development of the merged districts is not only a constitutional right of their residents but also essential for lasting peace in the region. "If the federal government is serious about eradicating terrorism, it must prioritize funding for the merged districts. Terrorism is not just a provincial issue—it is a national crisis, and full cooperation must be extended to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to resolve these issues."

# Israel launches 'extensive' new ground operations in Gaza as airstrikes kill at least 103 people

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP): Israel launched "extensive" new ground operations in the Gaza Strip while airstrikes in its new offensive killed at least 103 people, including dozens of children, overnight and into Sunday, hospitals and medics said. The strikes forced northern Gaza's main hospital to close.

Israel began the offensive — the largest since it shattered a ceasefire in March — on Saturday with the aim of seizing territory and displacing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

Israel is pressuring Hamas to agree to a temporary ceasefire, one that would free hostages from Gaza but wouldn't necessarily end the war. Hamas says it wants a full withdrawal of Israeli forces and a path to ending the war as part of any deal.

"When the Jews want a

truce, Hamas refuses, and when Hamas wants a truce, the Jews refuse it. Both sides agree to exterminate the Palestinian people," said Jabaliya resident Abu Mohammad Yassin, who was among those fleeing the new offensive on foot or in donkey carts. "For God's sake, have mercy on us. We are tired of displacement."

Israel's military, which recently called up tens of thousands of reservists, said the ground operations are throughout the north and south of the Palestinian territory. It wasn't immediately clear whether any areas were designated as safe.

Before the announcement, airstrikes killed more than 48 people — including 18 children and 13 women — in and around the southern city of Khan Younis, according to Nasser Hospital, which

said it struggled to count the dead because of the condition of bodies.

In northern Gaza, a strike on a home in Jabaliya killed nine members of a family, according to the Gaza Health Ministry's emergency services.

Another strike on a residence there killed 10, including seven children and a woman, according to the civil defense, which operates under the Hamas-run government.

Israel's military had no immediate comment. Its statement announcing the ground operations said preliminary strikes over the past week killed dozens of militants and struck more than 670 targets. Israel blames civilian casualties on Hamas because the militant group operates from civilian areas.

Shortly afterward,

Israel's military said that it intercepted a projectile from central Gaza and another fell in an open area, with no injuries reported.

Israel had said it would wait until the end of U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to the Middle East before launching its offensive, saying it was giving a chance for efforts at a new deal. Trump didn't visit Israel on his trip, which ended Friday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said his negotiating team in Qatar was "working to realize every chance for a deal," including one that would bring an end to fighting in exchange for the release of all remaining 58 hostages, Hamas' exile from Gaza and the disarmament of the Palestinian territory.

Hamas has refused to leave Gaza or disarm.

Israel ended the previous eight-week ceasefire in March. Gaza's Health Ministry has said almost 3,000 people have been killed since then.

Days before resuming the war, Israel cut off all food, medicine and other supplies to Gaza.

That blockade is now in its third month, with global food security experts warning of famine across the territory of more than 2 million people.

Frustration in Israel has been rising. A small but growing number of Israelis are refusing to show up for military service, even risking imprisonment. Other Israelis have been displaying photos of children killed in Gaza during weekly rallies demanding a deal to free all hostages and end the war.

The war in Gaza began on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants

attacked southern Israel, killing 1,200 people and abducting 251 others. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 53,000 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

Health officials said fighting around the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza and an Israeli military "siege" prompted it to shut down. It was the main medical facility in the north after Israeli strikes last year forced the Kamal Adwan and Beit Hanoun hospitals to stop offering services.

Israel's military said troops were "operating against terror infrastructure sites in northern Gaza," including in the area adjacent to the Indonesian Hospital, with-

out providing details.

Israel has repeatedly targeted hospitals, accusing Hamas of being active in and around the facilities. Human rights groups and U.N.-backed experts have accused Israel of systematically destroying Gaza's health care system.

In northern Gaza, at least 43 people were killed in strikes, according to first responders from the Health Ministry and civil defense. Gaza City's Shifa Hospital said 15 children and 12 women were among the dead.

In central Gaza, strikes killed at least 12 people, hospitals said. One in Zweida town killed seven people, including two children and four women, according to al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir al-Balah. Another hit an apartment in Deir al-Balah, killing parents and their child, the hospital said.

In Gaza City, Um Mahmoud al-Aloul lay across the shrouded body of her daughter, Nour al-Aloul.

"You took my soul with you," she cried. "I used to turn off my phone from how much you called."

The Israeli military said it intercepted a missile launched early Sunday by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The rebels said they fired two ballistic missiles towards Israel's main airport near Tel Aviv, whose grounds were struck by a Houthi missile earlier this month.

Israel was left out of a recent U.S. deal to halt attacks on Houthi targets in Yemen in exchange for an end to strikes on U.S. shipping vessels in the Red Sea.

The Houthis say they are attacking in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.





GUJRANWALA: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Patron-in-Chief of Markaz-e-Mustafa Maulana Muhammad Raza Saqib Mustafai. —APP Photo

### Police officers transferred

LAHORE (APP): The Crime Control Department (CCD) has undergone a massive transfer of officers and personnel from across the province. According to police sources, officers and personnel are being sent to the Crime Control Department from different units and districts. Sixty-three more sub-inspectors and 77 ASIs have been transferred to the CCD. Around 1,000 ASIs have also been sent as inspectors from different units and districts to the CCD. On the orders of the IG Punjab, the DIG Establishment has issued a transfer letter.

### Fund raising for Kiran Foundation held

KARACHI (APP): "Shafqat Bhari Shaam" was not just an event but a celebration of hope, compassion, and the spirit of family that Kiran Foundation stands for. A fund raising for the Kiran Foundation was so beautifully and immaculately organized by Danish, Shazia, Amin Mandavia, and Nausheen Zaid every detail reflecting deep love and care. The invitations were thoughtfully given to a truly extraordinary group of people many of them already admirers of Kiran's work, and many more who, after the event, have become a part of the ever-growing Kiran family. It was deeply indebted to 'Chief of Patrons', Danish Aman and his wife Nashmia for not only opening the doors of his home but also his heart to widen Kiran's network. Prominent personalities like Dr Ghaffar Billo, Dr Abdul Bari Khan, Mr Mushtaq Chappra, Dr Farhan Essa, Dr Quratul Ain Bakhteari and others were in attendance of the august gathering. Dr Muhammad Amjad Saqib was the chief guest of the event. The evening overflowed with love for Kiran Foundation. Every word spoken, every heart present, reaffirmed our belief that when sincerity meets purpose, miracles happen.

## Sindh Governor Visits CMH

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Hyderabad, where he met soldiers injured during "Operation Bunyad Marsous." On this occasion, he paid tribute to the courage of the Pakistan Armed Forces and congratulated the nation on their historic success. The governor stated that he was there with representatives of MQM Pakistan to boost the morale of the injured soldiers. He mentioned that our soldiers are filled with the spirit of martyrdom, which will deter the enemy from future aggression. Under the leadership of General Syed Asim Munir, the Pakistan Armed Forces effectively responded to the Indian attack. The Governor especially commended the Pakistan Air Force. Tessori stated that despite over 80,000 martyrs, the Pakistani nation and its armed forces remain united and determined. He expressed hope that India would neither think of

imposing war nor take any steps in that direction. The governor thanked the international community, especially China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, the United States, and others for their support. He announced that 52,000 youth in Hyderabad would be given modern training to earn opportunities in dollars. **Sindh Governor Hosts Key Meeting with Federal Ministers:** A significant meeting was held at Governor House Karachi where Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori hosted several federal ministers today. Those in attendance included Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Special Assistant on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, Minister for Energy Awais Leghari, and Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Nasreen Jalil, Aminul Haque, Javed Hanif, Hafeez, and other political leaders. The meeting fea-

tured detailed discussions on pressing issues faced by Karachi and interior Sindh. Later, addressing the media, Governor Tessori expressed gratitude to leaders of both parties for their participation. He praised the professionalism of Pakistan's armed forces, stating that the defense of the country rests in strong and capable hands. He lauded the finance minister for successfully negotiating with the IMF during a time of conflict, acknowledging that India had attempted to obstruct the process. However, the finance minister forcefully advocated Pakistan's case. The governor expressed hope that by next year, efforts would be made to steer the country out of debt. Governor Tessori emphasized that for political and economic stability in the country, all sectors of society must play their role. He also expressed appreciation for the exemplary achievements of the armed forces under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

## Senator Siddiqui lauds Hajj arrangements

LAHORE (APP): Parliamentary Party Leader in the Senate and Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Senator Irfan Siddiqui Sunday commended the Saudi government and Ministry of Religious Affairs for excellent Hajj arrangements and urged Pakistani pilgrims to follow local laws and discipline to uphold Pakistan's image. Speaking at a Hajj training workshop in Lahore, Siddiqui emphasized the importance of respecting Saudi Arabia's local laws and portraying a positive image of Pakistan. Senator Siddiqui said it was an honor to meet and see off the pilgrims. He praised the Hajj arrangements by the private sector and noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is

personally taking special interest in this matter. Muhammad Sadaqat, Director of Karwan-e-Ashrafiya, stated that the "e-Hajj system" is ensuring improved facilities for pilgrims, though some temporary challenges are being addressed. Hafiz Shafiq Kashif, Group Leader of Sukhera Travels, highlighted the importance of following Saudi guidelines due to the intense heat in June and praised the Saudi government's efforts to curb illegal pilgrimage. He also stressed the need to safeguard the "Nusuk Card," describing it as the pilgrim's identity. Renowned religious scholar Sheikh al-Hadih Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Khan emphasized the simplicity of Hajj and the beneficial impact of

training sessions, while motivational speaker Syed Qasim Ali Shah remarked that Hajj is more than a pilgrimage — it is a series of devotional acts that should be carried out with a mindset of service and dedication. On the occasion, IT expert Aftab Ahmed introduced the mobile application "Only Hajj," designed for the convenience of pilgrims, which was officially launched by Senator Irfan Siddiqui. He expressed confidence that the app will be beneficial for pilgrims worldwide in the future. Maulana Ajwad Obaid, Maulana Zubair Hassan, Dr Lubna Zaheer, and other prominent figures also spoke at the workshop, urging participants to perform Hajj with patience, perseverance, and a spirit of sacrifice.

### Yellow Line Electric Transit project feasibility complete

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Transport Department has completed the feasibility study for the much-anticipated Yellow Line Electric Transit Project in Lahore. The estimated cost of the project is Rs80 billion, and the Punjab government has proposed a timeline from September 2025 to June 2026 for its completion. The plan has been submitted to the Chief Minister's Secretariat for approval. The initiative aims to offer affordable and eco-friendly transport to the city's growing population. According to official sources, the proposed Yellow Line will span a 24-kilometer stretch from Thokar Niaz Baig to Harbanspura. Once operational, the project is expected to benefit nearly 130,000 passengers daily, easing congestion on major city routes and providing an efficient public transportation alternative. Furthermore, work is also underway on the Blue Line and Purple Line mass transit projects, reflecting the provincial government's broader vision for a connected urban rail network. These initiatives are designed to reduce traffic, minimise carbon emissions, and enhance commuter convenience across the city. The Yellow Line will operate using 20 electric train sets, which will be imported from China, that is pending for approval from the Punjab Cabinet and ECNEC (Executive Committee of the National Economic Council).

### Over 26,000 teachers to be posted at 1,961 govt schools

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab School Education Department (SED) has decided to reopen neglected government schools, with staff from schools previously outsourced to private contractors to be reassigned to newly established government schools. Sources told APP that more than 26,000 teachers will be deployed across 1,961 government schools. There will be no new recruitment, as staff surplus in certain schools will be transferred to those facing shortages. They said that outsourcing of schools had resulted in the elimination of 43,960 staff positions. Although the outsourced schools existed for over a decade, no new teachers were appointed during this period. With the reopening, each tehsil in Punjab has seen an increase of 15 to 20 government schools, they said, adding all appointments have been made from the existing pool of teachers, with no fresh hiring. The Punjab Finance Department has granted approval to the School Education Department for this restructuring, the sources confirmed.

### Heatwave continues in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): The provincial capital, along with most of the plains across the country, will continue to experience an intense heatwave over the next two to three days. According to the Meteorological Department, daytime temperatures in the upper regions—Central and Upper Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan—are expected to remain 5°C to 7°C above normal. Meanwhile, southern areas including Sindh, South Punjab, and Balochistan may see temperatures 4°C to 6°C above the seasonal average. On Sunday, the weather remained hot and dry in most parts of the country, with extremely hot conditions prevailing in the plains. However, rain accompanied by strong winds and thunderstorms is expected at isolated locations in Gilgit-Baltistan, Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Northeast Punjab, and the Potohar region during the evening or night. Similar conditions are forecast for Monday. Most areas will remain hot and dry, with extreme heat in the plains.

## JI announces protest across sindh against lawlessness

KARACHI (PPI): Jamaat-e-Islami has announced protest demonstrations against lawlessness and banditry in the province of Sindh, to be held from Karachi to Kashmore on May 23. Jamaat-e-Islami Sindh's leader, Kashif Saeed Sheikh, has appealed to the public to participate actively in these demonstrations. Addressing a meeting of the district leaders of Lower Sindh, Kashif Saeed Sheikh stated that the provincial government of the Pakistan Peoples Party has failed to establish peace from Karachi to Kashmore for the past seventeen years. He said that the increasing lawlessness in the province, particularly in

Kashmore, Ghotki, Shikarpur, and Jacobabad, has made the lives of the people miserable. Kashif Saeed Sheikh further said that the collusion between local feudal lords, bandits, and corrupt elements within the police has turned kidnapping for ransom into a lucrative business. He stated that from theft of water to conspiracies for land and resource grabs, to banditry, the province is engulfed in lawlessness, causing irreparable damage to education, business, economy, and culture. He also mentioned that the Hindu minority community, in particular, is being targeted, forcing

thousands of Hindu families to migrate. Jamaat-e-Islami has previously raised its voice on this grave issue through All Parties Conferences and sit-ins. The provincial leader said that instead of begging for peace, it is shameful for the rulers to file terrorism charges against those protesting to bring peace. He appealed to the public to demonstrate their awareness by participating in the protest demonstrations on Friday. The meeting also included participation from Lower Sindh officials, where performance reports and other public and organizational matters were discussed.

## PTI has always kept doors open for dialogue

LAHORE (PPI): Senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Musarrat Jamshed Cheema, on Sunday stated that if there had been any deal, PTI founder Imran Khan would not have remained in jail for a long time. She stated that the rulers should not attempt to create divisions within the nation's unity and that all cases against Imran Khan are false. In her statement,

Cheema said that the PTI founder would not be part of any deal, and even those spreading rumors know this. She further stated that the country cannot afford political tension, so the ruling class should refrain from creating disruptions in order to save their politics. She emphasized that the solution to the country's current problems and challenges lies in strong unity

and added that the unanimous demand of the nation is for Imran Khan to be released immediately so that the atmosphere of unity can be maintained in the country. Cheema said PTI had always kept the doors open for dialogue in the best interest of the country and nation, while the ruling class adhered to double standards and propaganda for their political interests.

## Rising epilepsy cases in demand urgent action

KARACHI (PPI): The increasing prevalence of epilepsy cases in developing countries requires urgent attention from policymakers. This was stated by Prof Dr Fowzia Siddiqui, President of the Epilepsy Foundation of Pakistan while addressing the second Neuro-Modulation Congress of Turkish-speaking countries in Istanbul. She highlighted the pressing need for more focused interventions in these regions.

As the sole representative from Pakistan at this prominent gathering, Dr Siddiqui contributed her expertise in sessions on Parkinson's disease and epilepsy surgery outcomes. She underscored the importance of early diagnosis and steady treatment for effective epilepsy management in Pakistan. Dr Siddiqui voiced concerns over the high cost of medications and treatments, advocating for enhanced training for young doctors.

She expressed optimism that pro-patient governmental policies and increased societal awareness could significantly curb the disease. In recognition of her contributions, Professor Sait OzTurk, President of the Neuroscience Society of Turkey, presented Dr Siddiqui with a commemorative shield at the congress. The event underscored the critical need for collaborative efforts in addressing neurological disorders globally.

## Pasban urges war against corruption

KARACHI (PPI): Chairman of Pasban Democratic Party, Altaf Shakoor, on Sunday emphasized the need for a war against corruption following the success against India. He described corruption as detrimental to the country's economy, stating that it causes a waste of trillions of rupees every year. Shakoor said in a statement that corruption is eating away at the economy like termites and, if not stopped, will affect every sector, including national security. He stressed the need for effective measures to control corrupt elements, particularly the elite. He appealed to the Chief

of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, to form a special institution within the scope of internal security that focuses solely on combating corruption. He declared Sindh as the most corrupt province in Pakistan, noting that mismanagement is at its peak there. Shakoor emphasized the need for reforms in the police and bureaucracy to provide relief to the common people. He supported the introduction of a digital governance system in government offices to reduce bribery. He highlighted the need for a 'whistleblowing' system in the government sector to expose and punish corrupt officials.

Shakoor condemned corrupt groups like the sugar mills mafia, which are looting the public under the patronage of politicians. Shakoor stated that corruption is hollowing out the foundations of our nation, and the political corruption of the elite is a cancer. He ranked Pakistani politicians among the most corrupt people in the world. He further stated that the corruption of Pakistan's governments has burdened the country with debt and now the nation is under the influence of the IMF. He appealed to the Pakistan Armed Forces to join the war against corruption.

## Member Wafaqi Mohtasib visits KE head office

KARACHI (INP): Member (Incharge He) Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman)'s Secretariat, Regional Office, Amir Ahmed Shaikh of the Pakistan Police Service visited K-Electric's Head Office. Shaikh was greeted by K-Electric CEO Moonis Alvi and the company's senior leadership including Chief Distribution and Marcoms Officer Sadia Dada and Chief Risk Officer and Company Secretary Rizwan Pesnani. Mr Shaikh also visited KE's Mega Centre at the Tipu Sultan IBC to witness on-ground performance of the power utility. At the outset, Mr Shaikh was given an overview of K-Electric's performance turnaround since its privatization, efforts to become a more customer-centric company, and its digital transformation journey. He was also briefed that K-Electric services roughly 3.8 million customers spread beyond Karachi in Sindh and Balochistan provinces. Mr Shaikh directed the power utility to continue its path of performance turnaround so that it can stay as a model for other DISCOs. "KE needs to continue its path of

empathy towards the customer. We receive complaints, but the company's performance in addressing them and the compliance of it is 95%, which is quite impressive. Other DISCOs also make efforts, but KE stands out," Mr Shaikh said as he visited the Mega Centre. "I have also directed KE to continue its path. They have set the bar quite high already. But I believe in improvement and results. "For the customer, KE has centres that address complaints during the entire customer journey. Customers also have the federal ombudsman that addresses customers' grievances. I urge all citizens to utilize these forums." KE CEO Moonis Alvi said the company also believes in remaining a customer-centric company. "We are glad that Member (Incharge) is seeing on-ground reality of how we operate. We are committed to implementing the ombudsman's decisions. Moving forward, we will continue to make efforts to improve on this to create win-wins for the customer and our stakeholders." During his stint at the federal ombudsman secretariat, less than

13,800 complaints have been filed with compliance of nearly 95%, which is the highest when compared with all other DISCOs in Pakistan. Mr Shaikh was also apprised that KE has doubled its customer base, and halved its transmission and distribution losses since privatization. He was also given first-hand knowledge of key challenges the company faced in terms of low recovery of electricity bills and theft in 30% of the company's feeders network. Mr Shaikh directed the company to guide the other DISCOs, and share its digital transformation journey and customer-centric behaviour. Mr Shaikh also praised the KE team's professionalism, stressing that the company's empathy has enabled it to become a more service-oriented entity. He said Pakistan needs sustainable measures to promote productivity and KE can be seen as an example that checks this box. Mr Shaikh also stressed the need for evidence-based and efficient solutions to Pakistan's economy and commended KE that has implemented a majority of his decisions during his stint at the federal ombudsman's office.

## LGH launches oral & maxillofacial surgery

LAHORE (APP): The Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at Lahore General Hospital (LGH) has officially commenced operations, marking a significant advancement in Punjab's healthcare sector under the development policy of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. The announcement was made by Principal Ameer Uddin Medical College, Professor Dr. Al-Fareed Zafar, during the department's inauguration ceremony on Sunday. Professor Zafar highlighted that the new department will provide specialized treatment for patients requiring surgery for mouth and skull conditions, including those with fractured jaws and facial bones. Previously, such trauma patients were referred to other

teaching hospitals due to the lack of in-house facilities. "With this new department, LGH can now offer timely and specialized surgical care, eliminating the need for external referrals," he stated. Head of Department Professor Armaghan Israr Mirza announced that a dedicated 20-bed ward has been established, with outpatient services available every Monday and Thursday for clinical assessments and treatments. Professor Zafar emphasized LGH's recent advancements across various departments, crediting the professionalism of healthcare workers and the support of Punjab Minister for Health, Khawaja Salman Rafique, for making this initiative

possible. The department will not only serve LGH patients but also extend services to those from the Punjab Institute of Neurosciences and cater to cosmetic surgical needs, enhancing community support. "This facility is a testament to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision of prioritizing healthcare development," Professor Zafar said. He added that the department's establishment is a milestone in improving public health across the region, with far-reaching impacts expected. The inauguration was attended by Medical Superintendent Dr. Faryad Hussain, Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Dr. Muhammad Ayub, Dr. Abdul Aziz, and other health professionals.



# Southern districts more beautiful than Switzerland: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday declared the southern districts of the province more beautiful than Switzerland and Europe, emphasizing that peace is essential for unlocking their true potential. He made these remarks while addressing a ceremony organized by Faisal Hills Islamabad in honor of investors, property dealers, businessmen, and social figures.

The event was also addressed by Faisal Hills' key figure Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, CEO of Haroon Real Estate and Builders Haji Akhtar Din Mehsud, prominent businessman Faizullah Khan Wazir, President of Sarhad

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Muqeem, among others.

Governor Kundi expressed gratitude to Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and his team for their warm welcome in Peshawar, expressing hope that their investment in the province would pave the way for progress and prosperity.

He stressed that launching modern, well-equipped development projects in the province is the need of the hour and could prove crucial for success.

Highlighting the potential of the northern areas, particularly Waziristan, the Governor said these areas could become among the world's most attractive tourist and investment des-

tinations if peace is fully restored.

"If peace prevails here, people will forget the beauty of Switzerland and Europe," he said.

He also said with pride that when Pashtuns accumulate wealth, they prefer investing in Islamabad rather than Kabul, indicating their trust in Pakistan's stability. Paying tribute to the local business community, he commended their resilience in continuing operations despite terrorism and challenges in the province.

The Governor lamented that new cities are not being developed in Pakistan, which is exacerbating existing problems.

He emphasized the urgent need for establish-

ing new urban centers to manage population growth and ensure sustainable development.

Assuring full support, Governor Kundi encouraged Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and his team to launch residential and commercial projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said that Peshawar's future lies in high-rise buildings and modern housing schemes and urged the inclusion of projects catering to the salaried and middle-class segments.

On the occasion, special turbans were presented to Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, Chaudhry Abdul Majeed, and other distinguished guests in recognition of their efforts.



PESHAWAR: On the special instructions of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, ration was distributed among 50 underprivileged Kalash families in Bamburet Valley during the Chilimjushst celebrations.

## Ration distributed among 50 Kalash families in Bamburet

KPCTA DG says more families to get food packages soon

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the special instructions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, ration was distributed among 50 underprivileged Kalash families in Bamburet Valley during the Chilimjushst celebrations.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Director General Habibullah Arif while speaking to the media after distributing ration on the

concluding day of the Chilimjushst Festival in Birir Valley said that 50 more families would be provided ration soon.

Event Manager Muhammad Ali Syed, Birir Village Council chairman Marshla Khan and other notable figures were also present on the occasion.

The DG said that as per the chief minister's directives, ration was distributed under the supervision of the village council chairman to support the needy families. He said

the government's commitment to further promote Birir, Rambur and Bamburet valleys to make them central attractions for both local and international tourists.

He said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was taking tangible steps to support indigenous communities in Bamburet and other Kalash valleys and encourage more domestic and international tourists to visit these areas.

The Chilimjushst Festival, which began on

May 13 in Bamburet Valley, concluded in Birir Valley with traditional Kalash dance performances.

During the festival, Tourism Police personnel performed their duties commendably by not only maintaining order but also assisting and guiding visitors.

The event saw participation from over 50 foreign tourists and more than 5,000 domestic visitors to enjoy the unique cultural events of the Kalash valleys.

## Hamayun congratulates Bilawal on entrusting to lead diplomatic delegation

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary General of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Mohammad Hamayun Khan has congratulated Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on being entrusted by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to lead the diplomatic delegation at the global level.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that this decision is not only a manifestation of the wisdom but also a positive, fruitful and dignified step for the country and the nation.

The PPP stalwart recalled that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has discharged his responsibilities as Foreign Minister with utmost seriousness, skill and passion. The dignified and eloquent manner in which he has presented Pakistan's case at international forums is commendable.

He said that Chairman

### Kundi welcomes PM's decision to appoint Bilawal as diplomatic envoy

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday lauded Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's decision to appoint Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the head of a diplomatic delegation.

He termed the move a "wise decision" and a "recognition of Bilawal Bhutto's capabilities."

In an official statement, Governor Kundi highlighted the Bhutto family's longstanding commitment to Pakistan's development and global image.

He said that the international diplomatic contributions of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto have earned global respect, and Bilawal Bhutto continues that legacy. Governor Kundi praised Bilawal's performance as Foreign Minister, particularly his role during the recent Pakistan-India tensions, where his diplomatic efforts were commended by the Pakistani diaspora and friendly nations.

He expressed confidence that the Prime Minister's decision will lead to significant progress in Pakistan's development, prosperity, and global standing.

Bilawal Bhutto has highlighted the true identity of Pakistan to the world and established Pakistan as a peaceful, responsible and

progressive state in the global media. Under his leadership, Pakistan's position on the diplomatic front remained clear,

strong and effective.

Recently, he has exposed the ugly face of India and obstacles to peace and stability in the region before the world. This courageous stance is a practical demonstration of his political acumen and national pride.

The PPP leader said that the nation has always full confidence in the leadership, insight, and capabilities of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and today this confidence has once again been proven true.

This success he said is a living testament to his selfless love for his beloved homeland, hard work day and night, and immense dedication, saying the Pakistan People's Party and the entire nation are proud of him and pray that he continues to serve Pakistan with the same determination and courage and make the name of the country even brighter across the world.

## Fazal Hakim Khan Yousafzai Reaffirms PTI's Commitment to Peaceful Democratic Struggle

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, Fazal Hakim Khan Yousafzai, stated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) firmly believes in democracy and is steadfastly pursuing its mission for genuine change in the country through democratic and peaceful means. Speaking at his residence in Mingora during meetings with various public delegations and citizens, the provincial minister emphasized that Pakistan can only progress towards development, sovereignty, and justice under the leadership of Imran Khan. He stressed that Imran Khan's early release is a pressing national necessity, enabling him to resume leadership of the country in a dignified and prosperous manner, aligned with the aspirations of the people. Fazal Hakim Khan reaffirmed that PTI's struggle will continue until the constitution, rule of law, and true public representation are established in Pakistan. During his interactions, he attentively listened to public grievances and assured them of prompt and effective resolutions. The provincial minister also met with PTI workers and office-bearers to discuss party organization, public service initiatives, and the prevailing political situation. He reiterated that Imran Khan's vision is rooted in public service, transparent governance, and the supremacy of law - principles that the provincial government is committed to implementing. Highlighting ongoing government efforts, he said the provincial administration is taking all necessary measures to address public issues and is prioritizing welfare projects. He added that the current government has introduced revolutionary reforms in sectors such as health and education, with their positive impacts already reaching the public.

### Expressing solidarity with the nation

## Peshawar Zalmi unveils special 'Pakistan Edition' Green kits



### F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: In a powerful tribute of solidarity with the nation, Peshawar Zalmi has unveiled a special Pakistan Edition green kit for their matches on May 17 against Karachi Kings and May 18 against Lahore Qalandars at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

These limited-edition kits manufactured by Grip Active, marked a significant extension of Zalmi's commitment to national pride, empowerment, and social impact.

At the start of the season, Zalmi had unveiled

three Zalmi X Legacy official kits-yellow for home games, black for away fixtures and a green training kit for team's practise sessions. However, ahead of the Rawalpindi matches, the franchise introduced a fourth kit: the Pakistan Editiongreen kit. This special kit is not just a uniform change, but a symbolic gesture to honour the bravery, service, and sacrifices of Pakistan's armed forces.

Mr. Javed Afridi Chairman Peshawar Zalmi further elevated the tribute by announcing a PKR 50 million donation in honour of the armed forces, stating

that Zalmi Family stands shoulder to shoulder with our brave armed forces of Pakistan.

The green kits not only stand out visually but also connects with fans on an emotional level across the country. Social media was abuzz with appreciation for Zalmi's gesture, as the team encourages supporters to wear green kits to show solidarity.

In a league known for its vibrant energy, the Pakistan Edition kit proves that cricket could also serve as a canvas for patriotism and purpose. Peshawar Zalmi isn't just playing in Rawalpindi-

they are honouring the spirit of the nation, sending a powerful message of unity, and celebrating the deep connection between the sport and national pride. With yet another groundbreaking kit reveal, Peshawar Zalmi continues to push boundaries, blending tradition, technology, and talent into one powerful legacy.

Mr. Javed Afridi further added that the return of foreign cricketers to Pakistan is testament to the fact that Pakistan is a safe and peace-loving country and our foreign guests have full faith in Pakistan forces and security.

PESHAWAR (APP): Under blistering heat in the outskirts of Peshawar, 40-year-old Qudratullah pushes a wheelbarrow stacked with bricks at a dusty construction site of Wapda Town to earn living for his family amidst a relentless rise in living costs.

For his backbreaking labor, Qudratullah earns Rs. 700 a day—barely enough to feed his six-member family in wake of inflation and soaring prices of daily commodities in open market of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"We work from dawn till dusk and still live hand to mouth," he says, wiping sweat dripping from his brow. "We have no proper healthcare, no specific educational facilities for our children and no home of our own."

Qudratullah's story reflects the harsh reality of millions of poor laborers across Pakistan as well as in KP. Daily wagers, unskilled workers, construction and agricultural laborers and domestic helpers who contribute relentlessly to national development and economy. But they are most often exploited by builders, factory owners, landlords and other businesses and remain a neglected segment of society.

After devolution of labor departments to provinces this area became more neglected with labor community mostly employed at brick kilns and agricultural lands face severe subjugation by employers.

Most of time these laborers and their families remain hostage to employers year after year for borrowing money in advance to feed their children. This vicious circle of taking

money in advance makes them hostage with employers treating them as slaves — a replica of dark ages.

"Nearly 72% of Pakistan's workforce is employed in informal sector especially in construction, transport and agriculture and these workers often lack written contracts, social protections and even minimum wage guarantees," remarked Prof. Dr. Naeemur Rehman Khattak, former Chairman of Economics Department, University of Peshawar.

"Most often their situation is bad. They are less paid and face shortage of opportunities to prosper. And if there are epidemics or calamities like COVID-19, life becomes even worse for them," Dr. Khattak said.

"Economic instability, weak industrialization and social inequalities continue to push the poor deeper into hardship. And when the economy shrinks, it's always the laborers who suffer the most," he added.

Pakistan, a founding member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), has ratified 36 ILO conventions, including eight fundamental ones. The 1973 Constitution also guarantees workers the right to unionize, bargain collectively and secure fair wages.

But in many instances, the employers shy away from ensuring all facilities like sufficient wages, residences, educational, health and working hours facilities for their workers.

"This is a sheer disconnect between policy and practice," said Syed Noman Bokhari, a senior labor law expert and member of the High Court Bar Association.

"In KP, the Minimum Wages Board revises salaries annually, but enforcement remains a major challenge—especially in rural areas."

"Labour courts exist but are under-resourced, and many workers can't even afford to take a day off to lodge a complaint," he stated.

Although he acknowledged some signs of progress like the KP government's increase in minimum wage to Rs. 36,000 in the last budget and pilot programs using digital tools for social security registration, yet he said, "we have to see how far the government remains successful in implementing these measures in every nook and corner of the province."

There are some other worth mentioning measures of the government like construction of affordable flats for laborers by Provincial Housing Authority (PHA) KP in different housing projects across the province.

In Labour City Regi Lalma, over 2,000 flats have been completed, while major housing projects are underway in Swat, Charsadda, Hangu, and Peshawar's Surizai and Nisharabad areas.

PHA Director Waqas Anjum says 9,000 units are being built in the Jalozai Housing Scheme, with 1,300 reserved specifically for laborers.

Meanwhile, in Mardan, infrastructure upgrades are underway in the Labour Colony, and large tracts of land have been earmarked for worker-friendly housing. Further support is also being provided for overseas Pakistanis through one-window facilitation desks and financial aid for

their children's international education.

Although these efforts are complemented by WWF- and PSDP-backed initiatives focusing on worker welfare and development infrastructure, yet the question of reaching these benefits to actual deserving still remains unaddressed.

Some civil society organizations and NGOs like Aurat Foundation and Labor Education Foundation are educating workers about their rights and helping them organize for better conditions. Youth and middle-class support for ethical labor practices is also growing.

But still, Dr. Khattak warns that systemic change demands more than scattered reforms. "We need digital worker databases, empowered inspection systems and above all, the political will to prioritize the rights of laborers."

The current government touts its new labor policy as a turning point—with promises of a 400% wage hike, job regularization and benefits for sacked employees.

Yet critics argue that implementation remains sluggish, especially compared to unmet promises like the PTI's pledge to construct five million homes for the poor.

"All we ask is fairness," Qudratullah says, taking a brief rest before returning to his load. "Not charity—just a little dignity."

He might be hinting towards political maneuvering, bureaucratic hurdles, lack of transparency and merit and calling upon the government for a judicious mechanism and identifying real deserving to benefit from these schemes.

## Afghan couple killed for honor

PESHAWAR (APP): A couple who had married for love was shot dead in Ghaffarabad area here, police informed on Sunday.

According to police, the suspect, identified as

Sardar, opened fire on the husband and wife, killing them on the spot.

Initial investigations revealed that motive behind the double murder was "honor killing," as the

ple had tied the knot a year ago against their families' will.

The victims have been identified as Adnan and his wife, both of whom were reportedly from

Afghanistan.

Following the crime, the accused managed to flee the scene. Police have registered a case and launched a thorough investigation to apprehend the suspect.

## Laborers rights – still a distant dream in KP





## In brief

## Two die in Kurram firing

KURRAM (APP): A shooting incident in village Norki of Upper Kurram has left two people dead, police said on Sunday. According to police, unidentified assailants opened fire in the area, resulting in the deaths of two individuals. The victims have been identified as Syed Musawir and Syed Sajid Hussain. Their bodies were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital for further procedures. Police have launched an investigation to determine the motive behind the attack and to apprehend those responsible.

## Relocation of sweet homes

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Deputy Commissioner Qurat-ul-Ain Memon has directed the revenue department to identify land for the relocation of Sweet Homes from a rented building to public property in Kot Addu. She ordered the department after Javed Rashid Chaudhry, CEO of a chain of local public schools, requested her about the land allocation of a better accommodation for orphaned children. The DC outlined her vision to establish a modern information technology lab for freelancing skills, aiming to empower the children of Sweet Homes to become self-reliant. She expressed her commitment to equipping the children with essential modern skills for a better future.

## Suspect arrested

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested a suspect involved in shooting at and injuring a man and his son over an old enmity. A couple of weeks ago, Sabir Hussain had shot at and injured his opponents—Mustafa Qureshi and his son Elaf near Qureshi Lodges in Layyah, and fled the scene. However, both the father and son were saved after timely treatment in hospital. The police have arrested the accused from a deserted area of Layyah. A case has been registered against the accused.

## IG FC visits Kohlu

QUETTA (APP): Inspector General, Frontier Corps Balochistan (North), Major General Abid Mazhar, visited Kohlu to attend the closing ceremony of a media workshop organized by the Frontier Corps. During the ceremony, Major General Abid Mazhar distributed certificates among the participants who had successfully completed the workshop, said a news release issued here on Sunday. He highlighted the vital role of media in fostering unity and harmony, particularly during the recent Pak-India conflict. Addressing the gathering, IG FC Major General Abid Mazhar appreciated the efforts of the participants and highlighted the significant role media played during the recent Pakistan-India conflict. He emphasized that media plays a crucial role in shaping national discourse. The workshop, which saw the participation of 40 local journalists and social media influencers, focused on media awareness and modern information and cyber security. The primary objective of the workshop was to educate participants on the importance of media, modern methods of information dissemination, and critical topics such as cyber security. Journalists and tribal elders expressed their gratitude to FC for providing valuable awareness and training to local journalists and youth through the workshop.

## Pakistan gives befitting response to India: Muqam

KOHAT (APP): Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam, on Sunday here declared that Pakistan has given a "befitting response" to India's recent unprovoked aggression, effectively thwarting the "nefarious designs of the enemy."

Speaking at a large public gathering at Kulachi in Kohat, the minister lauded the professional competence and battlefield readiness of Pakistan's armed forces that shutdown six IAF jets and many drones.

"Our military has once again demonstrated its superiority and resilience, shaking the very foundations of the Indian military establishment," he said.

Engr Muqam noted that Pakistan had initially shown maximum restraint in the face of Indian unprovoked aggression but was compelled to respond in self-defense. "Our response was precise, decisive, and necessary. The enemy has suffered significant losses," he added.

Reiterating Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and stability, the minister emphasized that the country's desire for peaceful coexistence

should never be mistaken for weakness.

Declaring Operation Iron Wall was a historic success in safeguarding national security, he said it was a symbol of complete unity between the political and military leadership and the nation.

He paid tribute to the martyred soldiers and troops of the Pakistan who sacrificed their lives to protect the country.

The Federal Minister said that today's Pakistan is under strong leadership, where national unity, political stability, security and consistent development are top priorities.

He added that the effective solution to the challenges facing the country lies in these very elements, to which the government is paying full attention.

He said India's aggression had only served to keep the Kashmir issue alive on the international stage.

"Pakistan is a powerful nation with a strong professional army, air force, and navy. We seek peace, but we are fully prepared to defend our sovereignty at all cost," he said.

Engineer Amir Muqam stated that the Pakistan armed forces gave a strong response to Indian aggres-

sion, sending a clear message to the enemy that this nation is awake and united. He saluted the armed forces for their decisive response.

He reiterated that the Pakistan Armed Forces are the defenders of our borders, and the 250 million people of Pakistan stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

Engineer Amir Muqam said the Armed Forces have made Pakistan proud around the world. The entire nation stands behind its armed forces.

The federal minister also highlighted the Kashmir dispute as the core issue between Pakistan and India.

He called for the resolution of the conflict in line with the United Nations Security Council resolutions, stressing that lasting peace in South Asia depends on a just and fair settlement of the Kashmir issue.

"The road to peace and prosperity in the region passes through Kashmir," he asserted.

"The time has come for the international community to put pressure on India to grant the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) their right to self-

determination."

Muqam praised Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for his proactive diplomacy and for raising the Kashmir issue at global forums, exposing the "fascist" policies of the Modi government.

He said Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif played the role of an excellent leader in the success operation Iron Wall.

While condemning the Rs. 40 billion mega financial scandal in Kohistan, the Federal Minister claimed that even a peon in the province cannot be transferred without paying a bribe.

Praising the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for initiating investigations into the Rs. 40 billion mega financial scandal in Kohistan, the Federal Minister stated that full investigations will be conducted into this corruption case.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering political, diplomatic, and moral support to the Kashmiri people, pledging continued solidarity until they achieve freedom.

Turning to domestic politics, the minister criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for what he described

as its failure to deliver during its 12-year rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He accused PTI of prioritizing agitation politics over governance, which, he claimed, has distanced the public from the party.

He expressed confidence in the growing influence of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, predicting a strong electoral performance in the upcoming elections. "The people are rallying behind PML-N because our focus is on development and improving lives," he said.

Engr Muqam reaffirmed that the government's commitment to people-centric policies was aimed at bringing tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens.

JUI-F leader Fawad Khan, along with his family and thousands of supporters from Lachi, Kohat, formally joined the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) [PML-N].

Fawad Khan—brother of former MPA Major Shadad Khan and son of former minister and Deputy Speaker Shad Muhammad Khan—along with his family and sup-

porters, formally joined

PML-N.

Following MPA Ali Hadi from Kurram district, another significant political figure has joined PML-N.

During the ceremony, Engineer Amir Muqam presented the traditional PML-N cap to the new members and welcomed them, stating that the inclusion of Fawad Khan and his companions is a testament to the growing popularity of PML-N and reflects public confidence in the outstanding leadership of Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

He emphasized that PML-N is committed to public service, national development, and welfare, and this joining marks a significant step in strengthening the party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Engineer Amir Muqam added that strengthening the party and promoting the spirit of public service remains PML-N's top priority.

The passion and sincerity of the new members will prove to be a valuable asset for the party and will enhance collective efforts to solve public issues.

The participants chanted loud slogans: "Long live Pakistan," "Long live Pakistan Armed Forces,"

"Long live Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif," "Long live Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir," and "Long live Engineer Amir Muqam, President PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

The event was also attended by PML-N leader Rehmat Salam Khattak, MPA from Kurram district Ali Hadi, PML-N District Karak President Mian Ikhtlaq, and PML-N Kohat General Secretary Hakim Badshah.

Among those who joined PML-N along with their families and thousands of supporters were JUI-F leader Fawad Khan, former MPA Major (Retd.) Shadad Khan, former Tehsil Councillor Momin Shah Advocate, former ANP Tehsil Lachi President Arshad, former Nazim Dehi Lachi Khan, former Nazim Lachi Payan Haji Gul Mali Shah, former member Lachi Urban Council Haji Gul Khan Shah, former Provincial Council member Haji Gul Khan Shah, Abdul Aziz, and others including Hanif, former Nazim Haji Hayat Khan, former Tehsil Councillor Shad Munir, Councillor Sardar Dawood, Ijaz Advocate, Chairman Village Council Kifayat, and Chairman Village Council Mansoor Khan.

## Survey for various roads in Saikot completed: Barakwal

## F.P. Report

KARAK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major@ Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal has said that in the Village Council Saikot of his constituency in Karak district, the survey team has completed the survey of various roads and streets including the Main Road to Zangana Road, Main Road to Khonshakel School Road, Sheikh Khan Korona to kashoo Road, Zara Gandhi Main Road to Degari Korona and Shoble Banda to Pulaski Algada Road and InshaAllah, practical

work on it will start very soon.

Meanwhile, the Agri Minister visited the Union Council Shnawah Godikhel, Naghriwala, Dagar Sar where he came to the residence of Arifullah, who was martyred in Kalabagh Dam, to offer his condolences to the family of the martyred. He met with the family members at his residence in Naghriwala and offered Fateha for the martyr. On this occasion, the minister took notice of the water problem faced by the elders of Shaheed Arifullah neighborhood and announced the solarization

of the mosque and the drinking water scheme and also paid tribute to Malik Muhit Khan and his team for their tireless struggle in difficult times.

The Provincial Minister also visited the residence of Shaheed Rehman, who was martyred in FC Balochistan, and expressed his condolences to his family. The minister on this occasion was accompanied by Tehsil General Secretary Malik Zahid Bahram Hail Arif Nawaz Khattak, Chairman Malik Muhit Khan, President VC Shah Saleem Haji Fazal Rahim and other party workers.

## Business community termed mail pillar of economy

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat Shafi Jan MPA has visited the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kohat (KCCI) where he met the President of the KCCI, Rasheed Paracha, members and the local business community. He on this occasion was briefed in detail on business activities in the city, problems of the industries and prospects for economic development.

The business community drew the attention of Chairman DDAC to the problems of power load shedding, poor infrastructure, water shortage and transport and requested to impose an "industrial emergency" so that the region can be transformed into an industrial hub. If

the government cooperates in providing facilities and incentives, Kohat can become the industrial hub of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which will increase employment opportunities, regional prosperity and economic stability.

Shafi Jan MPA listened to the problems of the traders patiently and assured that he would raise these issues vigorously in the Provincial Assembly. He assured that the relevant departments would be contacted immediately so that the problems could be resolved as soon as possible. He further said that the government is determined to provide all possible facilities to the business community as this segment is the main pillar of the local economy and prosperity.

The President KCCI and other members of the

Chamber welcomed the visit of MPA Shafi Jan and thanked him for his cooperation.

Earlier, a minute's silence was observed in memory of the late Malik Muhammad Asad Khan and tributes were paid to the deceased for his services while praying for his eternal peace.

The meeting was attended by the President of the Chamber Rasheed Paracha, Senior Vice President Fahimullah, former presidents Syed Faiq Shah, Arshad Hayat, Malik Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Junaid, Azmat Jamil, Colonel R. Jawad Paracha, Pir Kamran Shah, Shakir Jahangir, Muhammad Rashid Iqbal Mir, Chairman WASA Muhammad Saad, Qasim Zubair, Intizar Ali, Wasim Khan, Abdul Rehman, Rahat Khattak and others.

## RPO Dera pays surprise visit to Tank

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Syed Ashfaq Anwar on Sunday paid a surprise visit to Tank and inspected the ongoing development and security arrangements.

During his visit, the RPO inspected various sections of the Tank Police Lines including the barracks, MT block, the proposed building for a driving school meant to serve the public, and overall security measures.

He issued clear instructions to the on-duty officers to ensure the quality of work in all construction activities.

Later, RPO Ashfaq Anwar visited the District Police office, where he reviewed the Police Facilitation Center and the under-construction Command and Control Room.

Emphasizing citizen service, he directed that the facilitation center be equipped with modern facilities to ensure swift and effective public service delivery.

The RPO also made unannounced visits to the Hathala checkpoint under Hathala Police Station and the CRBC Check Post under Abha-Shaheed Police Station.

He thoroughly examined the buildings, security bunkers, barracks for personnel, and the use of thermal cameras. He also assessed preparedness against potential threats from various directions.

## Tenders for 2 roads awarded in Kohat

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam adding that strict monitoring of all the projects is being done to ensure the quality of work.

Aftab Alam said that tenders have been awarded for the 10-kilometer long Kamar Dhok Road in Union Council Khushal Garh of PK-90, the 5-kilometer long Siyah to Kot Road via Bandi Dhok in Union Council Blitang and the RCC Bridge on Khairmat Road Blitang, on which practical work

works are underway in every union council in his constituency PK-90 under the supervision of Tehsil Chairman Gumbat Sajid Iqbal adding that strict monitoring of all the projects is being done to ensure the quality of work.

Aftab Alam said that tenders have been awarded for the 10-kilometer long Kamar Dhok Road in Union Council Khushal Garh of PK-90, the 5-kilometer long Siyah to Kot Road via Bandi Dhok in Union Council Blitang and the RCC Bridge on Khairmat Road Blitang, on which practical work

will soon be started, which will be a new milestone of development and prosperity in the area.

Similarly, asphalt work has also been started on Sheikh Khan Road, which is in the final stage of completion, he added.

Meanwhile, on the directions of the Law Minister, the process of grafting fruit olives into wild olives is going on in his constituency in Mandoni area under the supervision of the Agriculture Department. Up till now total, 25,700 fruit olives have been grafted into 9,637 wild olive trees.

## Livestock at risk as heatwave intensifies

MULTAN (APP): With the ongoing heatwave intensifying across the region, animals are facing serious health threats including heat stroke, which can be fatal if not addressed in time.

Deputy Director Livestock Dr. Jamshaid Akhtar said that animals exposed to direct sunlight and extreme temperatures were unable to regulate their body heat, resulting in heat stroke.

This condition, he added, has led to increasing cases of livestock health issues. He advised farmers and animal owners to take

preventive measures seriously.

"Ensure a continuous supply of cool, clean drinking water to animals. Provide proper ventilation and shade, and avoid tying animals in the open," he urged. He emphasized that animals should be kept in cooler areas, especially during peak heat hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Dr. Akhtar explained that the symptoms of heat stroke in animals include a sudden rise in body temperatures. Animals may experience irregular or rapid breathing and begin to breathe through their

mouths.

They often show signs of weakness or may even collapse due to exhaustion. In dairy animals, milk production may noticeably decrease or stop altogether.

He added that in severe cases, immediate contact should be made with nearby veterinary services. "Proper medical treatment and timely action can save the life of the animal," he noted.

The Livestock Department of Punjab has activated a 24/7 helpline at 08000-9211 to offer assistance and guidance to farmers during the heatwave.

## Second shift female teachers demand regularization of services

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Female teachers working in second shifts at government schools across Lower Dir have demanded regularization of their services, protesting against the education department's decision to replace them with newly recruited staff.

The teachers, joined by students, staged a protest on Saturday in front of the Timergara Press Club. They blocked the main Balambhat road for several hours, bringing traffic between

Balambhat, Jandol, and Bajaur to a standstill. Commuters faced severe inconvenience due to the prolonged road closure.

Carrying placards inscribed with their demands, the protesting teachers said they had been teaching in second shifts for the past two years and had played a significant role in promoting female education in the district.

"We contributed to the rise in literacy rates by serving in difficult conditions," said one of the teachers, adding that instead of recognizing their efforts,

the government planned to terminate our services.

They urged the provincial government to regularize their jobs instead of recruiting fresh candidates, arguing that their experience and dedication deserved acknowledgement and job security.

Political leaders, including former PPP National Assembly candidate Advocate Alam Zeb, Jamaat-e-Islami's deputy general secretary Meraj ul Haq, and PPP leader Nawabzada Irfan, expressed solidarity with the teachers.



HYDERABAD: Youngster enjoying bathing in the running tube-well to get relief from scorching hot weather in the city.





# Ayyala Dance: Culture, hospitality, and the need for understanding



Asif Ali Yousafzai

DUBAI: During President Donald Trump's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates, a traditional Emirati performance known as the Ayyala dance drew wide attention across social media. While some online voices reacted negatively-often without understanding its significance-the cultural expression behind the performance deserves a closer look.

The Ayyala, also recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, is a centuries-old tradition rooted in the UAE and Oman. Performed dur-

ing weddings, national holidays, and to welcome dignitaries, the dance symbolizes unity, strength, heritage, and hospitality. It features rows of men moving in rhythmic formation with bamboo sticks, accompanied by traditional drums and chanting of poetry.

A notable part of the performance involves young Emirati girls dressed in traditional attire, gracefully swinging their long hair side to side. Contrary to assumptions made by some viewers, this movement is not intended to be provocative. Rather, it reflects elegance, joy, and a respectful form of welcoming-

embodying the warmth of Arab hospitality.

**Islamic Perspective on Cultural Expression**

Islam encourages dignity, hospitality, and the celebration of heritage-not judgment without understanding. In cultural events where young women participate respectfully in traditional attire and expressions, it is essential to differentiate between cultural customs and religious obligations.

Formal gestures such as ceremonial handshakes or participation in state rituals are part of diplomatic protocol and should be viewed through the lens of interna-

tional relations, not personal moral judgment.

**President Trump and the Spirit of Hospitality**

As Muslims, we are taught to extend respect and hospitality to all guests, regardless of their background. President Donald Trump's recent visit to the UAE was a state-level diplomatic engagement, and the warm reception he received reflects core Islamic values of hospitality, honor, and courteous conduct.

We also believe that every human being is a creation of Allah, and He alone guides hearts and actions. May Allah bring about good for the world through such leaders, and may He inspire all to act in ways that promote peace and mutual respect.

**A Call for Respect and Understanding**

In today's interconnected world, it is essential to distinguish between religion, culture, and local tradition. The Ayyala dance is not a violation of values but a proud and dignified expression of Emirati identity.

Let us respond not with ignorance or prejudice, but with knowledge, open-mindedness, and appreciation for the rich diversity of cultures that shape our world.



MOSCOW, RUSSIA: A musician plays trumpet past to the Mausoleum of Lenin during a ceremony for newcomers of the Young Pioneer Organization at Red Square, May 18, 2025 in Moscow, Russia.

## Estonia says Russia detained a tanker in Baltic Sea

TALLINN (Reuters): Russia detained a Greek-owned oil tanker on Sunday after it left an Estonian Baltic Sea port, the Estonian Foreign Ministry said, adding that it had alerted NATO allies to the incident.

The Liberia-flagged ship Green Admire was leaving Sillamae port using a designated navigation channel that crosses Russian territorial waters, the ministry said in a statement.

"Today's incident

shows that Russia continues to behave unpredictably," said Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna. "I have also informed our Allies of the event."

The Green Admire had departed Sillamae port on Saturday 18:40 GMT, and on Sunday afternoon was anchored near Russia's Hogland island, according to Marine Traffic, a website that tracks vessels.

The ship was bound for Rotterdam with a load

of Estonia's shale oil, said the Estonian Transport Administration.

The navigation channel out of Sillamae through Russian territorial waters has been set up under an agreement between Estonia, Finland and Russia to avoid shallows in the Estonian waters, the administration said.

Vessels sailing into and out of the port will now be guided through Estonian territorial waters, it added.

The Baltic has seen confrontations at sea over what NATO countries have described as Russian efforts to evade sanctions and sabotage undersea cables and pipelines.

On Thursday, Estonia said Russia had sent a fighter jet into NATO airspace over the Baltic Sea after an attempt to stop a Russia-bound tanker thought to be part of a so-called 'shadow fleet' used by Moscow to evade sanctions.

## Canada PM Carney says federal budget will come in the autumn

TORONTO (Reuters): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Sunday the federal government will present a budget in the autumn, days after the finance minister had said the new Liberal government will have an economic update later in the year.

Carney's announcement after he attended Pope Leo XIV's inauguration at the Vatican came days after Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said the new government will table an economic update later in the year, implying

it will not present an annual budget in the near term.

"There is not much value in trying to rush through a budget in a very narrow window - three weeks - with a new cabinet," Carney said at a press conference in Rome.

Carney said it would be too early to have a budget before the NATO summit in June, and before advanced discussions with the United States about their economic partnership. The government is also looking into areas where it can reduce costs and improve productivity

of the public sector, he said.

"Defense spending, the economic outlook, including the tariff relationship with the United States, and the (government) efficiency... all of those coming together, we will have a much more comprehensive, effective, ambitious, prudent budget in the fall," he said.

Champagne, in a post on X late on Saturday, said 70% of tariffs put in place to retaliate against those from U.S. are still in place.

The post came in response to opposition

Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre saying Carney "quietly dropped retaliatory tariffs to 'nearly zero' without telling anyone."

Carney was among many dignitaries attending the inaugural mass of newly elected Pope Leo on Sunday at the Vatican, where he also met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ahead of the G7 summit in Canada in June.

## Pope Leo urges unity for divided Church, vows not to be 'autocrat'

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Leo XIV formally began his reign on Sunday by reaching out to conservatives who felt orphaned under his predecessor, calling for unity, vowing to preserve the Catholic Church's heritage and not rule like "an autocrat".

After a first ride in the popemobile through an estimated crowd of up to 200,000 in St. Peter's Square and surrounding streets, Leo was officially installed as the 267th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church at an outdoor Mass.

Well-wishers waved U.S. and Peruvian flags, with people from both countries claiming him as the first pope from their nations. Born in Chicago, the 69-year-old pontiff spent many years as a missionary in Peru and also has Peruvian citizenship.

Robert Prevost, a relative unknown on the world stage who only became a cardinal two years ago, was elected pope on May 8 after a short conclave of cardinals that lasted barely 24 hours.

He succeeded Francis, an Argentine, who died on April 21 after leading the Church for 12 often turbulent years during which he battled with traditionalists and championed the poor and marginalized.

In his sermon, read in fluent Italian, Leo said that as leader of the world's 1.4 billion Roman Catholics, he would continue Francis' legacy on social issues such as combating pover-

ty and protecting the environment.

He vowed to face up to "the questions, concerns and challenges of today's world" and, in a nod to conservatives, he promised to preserve "the rich heritage of the Christian faith", repeatedly calling for unity.

Crowds chanted "Viva il Papa" (Long Live the Pope) and "Papa Leone", his name in Italian, as he waved from the open-topped popemobile ahead of his inaugural Mass, which was attended by dozens of world leaders.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic convert who clashed with Francis over the White House's hardline immigration policies, led a U.S. delegation alongside Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also Catholic.

Vance briefly shook hands with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the start of the ceremony. The two men last met in February in the White House, when they clashed fiercely in front of the world's media.

Zelenskyy and Leo were to have a private meeting later on Sunday, while Vance was expected to see the pope on Monday.

In a brief appeal at the end of the Mass, Leo addressed several global conflicts.

He said Ukraine was being "martyred", a phrase often used by Francis, and called for a "just and lasting peace" there.

He also mentioned the humanitarian situation in

Gaza, saying people in the Palestinian enclave were being "reduced to starvation".

Among those in the crowds on Sunday were many pilgrims from the U.S. and Peru.

Since becoming pope, Leo has already signalled some key priorities for his papacy, including a warning about the dangers posed by artificial intelligence and the importance of bringing peace to the world and to the Church itself.

Francis' papacy left a divided Church, with conservatives accusing him of sowing confusion, particularly with his extemporaneous remarks on issues of sexual morality such as same-sex unions.

Saying he was taking up his mission "with fear and trembling", Leo used the words "unity" or "united" seven times on Sunday and the word "harmony" four times.

"It is never a question of capturing others by force, by religious propaganda or by means of power. Instead, it is always and only a question of loving, as Jesus did," he said, in apparent reference to a war of words between Catholics who define themselves as conservative or progressive.

Conservatives also accused Francis of ruling in a heavy-handed way and lamented that he belittled their concerns and did not consult widely before making decisions.

Referring to St. Peter, the 1st century Christian apostle from whom

popes derive their authority, Leo said: "Peter must shepherd the flock without ever yielding to the temptation to be an autocrat, lording it over those entrusted to him. On the contrary, he is called to serve the faith of his brothers and sisters, and to walk alongside them."

Many world leaders attended the ceremony, including the presidents of Israel, Peru and Nigeria, the prime ministers of Italy, Canada and Australia, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

European royals also took their place in the VIP seats near the main altar, including Spanish King Felipe and Queen Letizia.

Leo shook many of their hands at the end of the ceremony, and hugged his brother Louis, who had travelled from Florida.

As part of the ceremony, Leo received two symbolic items: a liturgical vestment known as a pallium, a sash of lamb-wool representing his role as a shepherd, and the "fisherman's ring", recalling St. Peter, who was a fisherman.

The ceremonial gold signet ring is specially cast for each new pope and can be used by Leo to seal documents, although this purpose has fallen out of use in modern times.

It shows St. Peter holding the keys to Heaven and will be broken after his death or resignation.

## Portugal holds a third general election in 3 years

LISBON, Portugal (AP): Voters in Portugal returned to the polls on Sunday for a third general election in three years, as the country's increasingly fragmented political landscape defies efforts to unite behind policies on pressing national issues such as immigration, housing and the cost of living.

Hopes that the ballot might end the worst spell of political instability in decades for the European Union country of 10.6 million people could be dashed, however. Polls suggest the election is poised to deliver yet another minority government, leaving the Portuguese back where they started.

"What the polls indicate is that there will not be major differences from the last election results," said Marina Costa Lobo, head researcher at Lisbon University's Institute of Social Sciences. That outcome could bring another scramble to build political alliances in parliament, she said.

For the past 50 years, two parties have dominated politics in Portugal, with the center-right Social Democrats and the center-left Socialist Party alternating in power. They are likely to come out on top in this ballot.

But public frustration with their record in government has fueled the growth of new alternatives in recent years. That has denied the bigger parties enough seats in parliament to snare a majority needed to ensure that they serve a full four-year term.

"This campaign was very, very weak, had ridiculous moments, like clownish. Very little was spoken about Portugal within the European Union — it's like we are not part of it," teacher Isabel Monteiro, 63, said in Lisbon. "So I came with the conviction

that I need to vote, as it is my civic duty, but I come with a bit of sadness and disenchantment with all parties."

A center-right minority government headed by the Social Democrats in partnership with the smaller Popular Party lost a confidence vote in parliament in March after less than a year in power, as opposition lawmakers teamed up against it. That triggered an early election, which had been due in 2028.

Polls have suggested that the partnership, called Democratic Alliance, again has a small lead over the Socialists, but likely not enough to secure a 116-seat majority in the 230-seat National Assembly, Portugal's parliament.

Voting began at 8 a.m. (0700 GMT) and ends at 8 p.m. (1900 GMT), when exit polls can be published. Most official results are expected by midnight (2300 GMT).

The confidence vote was triggered by a political storm around potential conflicts of interest in the business dealings of Social Democratic Prime Minister Luis Montenegro's family law firm. Montenegro has denied any wrongdoing and is standing for reelection.

Corruption scandals have dogged Portuguese politics in recent years. That has helped fuel the rise of Chega (Enough), a hard-right populist party whose leader André Ventura says he has "zero tolerance" for misconduct in office.

But Chega, which shot from 12 to 50 seats to come third in last year's election, has recently fallen foul of its own lawmakers' alleged wrongdoing.

One of them is suspected of stealing suitcases from the Lisbon airport and selling the contents online, and another allegedly faked the signature of a dead woman.

Both resigned.

"We are lacking people with character, with righteousness," said Alexandre Cardoso, a 75-year-old retiree. "It worries me more due to my grandchildren. ... There is a lot of disenchantment, a lot, especially for people of my generation that have gone through what we did. I don't see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Chega owes much of its success to its demands for a tighter immigration policy that has resonated with voters.

Portugal has witnessed a steep rise in immigration. In 2018, there were fewer than a half-million legal immigrants in the country, according to government statistics. By early this year, there were more than 1.5 million, many of them Brazilians and Asians working in tourism and farming.

Thousands more lack the proper documents to be in Portugal.

The outgoing government announced two weeks before the election that it was expelling about 18,000 foreigners living in the country without authorization. Though such a step is routine, the timing drew accusations that it was trying to capture votes from Chega.

Socialist leader Pedro Nuno Santos, who is also standing for prime minister, described the move as a "Trumpification" of Portuguese politics, referring to U.S. President Donald Trump's focus on immigration policies.

A housing crisis has also fired up debate. House prices and rents have been soaring for the past 10 years, due in part to an influx of white-collar foreigners who have driven up prices.

House prices jumped another 9% last year, said National Statistics Institute, a government body. Rents in and around the capital Lisbon, where around 1.5 million people live, last year saw the steepest rise in 30 years, climbing more than 7%, the institute said.

People complain that they can't afford to buy or rent a home where they come from, and that they and their children have to move away to buy.

The problem is compounded by Portugal being one of Western Europe's poorest countries.

The average monthly salary last year was around 1,200 euros (\$1,340) before tax, according to the statistics agency. The government-set minimum wage this year is 870 euros (\$974) a month before tax.





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# Too soon to tell of the success of Russia-Ukraine talks

The Russians and the Ukrainians have started talking to each other for the first time in Istanbul. This was after Russian President Vladimir Putin in a televised address agreed to do so.

It is not possible to delve into the reason for the change of heart in the Russian president because he was not ready for any kind of talks. The two delegations met in Turkey's capital. Turkey Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan chaired the meeting.

The Ukrainian delegation was led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, and the other members of the Ukrainian delegation were First Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kyslytsya, domestic intelligence service's deputy head Oleksandr Poklad, and foreign intelligence unit deputy head Oleh Luhovsky.

The Russian delegation was headed by presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky, and it included Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin, Deputy Defence Minister Alexander Fomin, and director of military intelligence agency Igor Kostyukov. Fidan told the delegations at the beginning of the meeting, "We have to seize this opportunity to move forward on the path of peace. Every day that is delayed causes more lives to be lost."

Of course, it was not possible that there should be a breakthrough in a meeting between the delegations of two countries who had been at war with each other for three years. But there was a significant outcome when Russia and Ukraine agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners from each side. Russian delegation head Medinsky said after the two-hour meeting, "Overall, we are satisfied with the results and ready to continue contacts."

He also said that the two sides had agreed to provide a detailed proposal for the ceasefire. Ukraine delegation head Umerov said, "I think the next step would be that the leaders-level meeting should be organised." Fidan wrote on X, "Turkey would continue to make every effort to achieve a lasting peace between Russia and Ukraine."

Turkey has been playing an important role in the war in Ukraine. It had mediated along with the United Nations for Ukraine to export its grain through its Black Sea ports in July 2022. Both Ukraine and Russia trust Turkey as a neutral country.

Istanbul has close relations with Kyiv and Moscow. The European Union (EU) countries have been fiercely opposed to Russia and none of the European capitals could have served as a neutral venue for the talks. Interestingly, Turkey in many ways represents the West by virtue of its membership of the Western military alliance, the NATO.

Sources who spoke on condition of anonymity to Western news agency Reuters revealed that the Russian position was maximalist. Moscow is demanding that it would want to retain control of four regions in eastern Ukraine though they are not under Russian occupation.

Medinsky said that if Ukraine does not accept the peace offer made by Russia, it would be writing its own death. According to Medinsky, Russia can continue to fight as long as it needs to, and a reference was made to Russia's 21-year-war with Sweden in the 18th century.

The talks will be drawn out. There is need for patience. The only urgency is for a ceasefire, and it is to be seen how quickly it can be reached. The Russians feel that they are in an advantageous position and they can make tougher demands on Ukraine at the negotiation table.

With Americans refusing to continue with the arms supplies to Ukraine, Kyiv may not be able to sustain a longish war. This despite the fact that EU members are determined to help Ukraine financially as well as militarily. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is aware of the painful fact that it is only America that can make some difference in the outcome of the war.

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# Trump's tariffs are failing, but the old model won't save us either

Gabor Scheiring

On May 12, the United States and China announced that they are putting reciprocal tariffs on pause for 90 days. Some tariffs will be retained while trade negotiations continue, a joint statement said.

This is yet another reversal of the sweeping tariffs US President Donald Trump imposed in early April that destabilised the global economy and sent stock markets into freefall.

Although he claimed that his measures would make the US economy "boom", it was clear from the start that they would not work. A trade war cannot improve the lot of American workers, nor bring back manufacturing into the country.

Now spooked by corporations slashing profit targets and reports of the US gross domestic product (GDP) shrinking, the Trump administration appears to be walking back on its strategy. But going back to economic liberalism under the guise of "stability" is not the right course of action.

The current global economic system, distorted by policies favouring the rich sustained over decades, has proven itself to be unsustainable. That is why we need a new world economic order that promotes inclusive and sustainable development across both the Global North and South and addresses global socioeconomic challenges.

The crisis of liberal globalisation

The troubles that economies around the world currently face are the result of policies the elites of the Global North imposed over the past 80 years.

In its original Keynesian vision, the economic order put forward by the Allied Powers after World War II aimed to combine trade, labour, and development best practices to foster inclusive growth. However, over the following few decades, corporate opposition in the US and Britain derailed this order, replacing it with a skewed system centred around the Global North's chief economic instruments, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, both created in 1944.

In the 1970s, economic elites blamed rising inflation and stagnation not on temporary shocks like the oil crisis but on what they saw as excessive concessions to organised labour: government overspending, strong unions, and heavy regulation. Subsequently, they launched an institutional counter-revolution against the Keynesian model of power sharing and social compromise.

This counter-revolution took shape in the 1980s under US President Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who aggressively pursued policies to restore corporate profitability. They slashed taxes on the wealthy, liberalised international capital flows that made it easier to relocate production to low-cost economies, deregulated the financial sector, weakened labour unions, and privatised public services. As a result, outsourcing of labour, tax evasion, real estate speculation, financialisation, and credit-fuelled bubbles became US

corporations' dominant ways of making profit.

In developing countries, the IMF, the World Bank and regional development banks pushed governments to cut public spending, privatise state-owned enterprises, remove trade barriers, and deregulate markets rapidly and with little regard for social consequences.

As a result, the 1980s and 90s became lost decades for many countries embracing globalisation through radical liberalisation. These policies triggered massive employment shocks, rising inequalities, skyrocketing debt and persistent financial turbulence from Mexico to Russia.

East Asian economies were the exceptions, as they learned to circumvent the straitjacket of liberal globalisation and joined the global economy on their

ment, they delivered rent-seeking and resource extraction without boosting productivity or innovation.

Trump's economic policies follow a similar path of economic populism and nationalistic rhetoric. Just like illiberal economic policies failed in Europe, his tariffs were never going to magically reindustrialise the US or end working-class suffering.

If anything, tariffs – or now the threat of imposing them – will accelerate China's competitive edge by pushing it to deepen domestic supply chains, foster regional cooperation, and reduce reliance on Western markets. In the US, the illiberal response will drag labour standards down, eroding real wages through inflation and propping up elites with artificial protections.

Furthermore, Trump has

**Yet, instead of achieving genuine structural transformation, they fostered oligarchies dominated by politically connected elites. Instead of development, they delivered rent-seeking and resource extraction without boosting productivity or innovation. Trump's economic policies follow a similar path of economic populism and nationalistic rhetoric. Just like illiberal economic policies failed in Europe, his tariffs were never going to magically reindustrialise the US or end working-class suffering. If anything, tariffs – or now the threat of imposing them – will accelerate China's competitive edge by pushing it to deepen domestic supply chains, foster regional cooperation, and reduce reliance on Western markets. In the US, the illiberal response will drag labour standards down, eroding real wages through inflation and propping up elites with artificial protections.**

own terms.

The biggest beneficiaries of this system were Western economic elites, as corporations profited from low-cost production abroad and domestic deregulation at home. The same cannot be said for Western workers, who faced stagnating real wages, eroded labour protections, and increasing economic insecurity under the pressure of competitiveness, relocation, and automation.

Illiberal economic policy is doomed to fail

For those of us who studied the post-war economic order, it was apparent that without correcting the pitfalls of liberal globalism, a nationalist, illiberal counter-revolution was coming. We saw its signs early on in Europe, where illiberal populists rose to prominence, gaining a foothold first in the periphery and then gradually scaling up to become Europe's most disruptive force.

In the countries where they gained power, they pursued policies superficially resembling developmentalism. Yet, instead of achieving genuine structural transformation, they fostered oligarchies dominated by politically connected elites. Instead of develop-

ment, they delivered rent-seeking and resource extraction without boosting productivity or innovation. Trump's economic policies follow a similar path of economic populism and nationalistic rhetoric. Just like illiberal economic policies failed in Europe, his tariffs were never going to magically reindustrialise the US or end working-class suffering.

Western governments rescued big banks and allowed financial markets to return to business as usual. Meaningful reforms of the global economic architecture never materialised. Meanwhile, the living standards of working- and middle-class families from Germany to the US stagnated or declined as wages flatlined, housing prices soared, and economic insecurity deepened.

We cannot return to this dysfunction again. We need a new global economic order focused on multilateral governance, ecological sustainability, and human-centric development. Such progressive global multilateralism would mean governments coordinating not only on taxing multinational corporations and curbing tax havens but also on regulating capital flows, setting minimum labour and environmental standards, sharing green technologies, and jointly financing global public goods.

In this new economic order, the institutions of global economic governance would make space for developing and emerging countries to implement industrial policies and build stronger ties with public finance bodies to mobilise patient, sustainable capital. This cooperative approach would offer a practical alternative to liberal globalism by promoting accountable public investment and development-focused financial collaboration.

Parallel to the eco-social developmentalism in emerging economies, wealthy nations need to embrace a post-growth model gradually. This strategy prioritises wellbeing, ecological stability, and social equity over endless GDP expansion.

This means investing in care work, green infrastructure, and public services rather than chasing short-term profits or extractive growth. For mature economies, the goal should be shifting from growing more to distributing better and living within planetary limits. This would also allow more space for low- and middle-income countries to improve their living standards without overexploiting our limited shared natural resources.

With stronger cooperation between national and multilateral public finance institutions and better tools to tax and regulate corporations, governments could regain the capacity to create stable, well-paying jobs, strengthen organised labour, and tackle inequalities. This is the only way for American workers to regain the quality of life they aspire to.

Such progressive multilateralism would be a powerful long-term antidote against illiberal populism. Achieving this shift, however, requires building robust global and regional political coalitions to challenge entrenched corporate interests and counterbalance the existing liberal, capital-driven global framework.

The challenge is clear: not only to critique Trump's destructive policies but to present a bold, coherent vision of industrial renewal, ecological sustainability, and global justice. The coming months will show whether anyone is prepared to lead that transformation.

# Drowning humanity: Another chapter in Modi govt's brutality

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

Another story of the Modi government's brutality and inhumanity has come to light on the part of India, which makes one bow their heads in shame, but the Modi government is not ashamed. This time, the horrifying tale involves Rohingya refugees-already among the world's most persecuted minorities-who have now become victims of an act so barbaric that it has alarmed the international conscience. Credible reports have surfaced indicating that dozens of Rohingya refugees were forced off Indian naval vessels into the Andaman Sea and made to swim toward Myanmar, a country from which they had fled to escape genocide and systemic oppression.

The incident is not only deeply disturbing but also a grave violation of international humanitarian norms. Tom Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, has rightly termed it an "unconscionable, unacceptable act." The very idea that refugees-already bearing the trauma of statelessness and persecution-could be blindfolded, forcibly transported, and thrown into open sea, speaks volumes about the moral degradation of those in power. These actions represent a blatant breach of the international principle of non-refoulement, which forbids

of refolement and emphasized the need for access to places of detention and fair treatment of refugees. Yet, the response from the Indian authorities has been not just dismissive but defiant-escalating their inhumane tactics instead of correcting them.

India, which once proudly opened its borders to refugees from Tibet, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka-now stands accused of pushing stateless Rohingya into the sea. Instead of honoring its civilizational heritage of hospitality and compassion, it is now following a path marred by hatred and exclusion. The Modi government's repeated targeting of the Rohingya community-detaining them, denying them basic rights, and now reportedly casting them into the ocean-reflects not just xenophobia but a dangerous, calculated strategy to appease a hyper-nationalist, anti-Muslim constituency.

The international community, particularly human rights organizations and the United Nations, must act with urgency. It is no longer sufficient to express concern or issue condemnations. Concrete diplomatic, legal, and economic measures are required to hold the Modi government accountable. The United Nations must press India to explain these incidents, grant access to the victims, and prosecute those responsible

**On March 3, 2025, Special Rapporteur Andrews had already communicated with the Indian government, raising concerns over arbitrary and indefinite detention of Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers. He had warned against the dangers of refolement and emphasized the need for access to places of detention and fair treatment of refugees. Yet, the response from the Indian authorities has been not just dismissive but defiant-escalating their inhumane tactics instead of correcting them. India, which once proudly opened its borders to refugees-from Tibet, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka-now stands accused of pushing stateless Rohingya into the sea. Instead of honoring its civilizational heritage of hospitality and compassion, it is now following a path marred by hatred and exclusion.**

returning individuals to territories where they are at risk of persecution or death.

The details are chilling. Dozens of Rohingya refugees, reportedly holding identification documents, were rounded up from Delhi and Assam. Around 40 of them were blindfolded and flown to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, only to be loaded onto an Indian naval vessel. In an act reminiscent of medieval cruelty, they were later handed life jackets and ordered into the sea-forced to swim toward a Myanmar island. Though they reportedly survived the perilous journey, their fate remains unknown. Another group of about 100 Rohingya refugees has also gone missing after being removed from a detention center in Assam and relocated to a border area with Bangladesh. Their condition and whereabouts are equally unclear.

The Modi government's silence and refusal to acknowledge, let alone apologize for, these acts, reflects not just policy failure but a complete erosion of ethical governance. The image of Indian naval ships-symbols of national strength-being used to commit such cruelty against helpless refugees is a grotesque distortion of national power. What makes it worse is that these acts are not isolated. They are consistent with a growing pattern of hostility, discrimination, and abuse against minorities, especially Muslims, under the current regime.

On March 3, 2025, Special Rapporteur Andrews had already communicated with the Indian government, raising concerns over arbitrary and indefinite detention of Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers. He had warned against the dangers

for these grave human rights violations. Refugee protection is a global responsibility, but when a country as large and influential as India shirks this duty with such cruelty, it sets a dangerous precedent for others to follow.

Mr. Andrews' efforts deserve support and reinforcement. As a representative of the UN Human Rights Council, though he serves in a personal and unpaid capacity, his voice carries the weight of the international community's moral authority. His inquiry must be allowed to proceed unhindered, and his recommendations must be taken seriously-not just by India but by all member states committed to upholding human rights and international law.

This episode, if verified, is not just a humanitarian disaster; it is a political and moral catastrophe. It strips away the veneer of democracy and secularism that India still claims to possess and exposes the rotten core of a regime that sees compassion as weakness and cruelty as strength. The Rohingya, who escaped death in Myanmar only to be thrown into the sea by India, symbolize a global failure of conscience-but above all, they are evidence of the Modi government's disdain for human dignity.

To feel shame is a sign of humanity. Yet, the Modi government seems incapable of it. The world must ensure that while the victims may be voiceless, their suffering does not go unheard. Their story-of survival, displacement, and betrayal-must remain a constant reminder of the cost of indifference, the horror of inhumanity, and the urgent need to reclaim our shared humanity from the clutches of state-sponsored brutality.



# Trump visit marks a new era of Saudi-US strategic ties

Dr. Ali Awadh Asseri

US President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia this week marked a decisive and strategic transformation of Saudi-US relations, producing outcomes that exceeded expectations.

During his visit a wave of high-impact agreements were unveiled that reflect a remarkable alignment between the interests of the two nations and confirm the Kingdom's elevated status as a regional leader.

Trump's emphatic endorsement of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, his public praise for Saudi Arabia's reforms agenda, and his unreserved support on critical regional issues such as Iran, Syria, and security cooperation, signal a clear shift in Washington's strategic calculus. The outcomes of the visit not only fulfill key Saudi priorities, but surpass them, signaling a new era of influence, investment, and diplomatic engagement for the Kingdom. Trump expressed unequivocal support for the crown prince, praised Saudi Arabia's regional leadership, and reaffirmed US alignment with the Kingdom's positions on defense, investment, Iran, Syria, and Gulf security.

The visit formalized a \$600 billion Saudi investment commitment across US sectors such as energy, critical minerals, infrastructure, and advanced technology. These investments, previously pledged in principle, have now been operationalized, reinforcing economic interdependence while supporting the diversification goals of Saudi Vision 2030. US firms stand to benefit from capital inflows, industrial partnerships, and joint innovation ventures.

The presence of American CEOs, including Elon Musk, Jensen Huang, and Larry Fink, at the Saudi-US Investment Forum that took place during Trump's visit underscored growing private sector confidence in Saudi Arabia's economic trajectory. Agreements have been signed in areas such as clean energy, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, logistics, and advanced manufacturing, further embedding American technological leadership into Saudi development plans.

In defense, a \$142 billion arms agreement constitutes the centerpiece of a revamped strategic agenda. It provides Saudi Arabia with advanced capabilities in air and missile defense, unmanned aerial systems,

cybersecurity, and localized arms production. This enhances the Kingdom's deterrent posture and operational readiness, especially amid escalating regional threats and persistent instability.

Crucially, this deal also signifies renewed American confidence in Saudi Arabia's role as the anchor of Gulf security. Trump's explicit reaffirmation of US military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and readiness to safeguard Gulf allies restores confidence shaken during previous US administrations.

The visit also confirmed alignment on Iran. Trump echoed Saudi concerns and made it clear that Tehran faces a binary choice: reintegration through behavior

Trump's informal meeting in Riyadh with the country's new president, Ahmad Al-Sharaa, which was facilitated by the crown prince, marked a de facto endorsement of the Arab-led normalization effort. By lifting economic sanctions and deferring to regional leadership on the issue of the Syrian transition, Washington has implicitly acknowledged Riyadh's central role in post-conflict diplomacy.

Saudi Arabia has shaped the Arab League consensus on Syria, prioritizing reconstruction, stability, and a phased reintegration into regional institutions. This outcome underscores the Kingdom's growing influence as a diplomatic broker capable of balancing inter-

It allows the Kingdom to reaffirm its principled stance on Palestinian rights under the Arab Peace Initiative, while simultaneously preserving the option to explore normalization at its own pace, free from external linkage to final status negotiations. This approach not only strengthens Saudi diplomatic flexibility but also positions it as a credible and autonomous leader in regional peace efforts.

Taken together, these outcomes signify a broader policy realignment as the US-Saudi relationship evolves beyond transactional energy and defense ties into a comprehensive strategic partnership encompassing investment, regional diplomacy, and

inauguration reflected the durability of this alliance and also marks a correction of earlier US disengagements from Middle East policy.

His unambiguous support for Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the country's social reforms, and regional engagement recognizes the Kingdom's transition from oil-dependent conservatism to a dynamic and globally connected actor. The White House's affirmation of Saudi Arabia's leadership sends a broader message: that a reformed and confident Saudi Arabia is integral to regional and global stability.

Riyadh's foreign policy increasingly emphasizes balance and diversification. The Kingdom has strengthened relations with China, deepened energy and investment ties with India, and engaged with Russia on the issue of OPEC+ coordination, all while remaining anchored in its foundational partnership with Washington.

This strategic pluralism is not a rejection of US leadership but a reflection of Saudi Arabia's rising agency. Trump's embrace of this flexible approach, rather than viewing it as a threat, underscores a pragmatic redefinition of alliance management in a multipolar world.

While differences persist — notably over oil pricing, currency flows, and global alignments — these are manageable within the new framework of cooperation. What now binds the two nations is more substantive than ever: joint leadership in securing regional stability, counterterrorism, cyber cooperation, and long-term economic alignment.

The Kingdom's investments in US infrastructure and technology offer tangible benefits to American workers and industries, while American know-how accelerates Saudi Arabia's transition to a post-oil economy.

Looking ahead, Riyadh expects strategic consistency and institutional continuity from Washington. In return, it offers capital, regional leadership, and a shared commitment to security and innovation.

If this trajectory is maintained, Trump's visit will be remembered as the moment when Saudi-US relations entered a new phase defined not by hierarchy or dependency, but by mutual respect, long-term vision, and joint responsibility for shaping the future of the Middle East and beyond.

# Bridging the divide: Trump's vision for a new Middle East

Dr. Turki Faisal Al-Rasheed

The recent diplomatic maneuvers led by US President Donald Trump during his visit to Saudi Arabia and other nations in the Arabian Gulf represent a pivotal shift from the foreign policy frameworks established by his predecessors.

In an era marked by escalating conflicts and instability reminiscent of the pre-Second World War landscape, the Middle East has emerged as a critical stage on which to redefine global relations. Its abundant energy resources, financial power, and strategic location position it as a potential pivot point for international collaboration.

In a week characterized by what some have referred to as diplomatic improvisation, Trump's engagement with Saudi Arabia highlights the sense of urgency in adapting to an evolving geopolitical landscape. This partnership underscores the potential of Gulf states as essential strategic allies of the US, providing not only vast natural resources such as oil, but also a critical geographical advantage that enhances global trade and connectivity. These intricate dynamics reveal the complex interplay of modern geopolitics and shifting power structures on the global stage.

During his address in Saudi Arabia, Trump boldly proclaimed an end to America's longstanding practice of nation-building and military intervention, asserting that the US would no longer impose its values on other nations. This shift resonates with sentiments shared by many in the region, reflecting a growing frustration with the consequences of American interventionism.

"In the end, the so-called nation-builders wrecked far more nations than they built," he told an investment conference in Riyadh. While this critique captures a crucial sentiment, it also invites scrutiny regarding the historical ramifications of US foreign policy over the past seven decades.

Through Trump's lens, the Middle East is viewed as a landscape ripe for opportunity. Influenced by a circle of affluent advisers and unconventional think tanks, his vision intertwines with significant military interests and the region's natural resources.

Embracing the "Make America Great Again" mantra, Trump views engagement with the Middle East not only as a chance to redefine America's global role but also as a departure from traditional diplomatic practices that have typically prioritized Israel as a key ally.

However, it is essential to recognize the multifaceted dynamics that characterize the Middle East. American political commentators and New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman's assertion that "this Israeli government is not our ally" underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the region's complexities.

Trump appears to acknowledge that shifting demographics and evolving geopolitical landscapes could significantly impact American strategic objectives. The statement by the US ambassador to Israel that America acts in its own interests without seeking permission raises ethical concerns about the implications of American foreign policy in the region.

The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land starkly highlights these complexities, particularly in light of the recent violence in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments reveal a troubling strategy that risks further displacing Palestinians and exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis.

Such developments pose significant challenges to American interests, indicating a departure from traditional US support for Israeli policies, especially with regard to Syria, maritime routes in the Red Sea, and negotiations with Iran.

Amid these challenges, Trump's agenda seeks to reshape American interests by balancing traditional energy needs with the evolving geopolitical landscape. His discussions emphasized the importance of securing safe maritime routes while addressing the concerns of Arab allies regarding broader American intentions. Partnerships

with nations such as Saudi Arabia, centered around peaceful energy initiatives, aiming to foster economic collaboration and mutual political respect.

For these partnerships to flourish, however, a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue is paramount. The establishment of a legitimate Palestinian state could serve as a linchpin for the transformation of regional relations and the facilitation of Israel's integration into a cohesive Middle East. Without acknowledgment of this necessity, agreements risk becoming mere formalities, burdened by distrust and dissatisfaction.

Trump's aspirations extend beyond mere diplomacy; he positions himself as a potential peacemaker. While this ambition could earn him accolades, such as the Nobel Peace Prize, its realization hinges on fostering balanced partnerships throughout the region. Arab nations hold considerable strategic leverage that, if wisely utilized, could align with Trump's broader vision. A unified Arab stance is critical for efforts to counter foreign interference and address extremist threats that could escalate tensions.

As we delve deeper into this complex situation, three prominent dynamics emerge. The first encompasses the promotion of

**Finally, there is a compelling call for sustainable development and the common good, with Saudi Arabia aiming to lead by example through its ambitious Vision 2030 initiative, which seeks to diversify the national economy and lessen its dependency on oil. Through this lens, Trump recognizes the potential of Saudi Arabia as a vital channel for dialogue with Russia. His administration sees the Kingdom's role as a pivotal one in efforts to mitigate tensions and foster positive relations between Moscow and Washington. Given the ongoing crisis stemming from the war between Russia and Ukraine, Saudi diplomacy has demonstrated a sincere commitment to addressing global nuclear fears and the promotion of regional stability. The Arabian Gulf and broader Middle East are not merely regions of contention; they represent opportunities for strategic partnerships. Over the past decade, Arab states have adeptly navigated their international relations, distancing themselves from partisan affiliations and asserting their agency in global affairs.**

conflict, often perpetuated by the US military-industrial complex, right-wing elements within the Israeli government, and various special interest groups entrenched in Washington. This cycle of violence, frequently driven by economic motivations, detracts from genuine peace efforts.

The second dynamic involves the rising influence of global powers such as China and Russia, which are increasingly inserting themselves into international relations, thereby reshaping traditional geopolitical alliances.

Finally, there is a compelling call for sustainable development and the common good, with Saudi Arabia aiming to lead by example through its ambitious Vision 2030 initiative, which seeks to diversify the national economy and lessen its dependency on oil.

Through this lens, Trump recognizes the potential of Saudi Arabia as a vital channel for dialogue with Russia. His administration sees the Kingdom's role as a pivotal one in efforts to mitigate tensions and foster positive relations between Moscow and Washington. Given the ongoing crisis stemming from the war between Russia and Ukraine, Saudi diplomacy has demonstrated a sincere commitment to addressing global nuclear fears and the promotion of regional stability.

The Arabian Gulf and broader Middle East are not merely regions of contention; they represent opportunities for strategic partnerships. Over the past decade, Arab states have adeptly navigated their international relations, distancing themselves from partisan affiliations and asserting their agency in global affairs.

As the US faces a com-

plex web of challenges, including a resilient military-industrial complex, economic sustainability pursuits and the emergence of new powers, it becomes clear that collaboration, rather than dominance, will be essential to achieve sustainable peace.

As Trump embarks on this diplomatic journey, addressing the foundational issues that resonate within the Arab world, in particular the Palestinian cause, is crucial. A profound call exists for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, coupled with an urgent need to confront the grim realities of Israeli violations.

The support of crisis profiteers for the interests of a few has perpetuated instability and conflict in the region. The current state of the Middle East reflects the consequences of historical missteps in US and wider Western foreign policies.

Ultimately, the nations of the Middle East aspire to stability and development, and are firmly opposed to cycles of violence. Achieving these objectives necessitates overcoming entrenched barriers and cultivating a dialogue-rich environment conducive to peace and prosperity.

By acknowledging and balancing the diverse aspirations of all stakeholders, Saudi-US relations stand

poised to enter a new era, one that places an emphasis on cooperation and mutual benefit while effectively addressing historical grievances and shifting the focus from power struggles to shared ambitions for a better future.

Trump's approach reflects a confluence of interests that offers a unique opportunity to formulate a politically astute strategy that recognizes the historical complexities of the Middle East. However, achieving a reciprocal balance is essential; without it, the persistent disconnect between American and Arab interests will hinder progress. Gulf leaders are increasingly cognizant of the futility of seeking agreements with the US, given past betrayals and the current geopolitical landscape.

As tensions persist, maintaining amicable relations with global powers such as Russia and China will be crucial to safeguarding energy markets and promoting economic growth. Lessons learned from previous American policies, particularly concerning oil-price manipulation, illuminate the dangers of misaligned interests. The solutions of one era often morph into the challenges of the next. Thus a future-oriented approach must involve a careful calibration of alliances that serve the interests of both the US and Middle Eastern nations, ultimately striving for stability, peace, and mutual respect.

In navigating these new diplomatic frontiers there lies the potential for a more balanced and fruitful engagement with the Middle East, one that acknowledges the complexities of the region and affirms the dignity of all its peoples.

# Israel's Gaza 'disengagement' that paved the way for conquest

Belén Fernández

In August 2005, the Israeli government officially withdrew from the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian coastal enclave it had occupied continuously since 1967. Apart from pulling back its armed forces, it had to undertake the dismantlement of 21 illegal settlements housing 8,000 Jewish settlers.

Israeli troops were deployed to begin the process, which pulled at the heartstrings of international media outlets like The New York Times. The paper reported on the sobbing settlers affected by Israel's "historic pullout from the Gaza Strip", some of whom had to be carried "screaming from their homes in scenes that moved a number of the soldiers to tears".

To be sure, there is nothing quite so tragic as illegal colonisers being uprooted from one section of land that does not belong to them and transferred to another section of land that does not belong to them. It bears mentioning that a majority of the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip are themselves refugees from Israel's blood-drenched conquest of Palestine in 1948, which killed 15,000 Palestinians, expelled three-quarters of a million more, and destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages.

Since 2005, the myth of a unilateral Israeli "withdrawal" from Gaza has stubbornly persisted – and has been repeatedly invoked as alleged evidence of Israel's noble willingness to occasionally play by the rules.

And yet objectively speaking, what happened in August of that year was not much of a "withdrawal" at all, given that the Israeli

military continued to control Gaza's borders while subjecting the territory to a punishing blockade and periodic wanton bombardment.

Israeli officials themselves made no effort to hide what they were really up to. In 2004, while the plan was still being discussed in the Knesset, Dov

whole issue of Palestinian statehood had been "removed indefinitely from our agenda" – and all with the "blessing" of the president of the United States of America "and the ratification of both houses of Congress".

Since the so-called "withdrawal" from Gaza did not entail ceasing to

threw the place into panic."

These were the effects of Israeli aircraft executing sonic booms in the skies over Gaza, a method El-Sarraj noted "was never used before the disengagement, so as not to alarm or hurt the Israeli settlers and their children". And that was just the start of the "disengaging".

**Since the so-called "withdrawal" from Gaza did not entail ceasing to make life hell for the Palestinian inhabitants of the territory, Israel remained ever-engaged on that front. On September 28, 2005 – the month following the drama of the sobbing settlers and soldiers – the late Dr Eyad El-Sarraj, founder of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, wrote on the Electronic Intifada website: "During the last few days, Gaza was awakened from its dreams of liberation with horrible explosions which have shattered our skies, shaken our buildings, broken our windows, and threw the place into panic." These were the effects of Israeli aircraft executing sonic booms in the skies over Gaza, a method El-Sarraj noted "was never used before the disengagement, so as not to alarm or hurt the Israeli settlers and their children". And that was just the start of the "disengaging".**

Weisglass, a senior adviser to then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, stated point-blank: "The disengagement is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that is necessary so there will not be a political process with the Palestinians."

By "freezing" the political process, Weisglass went on to explain, "you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and you prevent a discussion on the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem". Thanks to "disengagement", then, the

make life hell for the Palestinian inhabitants of the territory, Israel remained ever-engaged on that front. On September 28, 2005 – the month following the drama of the sobbing settlers and soldiers – the late Dr Eyad El-Sarraj, founder of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, wrote on the Electronic Intifada website: "During the last few days, Gaza was awakened from its dreams of liberation with horrible explosions which have shattered our skies, shaken our buildings, broken our windows, and

In 2006, Israel launched Operation Summer Rains in the Gaza Strip, which scholars Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé would subsequently characterise as being thus far the "most brutal attack on Gaza since 1967". This, of course, was before Gaza was awakened from its dreams of liberation with an all-out Israeli genocide, which has now killed more than 53,000 Palestinians since October 2023.

But there was plenty of brutality in between, from Israel's Operation Cast Lead – which kicked off in





# Minister prioritizes to increase county’s export up to \$60 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan said that the government is implementing comprehensive economic policies to take the country’s exports to \$60 billion through tariff rationalization.

Tariff rationalization plays a significant role in economic governance, and it is planned to take country’s export to \$60 billion in the next five years through short, medium and long term economic and trade policies goals, Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan told APP in an exclusive interview here Sunday.

The commerce minister said that tariffs have a pivotal role for promoting trade liberalization, for which, on the instructions of Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the government has formulated a comprehensive tariff policy, which will increase the volume of domestic trade and give Pakistan an opportunity to enter new markets.

Jam Kamal said that the government has planned to increase domestic exports up to \$60 billion in the next five years and Prime Minister, Muhammad Sha-

hbaz Sharif is giving policy guidelines in this regard.

Replying to a question on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with different countries, he said that the government is working on trade diversification at the item level to introduce the new commodities in the international market for expanding the country’s trade basket and giving an option to liberalize the country’s trade with these economies.

The Minister said that Pakistan has finalized FTAs with China, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, and similarly, FTAs with Turkey, Thailand and Iran are still in the negotiation stage, in which the role of tariff policy is very important.

He said that Pakistan’s Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Central Asian countries Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Indonesia is of great importance in trade with these countries.

The minister said that Pakistan prioritized its trade with regional countries, including the Central Asian Republic and also promoted its goods to the non-traditional markets of North and South America.

He said that Pakistan

supports free trade in global and regional trade and policies are also being formulated in this regard.

Replying to a question, he said the current government’s home-grown tariff rationalization policy vision has emerged the country as liberalized and robust economy at the global level, which will not only increase the country’s exports, but also increase the effectiveness of Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTAs) with various countries and also connect the country’s economy with the Global Supply Value Chain (GSVG).

The Minister said that in Pakistan, tariffs have historically served as a significant source of revenue, often at the expense of export competitiveness and industrial efficiency.

He said that tariff rationalization is crucial for Pakistan’s economic transformation, promoting export competitiveness, industrial efficiency, and trade integration with potential global and regional markets.

The minister said the main policy suggestions are lowering the tariffs on value-added and finished goods for enhancing insti-

tutional capacity, making trade agreements more robust, and promoting export-oriented industrialization.

Jam Kamal said that due to the government’s tariff rationalization policy, the country’s economy would be efficient and achieve industrial productivity and trade competitiveness for sustainable economic growth.

He said that data science and statistics were important in the current era, and the government has conducted a diagnostic study of 15 potential export-oriented sectors and decided to go for pragmatic decisions to reduce or increase the tariff in light of available data from different quarters.

Replying to another question, he said that regional trade was the main focus of the government and five Central Asian states, including Azerbaijan is important for increasing trade and economic connectivity with European countries.

The minister said that Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan were important trading partners in future trade with Pakistan.



KARACHI: A vendor displaying goats to attract customers at roadside.

## Cotton cultivation on 2.7m acres completed

MULTAN (APP): Punjab has achieved a significant milestone in its ongoing cotton sowing campaign, with cultivation completed on over 2.7 million acres of land so far, said Secretary Agriculture Punjab Iftekhar Ali Sahoo.

Chairing a review meeting on the cotton crop situation, the secretary shared optimism about achieving the province’s overall target of 3.5 million acres within the next 10 days.

Secretary Sahoo highlighted that special focus was being paid on the care of early cotton sowing, which remained free from pest attack. “During the recent heatwave, special advisory was issued to farmers to safeguard their crops,” he added.

Technical committees comprising agricultural experts and progressive farmers have been established. Furthermore, an adequate and timely supply of canal water was being ensured in all major cotton-growing regions.

The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary Agriculture Task Force Punjab Muhammad Shabbir Ahmad Khan, Director Generals of Agriculture Chaudhry Abdul Hameed, Naveed Asmat Kahloon, Dr. Abdul Rehman, Dr. Abdul Qayyum, and other senior officials.

## Machinery imports surged

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall machinery group experienced a substantial increase of 14.35 percent during the first ten months of the current fiscal year (July-April) compared to FY 2023-24.

The growth in machinery imports would help elevate productivity and spur technological advancements in essential sectors, leading to economic expansion and progress in infrastructure development.

The total imports of the machinery group during the 10 months of the FY 2024-25 stood at \$7,729.329 million against the imports of \$6,759.47 million of the corresponding period the last year.

The import of agriculture sector machinery and equipment surged by 33.79 percent from \$69.276 million to \$92.578 million; textile machinery 61.716 percent from \$ 118.201 million to \$ 191.137 million; power-generating machinery 65.41% from \$321.273 million to \$531.403 million; construction and mining machinery 57.21 percent from \$72.609 million to \$ 114.149 million; electrical machinery and apparatus 14.62% from \$ 2,590.517 million to \$2,969.217 million; other apparatus 27.51 percent from \$372.054 million to \$ 474.399 million; other machinery by 22.57 percent from \$ 1,370.516 million to \$1,679.882 million; and office machinery including data processing equipment declined by 10.27% from \$ 382.267 million to \$421.526 million.

However, during the period under review, the import of mobile phone declined by 14.21 percent from \$1,462.767 million to \$1,254.931 million and telecoms-related equipment by 5.75 from \$1,834.821 million to \$1,729.330 million.

# Investors assured of facilities

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Former Minister of State for Finance, assured the business community that the Government remains steadfast in its commitment to provide all out facilities to local and foreign investors. He addressed a delegation of over 25 member companies of the American Business Forum (ABF), representing American businesses operating in Pakistan.

The Minister expressed gratitude to Dr. Faisal Hashmi, Vice President of ABF and Senior Director at Coca-Cola, for organizing the constructive dialogue.

He emphasized that the Government is taking every step to ensure a conducive and enabling environment for investors. Highlighting the importance of a pro-business and investor-friendly taxation and regulatory environment, he confirmed that the Government is fully aware of its significance for retaining investor confidence and attracting more trade and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Acknowledging the business community’s role, particularly the American businesses, in Pakistan’s economy, the Minister participated in a session chaired by Mr. Kamran Atta Khan, CEO of Dupont

Operation in Pakistan and President of ABF. The ABF Board of Directors commended the Government’s innovative approach to partnering with the business community and praised Ali Pervaiz Malik’s proactive engagement.

Dr. Faisal Hashmi, in his vote of thanks, recognized the Minister’s willingness to address the business community’s concerns and his collaborative approach.

The State Bank of Pakistan’s recent assessment reported that FDI flow to Pakistan reached \$141 million in April 2025, showing a significant month-on-month increase from \$26 million in March 2025.

# Carpet association demands cut in taxes

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) has solicited the government to slash the additional 10 percent customs duty and decrease the 25 percent sales tax on semi-processed raw materials imported via the Torkham Border in the upcoming federal budget.

PCMEA Patron-in-Chief Abdul Latif Malik, Chairman Mian Atiq-ur-Rehman, and Vice Chairman Riaz Ahmad, in a joint media statement issued here Sunday, said that rising costs have made it increasingly difficult for Pakistan’s handmade carpets to remain competitive in international markets.

The government is trying to boost exports through initiatives like Uraan Pakistan, they said and added that such moves could only be successful by

reducing taxes and removing bureaucratic hurdles, besides formulating well-conceived balanced policies for the growth of one of Pakistan’s most valuable export industries.

The Association highlighted that the handmade carpet sector, which is entirely export-oriented and part of the country’s largest cottage industries, plays a significant role in the national economy by earning valuable foreign exchange. However, heavy duties, complex procedures, and certain restrictive measures have made it difficult for exporters to thrive.

The officials stressed that raw materials are often sent to Afghanistan for partial processing before being brought back to Pakistan for final value addition and eventual export. The imposition of a 25 percent sales

tax on these semi-processed imports through Torkham, they said, has placed an unsustainable financial burden on exporters.

They urged the government to reinstate the Final Tax Regime, cautioning that its absence would severely affect export performance.

Pakistan’s production costs are already much higher than regional competitors, if these issues persist, it risk losing international buyers — a loss it can ill afford, they mentioned.

The PCMEA has appealed to the government to address these pressing concerns in the forthcoming budget, emphasizing that protecting and promoting the handmade carpet industry is vital for both export growth and the livelihoods of the millions of artisans it employs.

# Saleem Memon appreciates swift approvals of development projects

HYDERABAD (APP): President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry (HCSTSI), Muhammad Saleem Memon, has welcomed the major development decisions taken during the recent 120th Governing Body meeting of the Hyderabad Development Authority (HDA), commending the leadership of Sindh Minister for Local Government, Saeed Ghani.

HCSTSI President appreciated the swift approvals of development projects and financial allocations for Gulistan-e-Sarmast and other residential schemes, calling them a testimony of the Sindh Government’s serious commitment to improving the urban infrastructure of Hyderabad.

In a formal letter addressed to the Minister, the Chamber President Saleem Memon acknowledged the positive steps taken so far but emphasized the need for further practical and sustainable measures to ensure long-term benefits of these decisions. He strongly recommended that at least 70% of the rev-

enue generated from Gulistan-e-Sarmast and other ongoing HDA schemes must be reinvested directly into their respective areas to promote self-sufficiency and continuous development.

He highlighted the urgent necessity for establishing a dedicated grid station for Gulistan-e-Sarmast, in line with NEPRA policies, to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply.

He also called for the immediate completion of the long-pending 36-inch water supply line, which has been delayed since 2009. Emphasis was laid on expediting internal road construction, drainage systems, and provision of water and electricity lines particularly in neglected sectors such as Kohsar Extension that have been deprived of basic amenities for decades.

HCSTSI President further urged the launch of new schemes under the Annual Development Program (ADP) for water filtration and sewerage treatment plants in severely underserved areas, includ-

ing Gulistan-e-Sarmast, Kohsar Zone, Bypass, and New Hyderabad City.

He also stressed the need for a complete revision of existing zoning strategies, proposing that each designated residential or commercial zone must be equipped with all basic utilities within a defined timeframe to prevent land misuse and speculation. This, he asserted, would encourage legal occupancy and promote healthy commercial activity.

Chamber President called on the HDA to prioritize the completion of infrastructure work in pending schemes and to organize well-planned plot auctions thereafter.

This would not only enhance the Authority’s revenue but also help regain the lost market value of land.

Expressing concern over the diminishing public trust in HDA due to years of neglect and unfulfilled commitments, he urged the Authority to take immediate and visible actions to restore public confidence through reliable service delivery.

He also suggested outsourcing key development works to ensure quality and timely execution.

Most significantly, HCSTSI President made a strong case for the inclusion of Hyderabad’s business community especially representation from HCSTSI in the Governing Body meetings of HDA. He emphasized that direct participation would allow the ground realities, public grievances, and trade-related concerns to be effectively presented at the policy level, leading to more practical and people-centric urban planning.

Concluding his remarks, he expressed hope that under the leadership of Saeed Ghani, the Local Government Department will continue to play a pivotal role in making Hyderabad’s development more transparent, effective, and citizen-focused.

He added that if the Chamber’s recommendations are adopted in the next Governing Body meeting, Hyderabad will progress rapidly towards becoming a well-planned and modern city.

# Technological advancement vital for defence, economic growth

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftekhar Ali Malik emphasized that in today’s rapidly changing global environment, technological advancement is essential not only for military preparedness but also for achieving sustainable economic growth.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists, including Convener of the FPCCI Regional Committee on Food Shahid Imran, Coordinator to the Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman, and former FPCCI Vice President Mian

Zahid Iqbal, her on Sunday, he said that the widening gap between technologically advanced nations and developing countries poses serious threats to both national security and economic sovereignty.

He stressed that investment in research and development (R&D), innovation, and modern industrial practices is critical to staying competitive on the global stage.

“Acquiring and mastering modern technology is no longer optional; it is a strategic necessity, especially in light of rising India tensions and the

demands of economic progress,” he said.

Iftekhar Ali Malik urged policymakers to act swiftly to ensure Pakistan does not fall further behind in the global technology race. He called for robust public-private partnerships and enhanced regional cooperation to encourage technological exchange, foster innovation, and reduce reliance on foreign technologies.

He also emphasized the need for a tech-friendly entrepreneurial ecosystem, heavy investment in science and technology education, and the nurturing of

indigenous talent. “Only by empowering our youths and professionals in emerging fields like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing can we strengthen both our economy and national defence,” he noted.

He pointed out that nations prioritizing technological innovation have achieved substantial GDP growth, higher living standards, and greater global influence. He underscored the urgency for Pakistan to adopt a proactive approach in embracing cutting-edge technologies to secure its future.

# PMYP’s initiative to boost Women-Owned Businesses

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to promote economic empowerment among women, the Prime Minister’s Youth Program (PMYP) has planned to launch an initiative to support women-owned businesses through the Prime Minister’s Youth Business & Agriculture Loan Scheme (PMYBALS).

In collaboration with Rawalpindi Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RWCCI), the scheme aims to provide

financial assistance to young women entrepreneurs, enabling them to start or expand their businesses.

According to an official, 25% of the scheme’s quota is dedicated to women entrepreneurs, promoting female economic empowerment. Furthermore, a Loan Facilitation Center will be established at RWCCI to streamline the loan application process and support women-led businesses.

Notably, the program

would also provide formal mentorship sessions, capacity-building programs, and awareness and business training sessions to equip women with the necessary skills to succeed in the business world.

These initiatives will be extended to RWCCI members and women from other regional chambers, equipping them with the tools and expertise needed to succeed in business.

Under PMYBALS, women entrepreneurs can

access loans up to a specified amount to pursue their business ventures.

The initiative is expected to have a significant impact on women’s economic empowerment, promoting financial independence and contributing to the country’s overall economic growth.

By supporting women-owned businesses, PMYP is playing a vital role in promoting gender equality and social development.

# PFC team returns from China after productive visit

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from PFC returned to Pakistan on Sunday after completing a successful weeklong visit to China, aimed at enhancing bilateral trade and exploring collaborative opportunities in the furniture industry.

Upon arrival, PFC CEO Mian Kashif Ashfaq shared that the delegation held high-level meetings with Chinese counterparts focused on joint ventures in manufacturing, technology transfer, and investment. Preliminary agreements were reached to enhance

Pakistan’s furniture production capabilities by leveraging China’s advanced technological expertise.

The visit also generated encouraging prospects for export growth, with Chinese firms showing strong interest in importing high-quality Pakistani wooden furniture. Both sides emphasized the mutual benefits of collaboration, with Chinese stakeholders expressed confidence in Pakistan’s skilled workforce and abundant raw material resources.

The delegation visited modern manufacturing fac-

ilities in Shanghai and Guanzhou, gaining valuable insights into sustainable production practices, innovative design techniques, and advanced machinery.

Terming the visit a milestone, Mian Kashif Ashfaq said it laid the foundation for long-term partnerships that could position Pakistan as a competitive player in the global furniture market. He added that such cooperation will contribute to economic growth, job creation, and an overall uplift in the standards of Pakistan’s furniture industry.





**In brief**

**Van Aert wins at last**

SIENA (AFP): Wout van Aert snapped a dry run by winning stage nine of the Giro d'Italia on Sunday as Mexican rookie Isaac del Toro took the overall race lead after coming an agonising second. For the 21-year-old Del Toro, racing in his first Giro, this was a landmark performance that puts the UAE rider on the cycling map after he and Van Aert dropped everyone else. Italian Giulio Ciccone was third, 58 seconds down, while title pretenders Richard Carapaz, Simon Yates, Antonio Tiberi, Juan Ayuso, Egan Bernal and Adam Yates were all around a minute adrift. On the challenging white gravel roads towards Siena's iconic 12th-century Piazza del Campo finish line Primož Roglic, Tom Pidcock, Derek Gee and Michael Storer all lost considerable time in the overall standings. Del Toro now leads teammate Ayuso by 1min 13sec atop the overall. Tiberi is 1:30 off the pace, with Carapaz at 1:40 and Ciccone rounding out the top five at 1:41. For Van Aert it was a long awaited 50th win and the Belgian lay gasping on the floor of the medieval square that hosts a bareback horse race twice a year. Van Aert and Del Toro broke free from Bernal with 30km to go after it had seemed the Colombian was finally fully over his terrible injuries from a training crash in 2022, but now the 2019 Tour de France and 2021 Giro champion appears to be back in the mix at least. Del Toro refused to work with Van Aert and did most of the work over the final kilometres, possibly costing him the stage win on his big day.

**Journalism wins**

WASHINGTON (AFP): Pre-race favourite Journalism stormed to victory in the 150th Preakness Stakes on Saturday, producing a devastating finish to claim the second leg of US horse racing's Triple Crown. Journalism, ridden by Italian jockey Umberto Rispoli, looked set for more disappointment following his second-place finish in the Kentucky Derby after being boxed in coming down the stretch at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore, Maryland. But after clashing with the Bob Baffert-trained 6-1 shot Goal Oriented, Journalism burst through a gap and reeled in 20-1 outsider Gosger to claim a sensational win. Gosger and 4-1 shot Sandman finished second and third respectively. There was a brief delay as stewards reviewed footage of Journalism's skirmish with Goal Oriented before the Michael McCarthy-trained horse was confirmed as the victor. The 36-year-old Rispoli, the two-time Italian Champion Jockey, said the victory owed everything to Journalism's never say die approach. "I still can't realize what this horse did today," an emotional Rispoli said moments after crossing the line. "I got in trouble at the corner pole. But it's all about him -- it's a pleasure and a privilege to ride a horse like him." "It's just unbelievable. I won one of the legs of the Triple Crown and I'm crying like a kid." Journalism's triumph also marked a fairytale win for California-based trainer McCarthy, who lives in Altadena, one of the Los Angeles communities devastated by deadly wildfires in January. McCarthy said when he saw Journalism seemingly in a hopeless position, boxed in on the rails coming off the final turn, he had feared the worst.

# Sirbaz Khan successfully summits 8,586m Mount Kangchenjunga without oxygen



ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Pakistani mountaineer Sirbaz Khan has made history by successfully peaking Mount Kangchenjunga (8,586 metres) without supplementary oxygen, Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) announced on Sunday. The ascent, achieved at 5:00 AM Nepal Time (NPT), makes him the first Pakistani to climb all 14 of the world's 8,000-

metre peaks without the aid of bottled oxygen. Sirbaz's accomplishment places him among a select few elite climbers globally to achieve this feat. He has successfully climbed the following 14 peaks above 8,000 metres without relying on bottled oxygen: Everest (8,848 m), K2 (8,611 m), Kangchenjunga (8,586 m), Lhotse (8,516 m), Makalu (8,485 m), Cho

Oyu (8,188 m), Dhaulagiri (8,167 m), Manaslu (8,163 m), Nanga Parbat (8,126 m), Annapurna I (8,091 m), Gasherbrum I (8,080 m), Broad Peak (8,051 m), Gasherbrum II (8,035 m), and Shishapangma (8,027 m). His summit of Mt. Kangchenjunga was undertaken in pure alpine style, characterized by minimal equipment, the absence of fixed ropes or

camp established by Sherpas and crucially, no supplementary oxygen. This demanding approach underscores the magnitude of his accomplishment. Karrar Haidri, Secretary of the ACP, lauded Sirbaz's historic achievement. "Sirbaz Khan has brought immense pride to the entire nation. To complete all 14

eight-thousanders without oxygen is an extraordinary and heroic feat. He embodies the resilience, skill and bravery of Pakistan on the world's highest mountains." Sirbaz, who hails from Gilgit-Baltistan, has dedicated his mountaineering career to representing Pakistan on the world's highest stages and inspiring future generations of climbers.

## Chelsea seal treble with FA Cup win over Man Utd

LONDON (Agencies): Chelsea completed the domestic Treble with a clinical victory over Manchester United in the Women's FA Cup final at Wembley. Sandy Baltimore scored twice and substitute Catarina Macario got in on the act to seal a sensational debut campaign at the helm for Chelsea manager Sonia Bompastor. This game was watched by the club's new board member - Reddit founder Alexis Ohanian - who was at Wembley with wife Serena Williams after announcing a £20m investment. The opener came from Baltimore, who calmly placed the ball past goalkeeper Phallon Tullis-Joyce from the penalty spot after Celin Bizet's high leg caught Erin Cuthbert.

That was the breakthrough Chelsea had been looking for after Mayra Ramirez and Aggie Beever-Jones had threatened, dimming United's early pressure. USA international Macario came on as a substitute in the second half and confirmed victory with a powerful header late on, before Baltimore rubbed salt into United's wounds with her second goal in stoppage time, firing in from five yards.

Last year's FA Cup winners United started with intensity but did not capitalise, rarely testing goalkeeper Hannah Hampton in a largely cagey affair. It was their third successive year appearing in the final but United were not able to impose themselves in the way they would have liked and could not muster a response to going behind. Chelsea wrapped up a sixth successive Women's Super League title in late April, having already beaten Manchester City to win

the Women's League Cup. This is their first Treble since 2021 under former manager Emma Hayes, while it extends their astonishing record over United, winning 14 of their past 16 meetings now.

'Queens of global soccer' dominating It has been a big week for Chelsea after Ohanian's investment sent ripples of excitement throughout women's football and it was confirmed he would be joining the board.

He flew over from the United States with tennis legend Williams and their daughter Alexis Olympia and was not left disappointed. He described his team as the "queens of global soccer" in an interview with BBC Sport at half-time.

Co-owners Behdad Eghbali and Todd Boehly, sporting directors Paul Winstanley and Laurence Stewart, director Barbara Charone and Chelsea Women chief executive officer Aki Mandhar joined the new investors in celebration from their box.

For United, co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe was not in attendance, a year on from having been criticised for his absence when Marc Skinner's side won the trophy. Had Ratcliffe been at Wembley, he would have been encouraged by United's start as they tested Chelsea's defence from set-pieces and created a good chance for Dominique Janssen that she blasted just over the bar from the edge of the box.

But Chelsea's experience was evident as they rode the early pressure and began testing in-form United goalkeeper Tullis-Joyce. The Blues could have scored earlier as Ramirez got the better of

United captain Maya Le Tissier and almost teed up Lucy Bronze, before a combination of Tullis-Joyce and Leah Galton kept the ball from rolling over the line later in the first half.

Chelsea continued to attack and were eventually rewarded when Bizet fouled Cuthbert inside the box and gifted Bompastor's side an opportunity. Baltimore, signed from Paris St-Germain last summer, stepped up to the penalty spot and placed the ball past Tullis-Joyce, finding the left corner as Chelsea's fans at the other end of the stadium erupted in celebration.

The France international has been a standout performer in their unbeaten domestic campaign and she was in the spotlight again in the closing moments, swivelling and firing in home from close range in front of Chelsea's supporters to make it 3-0. United boss Skinner surprisingly left England international Ella Toone on the bench but she came on at half-time and was not able to spearhead a comeback, with Chelsea gaining more control.

It emphasised the gap that remains between WSL champions Chelsea and the chasing pack – a gap that is only likely to increase with Ohanian's backing. Bompastor's debut season has been near-perfect - but for the disappointing Champions League semi-final thrashing they suffered by Barcelona in April. The former Lyon boss was full of smiles as she fist-pumped in celebration when the full-time whistle went – her quest for Treble glory emphatically complete.



LONDON: Chelsea captain Millie Bright lifts the trophy with teammates after The Adobe Women's FA Cup Final match.



RAWALPINDI: Hasan Nawaz saw Quetta Gladiators through in a thriller.

## Hasan's top notch innings help Gladiators to down Sultans

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hasan Nawaz's brilliant batting steered Quetta Gladiators to a thrilling two-wicket win over Multan Sultans in their last league-stage game as they chased down the 186-run target on the last ball of the 20th over at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Sunday. Gladiators, who now sit atop the points table with seven wins and 15 points in 10 matches, handed Sultans their ninth loss of the HBL PSL X.

With Quetta requiring 11 runs off the last over, Hasan, who bludgeoned six sixes and two fours in the outing, only managed two runs off the first three balls against Mohammad Hasnain before launching him for six straight down the ground on the fourth ball. The penultimate ball saw Abrar Ahmed run out at non-striker's end while coming for the second run leaving Gladiators requiring two of the last ball, which was dismissed for another six over long on as Hasan finished with a 38-ball 67 not out.

At the start of the chase, Khawaja Muhammad Nafay (51, 26b, 5x4s, 4x6s) and Saud Shakeel (18, 24b, 2x4s) provided their team a strong start with a 77-run

opening stand in 7.5 overs, which also included 60 off the Powerplay.

Sultans landed consecutive blows in 8th, 9th and 10th overs to leave Gladiators 87-3 before Hasan partnered with Dinesh Chandimal (17, 10b, 2x4s, 1x6) for a 29-run stand as the latter fell prey to Ubaid Shah in the 13th over. Danish Aziz departed for a five-ball duck in the subsequent over with scorecard reading 123-5.

Hasan, who has 317 runs to his name in 10 games, and Faheem Ashraf (16, 9b, 1x4, 1x6) then wrestled back as they collected 36 runs off 20 balls for the sixth wicket including consigning Dilshan Madushanka's 15th over for 16 runs.

Gladiators required 46 runs off the last five overs with five wickets in hand, which they successfully notched with Hasan leading the charge as three wickets fell from the other end. For Sultans Shahid Aziz picked up three wickets for 29 runs in his four overs.

Earlier, Multan Sultans, who opted to bat first, were helped to 185-7 as Yasir Khan top-scored with a 25-ball 45 including six fours and two sixes. The right-handed opening batter also shared a 52-run second-

wicket stand with HBL PSL debutant Jahanzaib Sultan (25, 21b, 2x4s, 1x6) as Mohammad Rizwan departed in the second over.

Usman Tariq, who finished with figures of 4-0-32-3, dismissed the Jahanzaib and Yasir in the 7th and 9th overs, respectively as Sultans reached the halfway mark with 82 runs on the board.

No.4 batter Tayyab Tahir (36, 24b, 2x4s, 3x6s) and another HBL PSL debutant Humayun Altaf (16, 13b, 2x4s) stitched a quickfire 26-ball 42-run stand to provide the innings impetus in the middle overs.

While, Muhammad Amir Barki remained unbeaten for a 16-ball 21 hitting one four and a six after walking in to bat at 120-4, it was No.8 batter Shahid Aziz's (29, 14b, 2x4s, 2x6s) cameo, which took Sultans to a healthy total in the allotted 20 overs.

Scores in brief: Multan Sultans 185-7, 20 overs (Yasir Khan 45, Tayyab Tahir 36, Shahid Aziz 29, Jahanzaib Sultan 25, Muhammad Amir Barki 21; Usman Tariq 3-32). Quetta Gladiators 190-8, 20 overs (Hasan Nawaz 67 not out, Khawaja Muhammad Nafay 51; Shahid Aziz 3-29).

## Verstappen takes dominant win in Imola

IMOLA (Agencies): Red Bull's Max Verstappen took a dominant victory in the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix founded on an audacious overtaking move on the first lap. The four-time champion passed pole-sitter Oscar Piastri's McLaren around the outside of the first chicane after the start and controlled the race from there. A late safety car closed the field up and put the McLarens of Piastri and Lando Norris on Verstappen's tail. But a consummate restart from Verstappen allowed him to break free while Norris, on much fresher tyres than Piastri, fought for three laps before finally passing the Australian to take second. The result, Verstappen's second win of the season, reduces Piastri's championship lead over Norris to 13 points from 16, and puts the Dutchman nine behind the Briton. Lewis Hamilton benefited from an offset strategy, starting on the hard tyre, and the two safety cars to fight up from

12th on the grid to finish fourth for Ferrari, passing his teammate Charles Leclerc in the hectic closing laps thanks to much fresher tyres. For McLaren, there will be questions about strategy, after they pitted Piastri early in the race when he was second behind Verstappen, albeit beginning to lose time. Piastri acknowledged that they had made some "wrong calls" and also that he had "braked too early" on the first lap when challenged by Verstappen. That decision to stop early put Verstappen in a comfortable 10-second lead over Norris, who was unable to do anything about the Red Bull's advantage, and forced Piastri to have to fight back through the midfield cars to reclaim his position.

A virtual safety car mid-race made Verstappen's life even easier for a while, and wrecked Piastri's hopes of second place, but the Red Bull had long ago taken control of the race. It was a fitting drive to mark Red Bull's

400th grand prix. The two caution periods led to a see-sawing battle between the McLaren drivers for second place. Piastri had been on target to pass Norris when the Briton made his only pit stop and looked set to lead to a fight with Norris coming back at Piastri on fresher tyres. Shortly after Norris' stop, Esteban Ocon's Haas stopped on the hill between the Tosa and Piratella corners, leading to a virtual safety car (VSC) period. Norris was ahead after the VSC because Piastri stopped for fresh tyres to avoid being vulnerable to cars behind. Then, officials decided to deploy a full safety car when Kimi Antonelli's Mercedes stopped in exactly the same place as Ocon had. This time, Verstappen and Norris stopped for fresh tyres and Piastri did not - because he had no appropriate ones still available - and that put Norris back behind Piastri, but on 16-lap fresher tyres.



Behind the safety car, Norris suggested that Piastri's tyres "looked pretty dead" and they should not fight if they wanted to challenge Verstappen for the win. But McLaren chose not to apply team orders and the two battled for three laps before Norris finally swept by into the first chicane with five laps to go, by which time Verstappen was out of reach. The closing laps were com-

PELLING viewing, with the field alternating position between drivers on old tyres and those on fresh. This allowed Hamilton to move up. He had started on hard tyres and ran long, which allowed him to make his first stop under the VSC, and again for fresh tyres under the safety car. He passed Albon's Williams and Leclerc and was just 1.4 seconds behind Piastri at the flag.

Abbasi mentioned that he remained among the world's top blind bowlers until 2018, winning the Best Bowler award in four World Cups. In recognition of his outstanding performance, the Government of Pakistan honored him with the Pride of Performance Award in 2013. To a question, he recalled a historic match during the 2012 Blind World Cup against India. Abbasi said Pakistan defeated India on their home ground. After the match, the Pakistani team took a victory lap around the ground holding the national flag and chanting "Pakistan Zindabad." He said that the match also saw an unfortunate incident when, in frustration, the Indian team threw a bottle at him.





## In brief

### 14 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police teams from Industrial Area, Shams Colony, Korla, and Shahzad Town police stations arrested nine suspects involved in various criminal activities. A police spokesman told APP on Sunday that the teams also recovered 503 grams of hashish, 549 grams of Ice, and four pistols with ammunition from the possession of the accused. He said that during a special campaign launched to apprehend proclaimed offenders and absconders, police teams arrested another six criminals. He added that cases have been registered against the arrested individuals, and further investigation is underway. He said the operations were conducted under the special direction of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, as part of an ongoing crackdown against crime and criminal elements to ensure peace and tranquility in the federal capital. He said Islamabad Police remains committed to protecting the lives and property of residents, and no one will be allowed to disturb public order. Ensuring peace and safeguarding citizens remains the department's top priority.

### Over 11,000 vehicles fined

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has taken legal action against 11,961 vehicles involved in overloading during the ongoing year, as part of its intensified efforts to ensure road safety and discipline in the federal capital. An official told APP on Sunday that additional traffic personnel had been deployed at various key points across the city to enforce traffic rules and provide maximum assistance to commuters, particularly along Islamabad Expressway, Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed Road, Srinagar Highway and other major arteries. He said that the deployment aims to ensure smooth and safe travel for citizens and to make Islamabad completely accident-free. He said that Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Zeeshan has issued special directives to zonal DSPs to further enhance traffic flow on major roads, including Expressway, Srinagar Highway, and Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed Road. He further stated that Islamabad Police is committed to taking all possible measures to prevent road accidents and maintain the rule of law equally for all, in order to ensure smooth and safe traffic movement in the city.

### Two bike lifters arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, Margalla police team have arrested two wanted members of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting activities and recovered 10 stolen motorbikes and weapons with ammunition from their possession on Sunday. A public relations officer told APP that the Margalla police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of a bike lifter gang who were identified as Asif and nabeel. Police team also recovered 10 stolen motorbikes and two pistols from their possession. Additionally, cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq also directed officers for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens.

# Modi venting his anger on innocent Kashmiris to cover his defeat: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mushaal Hussain Mulick wife of Hurriyat Leader Yasin Malik in her video statement on the current situation in IIOJK said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was venting all his anger on the defenseless Kashmiris to cover the shame of his defeat.

She said that Modi has become disappointed after the defeat and become a victim of panic, as thou-

sands of Kashmiris have been jailed and attempts are being made to force confessions from them.

Modi government is destroying the businesses of Kashmiris and a number of Kashmiri students are being expelled from universities in India, their degrees are being cancelled.

Those who write on social media are being silenced, after the defeat, Modi government was

using these tactics, she added. Modi government has only one agenda, to empty Kashmir of Kashmiris and settle the new Hindu population.

As a result of the victory that Pakistan got, India increased the atrocities on Kashmiris. The time has come for all Kashmiris to become the voice of Kashmiris to give them the right to self-determination, she urged.

## NA resolution of CSS age limit hailed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The recently passed resolution in the National Assembly of Pakistan to increase the upper age limit for the CSS examination from 30 to 35 years and the number of attempts from three to five has been widely welcomed across the country.

Youth groups, educationists, former bureaucrats, student organizations and civil society have hailed it as a historic move toward ensuring equal opportunities for young aspirants.

According to analysts, the resolution not only aims to make access to the civil service more transparent and inclusive but also sends a message of hope to thousands of

determined students who face economic hardships, educational delays, and intense competition. Student unions have labeled it a "youth-friendly policy" that will pave the way for meaningful representation of young people in state institutions.

University students preparing for the CSS exam view the resolution as the fulfillment of a longstanding demand. They note that many candidates are compelled to delay their preparation due to financial constraints or educational interruptions, making the previous age limit of 30 a significant barrier.

Last day, a youth delegation met with MNA

Malik Bashir Awan and MNA Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar to express their gratitude for the passage of the resolution. The delegation called it a positive step toward restoring young people's confidence and increasing their inclusion in national institutions.

In the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this decision is being described as a practical example of youth empowerment. Pakistani students and professionals abroad have also praised the move, calling it a reflection of policy flexibility and alignment with international standards for inclusive governance.

## Rich tributes paid to Pakistan Armed Forces



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A special ceremony was organized at the secretariat of Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, and Omar Shahid Butt, President Pakistan Business Network, to pay rich tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their historic victory in the recent battle for justice.

The event was attended by a large number of notable business figures and dignitaries who expressed deep admiration for the sacrifices and valor of the Pakistani forces. Participants also paid homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives for the country. A specially prepared cake was cut to mark the occasion.

Distinguished attendees included President of Jinnah Super Market Asad Aziz, President of Super Market F-6 Shehzad Abbasi, former Federal

Minister Dr. G.G. Jamal, President of National Press Club Azhar Jatoi, Justice (R) Mudassir Khalid Abbasi, senior journalists Malik Manzoor Ahmed, Malik Nadeem, Akhtar Jameel Abbasi, Khurshid Qureshi, Hamza Rehman, former ICCI President Basir Dawood, Salman Dar, Usman Khan bin Rashid, Hasbi Ahmed, and Parvez Abbasi.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt, Umar Shahid Butt, Dr. G.G. Jamal, Jameel Abbasi, Mudassir Khalid Abbasi, and other speakers praised the courage and professionalism of Pakistan's armed forces. They said that under the effective leadership and strategic vision of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, the Pakistani forces have rendered the country's defense invincible.

The speakers noted that Pakistan has emerged as a major defense power in the region, having suc-

cessfully thwarted Indian aggression. They stated that the historic triumph has enhanced Pakistan's standing on the global stage. Pakistan's air force destroyed enemy targets within hours, demonstrating superior capability. They also emphasized that any future aggression would be met with a firm and decisive response.

Furthermore, the civil and military leadership was commended for exhibiting maturity and patience during the conflict. The participants stressed the importance of national unity and highlighted Pakistan's diplomatic successes in the international arena.

All attendees extended their heartfelt thanks to Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt and Umar Shahid Butt for organizing such a unique and meaningful event, which brought together individuals from all walks of life in a unified show of patriotism and gratitude.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of youngsters swimming in Rawal Lake spillway water to get some relief from hot weather in Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## QAU criminology students visit Safe City Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of students from the Department of Criminology at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), led by former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kaleem Imam, visited Safe City Islamabad to observe its technological advancements and operational capabilities.

An official told APP on Sunday that the Safe City Project, the Deputy Director (NOC) and Assistant Director Safe City welcomed the delegation and briefed them on various components of the facility, including the police operations hall, online women police station, Safe City web TV, and wireless control room.

The students were given a detailed tour of the command and control centre, where the functionality and significance of the systems in maintaining law and order were demonstrated.

The delegation observed the operations of the advanced surveillance camera system, gaining insight into the monitoring, detection, and response capabilities of Safe City Islamabad. The students were also informed about key technological initiatives, including the emergency control centre.

## Wanted criminals arrested during crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three proclaimed offenders wanted in different criminal cases in the jurisdiction of Waris Khan police station here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, Waris Khan police have arrested pro claimed offenders who were wanted since last year in miscellaneous cases. The police carried out a targeted operation and successfully took them into custody.

SP Rawal Division, Muhammad Haseeb Raja appreciated the performance of police team, said that those involved in criminal activities including their facilitators will not be able to escape the law. He added that police are committed to bringing all such elements to justice.

## Kiani inaugurates new stop of Awam Express train at Sohawa station

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani on Sunday officially inaugurated the new stop of Awam Express at the Sohawa Railway Station to facilitate the locals.

With this addition, the Awam Express running from Karachi to Peshawar will now make regular stops at Sohawa Station in both directions.

Speaking at the inauguration, Bilal Kayani said the new stop as a "gift for the people of Sohawa," expressing joy at the

revival of activity at the station after a long gap of 17 years. He extended his congratulations to the local population on the restoration of railway services.

Following the inauguration at Sohawa, the minister proceeded to Jhelum Railway Station, where he inaugurated a new stop for the Rehman Baba Express, another train running on the Karachi-Peshawar route.

This train will now also halt at Jhelum Station in both directions, providing improved connectivity for the region.

The local residents warmly welcomed the minister at both stations and thanked him for the reinstatement of the train stops.

Talking to media at Jhelum Station, Bilal Kayani reaffirmed the government's commitment to upgrading railway facilities across smaller cities, including Jhelum and Sohawa. On this occasion, he directed the Divisional Superintendent, Rawalpindi to ensure that no effort is spared in facilitating passengers at the newly reinstated stops.

## Glaciers preservation conference today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir on Monday said that the three days 'International Glaciers Preservation Conference' to be held in Tajikistan, will help to raise awareness about the Climate Change and Water issues facing by our region countries.

At present, Climate Change and environmental degradation is the biggest issue for the countries of our region, which will be discussed by experts from international and regional countries in the three-day International Glaciers Conference to be held on 29-31 in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and will formulate a future action plan on this important issue.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir told APP here on Sunday.

Pakistan and other countries of the regional countries are already invited and participate actively in this international conference to be held in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, and join in discussions with international experts, which will pave the way for resolving problems for the future and develop common thinking to understand the pertinent issues of

Climate change, he said.

Tajik Ambassador said that regional countries are suffering from a different kind of environmental challenges due to their common geography and mountain ranges, which all regional players need a common plan of action to deal with.

The envoy said that Tajikistan is the home of glaciers and clean water in the world, and glaciers melting and climate change are the biggest issues for the world, and the glaciers preservation conference in Tajikistan is an endeavor to give the world a road map for resolving the biggest challenge of climate change and water sustainability.

He said that the third International Conference dedicated to Glaciers, and the territory of Tajikistan has more than ten thousand mountain glaciers, the largest of which is the Vanch-Yakh (Fedchenko) glacier. Tajik envoy said that this initiative of Tajikistan was fully supported by the government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Pakistan is actively participating in the framework of this initiative.

Participants of the conference will be invited to a post-conference field trip to observe glacier degradation, integrated water resources management practices, and water-related sustainable development examples in Tajikistan, he said.

The Ambassador said that Modern Tajikistan carefully preserves the ancient historical and cultural heritage and revives original craft traditions and to this day, in many ancient cities of the republic, famous dynasties of masters of gold embroidery, masters of silk, abra, batik, gulduzi, skullcap embroiderers, weavers, jewelers, ceramists, whose products are known all over the world, have been preserved.

The Hisor Fortress, the mausoleum of Khoja Mashhad, the remains of Buddhist monasteries from the 7th-8th centuries, and many other monuments will tell a lot about important milestones in the history of Tajikistan, he said. Replying to another question, he said that around 93 percent of the country's territory is occupied by majestic mountains that belong to the highest in the world including the 'Tien Shan, Pamir and Gissaro-Alai.

The conference will be hosted by the government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the conference will provide a unique platform and excellent opportunity for the world community to raise awareness of and to promote and facilitate actions and sustainable measures towards preserving glaciers, as well as its integrated management at all levels through transformative glaciers-related actions and commitments, he said.

## Digital sector surges under PM's leadership: Shaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Sunday said that Pakistan has transitioned from the brink of economic collapse to a trajectory of sustainable growth and digital transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Speaking to the media, she said that just over two years ago, Pakistan faced serious economic challenges, including fears of default, falling exports, and low investment. However, she added that strong government efforts helped improve the overall economic condition.

"The interest rate, which was as high as 23 percent, is now down to 11 percent.

Inflation, once nearly 40 percent, has dropped to below 5 percent," she added.

She said exports have increased, and overseas Pakistanis sent record remittances, all due to better planning and teamwork across government institutions. "The government's strategy has not only stabilized the economy but also put us on a sustainable growth path," she said.

On the digital front, the minister shared that Pakistan's IT exports — including earnings from freelancers and IT companies — reached over \$3.5 billion between July 2024 and April 2025. Of this, \$3.14 billion came from IT services alone in the first 10 months of the fiscal year.

She said Pakistan is moving steadily towards the

vision of a 'Digital Pakistan,' where technology supports the economy and ensures inclusive growth. "Our IT sector's trade surplus is the highest among all service sectors, at around \$2.3 billion," she stated.

Despite global challenges like reduced demand and trade barriers, Pakistan's IT sector has remained strong and growing. She credited this to a better economic environment and the Prime Minister's coordinated policies, particularly through platforms like the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which boosted investor confidence.

A major achievement, she said, was the country's first Digital FDI Forum, organized with the support of the Saudi-based Digital Cooperation Organization

(DCO). The event drew over 500 participants, including 100 international investors, global tech CEOs, development leaders, and government officials.

Over 100 Pakistani IT companies presented their products and proposals. The event concluded with signed investment agreements worth \$700 million, not just MoUs. "These investments will benefit the entire economy in the coming years," she said.

She thanked the Ministry of IT, PSEB, PTA, Foreign Affairs, Interior Ministry, DCO, and especially P@SHA Chairman Sajjad Syed for their support in making the forum successful. "The government builds the system and investor trust, and the industry delivers. This

\$700 million investment is proof of that partnership," she added.

The minister said that Pakistan has crossed 200 million mobile subscribers. She said this shows strong progress toward digital inclusion, giving people from all backgrounds — urban and rural, men and women — access to digital tools.

She highlighted that 8 million women started using mobile internet for the first time in 2024, contributing to 13 million new users overall. She attributed this success to the government's Gender Digital Divide Policy, which helped reduce the gap in mobile internet usage between men and women from 38 percent to 25 percent. Women's mobile

internet use increased from 33 percent to 45 percent.

She said women and youth are key to Pakistan's progress, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has always supported youth participation in the country's development.

The minister praised the efforts of the SIFC, PTA, PSEB, Ignite R&D Fund, and the Universal Service Fund (USF), which connected over 1 million people in more than 900 remote areas last year. As part of the country's digital connectivity drive, internet usage grew by more than 25%, and two new submarine cable projects are also underway.

"These steps are building a connected and digital Pakistan, where every citizen will have a digital ID and can access govern-

ment services through mobile phones — without needing to stand in long queues," she said.

She congratulated the nation on the recent successful operations by Pakistan's armed forces. She said the military had responded bravely to recent threats, showing professionalism and strength under the leadership of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and the heads of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

She also praised Pakistan's technological capabilities demonstrated during defense operations, saying the country had proven its strength to the world. "Through courage, unity, and leadership, we've secured both our economy and our national defense," she said.



Representatives hold meeting

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, the General Director of Afghan Red Crescent Society, met in his office with Hussain Ahmed Botani, Representative of the Qatari Red Crescent in Afghanistan. The purpose of this meeting was stated as improving humanitarian aid and joint activities. Both sides conducted a comprehensive review of the ongoing joint humanitarian aid projects and the provision of better services, and also discussed the need to launch new projects.

Sar-i-Pul man arrested

SAR-I-PUL CITY (Pajhwok): A young man has been arrested on charges of killing his father and injuring his sister in the Gosfandi district of Sar-i-Pul province on Sunday. Police spokesman Hafiz Naqibullah Alimyar said the suspect stabbed his father to death and wounded his sister in Yul Turab village. He said the motive behind the incident remained unclear. The case will be referred to judicial organs upon completion of preliminary investigations.

Farmers call for action amid water crisis

PAKTIKA (TOLONews): Rahmatullah, a 30-year-old resident of Sharana, the capital of Paktika province, said he irrigates his 30 jerbis of agricultural land using solar-powered electricity and levels of groundwater are getting very low.

Rahmatullah, a farmer, said: "If these dams are built for us soon, the groundwater will rise again, and many barren plains in Paktika will become fertile. Currently, we use solar power to extract water, but many wells have dried up."

A number of residents and farmers in Paktika province are calling on officials to pay attention to the construction of water management dams in the region.

Abdul Karim, a farmer

in Paktika, said: "In districts such as Waza Khwa, Khushamand, and other areas, many lands have become barren due to water shortages. If these dams are built for us, Paktika's crops could suffice for all of Afghanistan."

Sayed Abad, a resident of Paktika, also said: "Day by day, groundwater levels are decreasing. I had to lower an eight-meter pipe into my well because the water has diminished. We request the Islamic Emirate allocate a budget for these dams as soon as possible."

However, the head of energy and water in Paktika said a plan for the construction of four water management dams in the province has been approved and the practical work will begin

once the budget is received.

Fatah Mohammad Zakir, head of energy and water in Paktika, said: "There is one dam under construction called the Paltuni Dam; Dasht Park Dam in Jani Khel, Gomal One and Gomal Two dams in Wurmami, and the Zami Dam in Argun district have all been approved under a five-year plan for Paktika. Each dam is designed based on the needs of the region and will irrigate vast areas of land."

Residents of Paktika province express concern over the declining groundwater levels while Afghanistan is among the ten countries most affected by climate change, with much of its population facing severe drought and natural disasters.

200 Afghans freed from prisons return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) says 193 more Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan.

These individuals returned to the country on May 15 and 16, the ministry wrote on its X handle on Sunday.

Citing Spin Boldak border officials in Kandahar, the ministry wrote the returnees had spent one to two days in jails and had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan.

After receiving humanitarian assistance, the returnees were transported to their respective native areas, the ministry added.

On May 12, about 119 Afghan refugees had been released from Pakistani prisons before being sent to their country.

WFP says it can assist only 1 million Afghans

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) says it can assist only one million people in Afghanistan this year due to a severe budget shortfall.

WFP wrote on its X handle: "This summer in #Afghanistan, nearly 3 million people need life-saving food assistance.

"But due to a massive funding shortfall, WFP can assist only 1 million to prevent catastrophic hunger," the UN agency added.

The organisation previously warned that its air-based aid operations in Afghanistan might be suspended due to a lack of funding.

Earlier, UNAMA had called on donors and humanitarian organisations to maintain critical support to the country.

UNAMA reported that 22.9 million people would need emergency assistance across the country this year.

10 held with opium

KUNDUZ (Pajhwok): Ten suspects have been arrested on charges of drug trafficking and more than 770 kilograms of opium seized from them in northern Kunduz province, an official said on Sunday.

Police spokesman Juma Din Khaksar said 10 suspects had been detained in connection with drug smuggling during an operation in Khanabad district.

The men were held while trying to smuggle 775 kilograms of opium, five bottles of alcohol and 88 K tablets in two vehicles from Kunduz to other provinces. The detainees' case will be referred to judicial organs on the completion of preliminary investigations.

Muttaqi meets Iranian counterpart in Tehran

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, Foreign Minister of the country, held talks with his Iranian counterpart Dr. Sayyid Abbas Araghchi in Tehran on Saturday, discussing bilateral ties, security issues, water rights, and Afghan refugees.

In a press release, the country's Foreign Ministry stated that Minister Muttaqi described ties between the two countries as significant, emphasizing the need to elevate diplomatic ties and expand cooperation across multiple sectors. He expressed appreciation for Iran's hosting of Afghan refugees while reaffirming the Islamic Emirate's commitment to creating conditions for their dignified repatriation. Muttaqi urged Iranian authorities to adopt a gradual approach to refugee returns.

Foreign Minister



Muttaqi also raised the issue of Afghan prisoners in Iran, requesting Iranian officials' attention to their transfer and improved conditions. He noted growing cooperation in trade and

transit between the two countries.

For his part, Dr. Araghchi stressed that bilateral relations are entering a new phase of progressive development, stating,

"Our ties are moving toward expansion." He assured that Afghan refugees' repatriation would be gradual and respectful, pledging enhanced facilities for Afghans remaining in Iran.

50 cold storage plants under construction in Ghazni province

GHAZNI (TOLONews): The construction of fifty cold storage facilities for storing raisins, onions, and potatoes has begun in the Ghazni province center and the districts of Andar, Deh Yak, Malistan, and Nawur, at a total cost of \$500,000.

These cold storage plants, supported by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), are expected to be completed within the next three months.

Sayed Jan Haidari, the provincial head of the implementing organization, said: "In the center of Ghazni and the districts of Andar and Deh Yak, 30 cold storage plants will be

built for raisins, and in Malistan and Nawur districts, 20 cold storages are being constructed for onions and potatoes. The total construction cost amounts to 500,000."

"These cold storage areas will extend the shelf life of agricultural products and improve their quality. This way, we can compete with neighboring countries and prevent fruit wastage," said Wahidullah Bakhtri, an agricultural affairs expert.

Meanwhile, some farmers in Ghazni are calling on officials for more support in the preservation and marketing of agricultural products.

"We have orchards and farmlands, but during the harvest season, rain and other natural disasters damage them. If we have cold storage and receive support, we can prevent these losses and increase our income," said Mohammad Anwar, one of the farmers in Ghazni.

"When our crops are ready, either frost damages them or rain, so we are in dire need of cold storage," said Mohammad Jan, another farmer in Ghazni.

The Director of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Ghazni stated they are supporting farmers in various areas.

Mohammad Ismail Shakib, director of agriculture and irrigation of Ghazni, said: "We are striving to establish a market for Ghazni's agricultural products within the framework of the Ministry of Agriculture and the private sector, and along with it, build cold storage areas. Because Ghazni's farmers collect their products with great effort and need a good market."

Lack of water, natural disasters, and the absence of cold storages are among the major challenges that have led to the spoiling of agricultural products, negatively affecting the income of farmers in this province.

Delegation from Afghanistan returned



KABUL(BNA): A high-level delegation from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, led by Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, has returned to Kabul following their participation in the 16th Kazan International Economic Forum in the Republic of Tatarstan.

During the visit, the delegation engaged in discussions focusing on economic and political issues, emphasizing bilateral cooperation in trade and investment. Meetings were held with key figures, including Tatarstan's President Rustam Minnikhanov, Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional

Development Marat Khusnullin, and President of the Republic of Mordovia Artjom Alekseevich Zhadunov.

Baradar Akhund said that agreements were reached on various sectors, highlighting the potential for enhanced trade transactions and investment opportunities across multiple sectors in Afghanistan.

Pensioners protest again: Years of service, still no pay

KABUL (TOLONews): A number of pensioners have once again gathered in protest over the non-payment of their pensions.

These pensioners, who each spent over thirty to forty years serving in government institutions, gather weekly in front of the Pension General Directorate with distressed faces and anxious eyes, seeking a way to receive their retirement payments.

Among them is 65-year-old Bori Qul, who dedicated more than thirty years of his life to serving in the country's government institutions.

He stated that he once worked in hopes of building a better future for the next generations, but now

he himself is facing severe economic challenges.

Bori Qul, pensioner, added: "I have a son, who works as a mechanic. If he finds work, he brings in one or two hundred Afghanis and we have no other income. We are a family of six or seven people to feed. I used to buy bread with my pension. It's been five years since I've received my pension; now we can't even buy bread and are in debt for our house rent."

Other pensioners have also gathered in front of the Pension General Directorate over the non-payment of their pensions, demanding immediate payment from the Islamic Emirate.

"We urge the Minister of Finance and the Head of the Pension Fund to urgently follow up on our cases. All these poor people are in debt. Most of the pensioners here walk on foot," said Habibullah, a pensioner.

"Personally, I find four or five pieces of bread a day and bring them home. That's how we survive each day," said Abdul Hakim, another pensioner.

These pensioners have repeatedly referred to the Pension General Directorate, the Ministry of Finance, the court, and UNAMA demanding their pension payments, but the caretaker government has recently given no updates about when their pensions will be paid.

Karakul hat industry in death throes

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Karakul hat industry, a distinctive symbol of Afghan culture, is now in decline. Once widely worn, the cap's use has dwindled markedly, with many artisans abandoning the trade.

The craftsmen, who remain in the business, having fallen on hard times, are appeal for support to ensure the preservation of the industry.

In the heart of Kabul, near the Shah-Do Shamshira Mosque, Karakul pelts once hung prominently. Numerous shops in the area used to produce various traditional Karakul hats, waistcoats and other garments – all integral elements of Afghan culture.

This neighbourhood was once famous for the Karakul trade and during King Mohammad Zahir Shah's reign, a dedicated exhibition for this craft was held.

However, the situation has now changed, only two tailoring shops specialising in the Karakul craft still

exist. One of them is run by 62-year-old Ahmad Ahmadi, who inherited the trade from his forefathers.

Worried about the future of his business, he says years of cultural encroachment have allowed foreign goods to dominate the local market. Traditional Afghan industries like the Karakul hat are being neglected, he regrets.

Ahmadi said: "Karakul is an ancient form of headwear, worn even by kings in the past. But now, this industry is facing an existential threat. Only two shops remain in Kabul and if they also shut down, the craft will vanish entirely."

While walking around the city, this reporter looked for someone wearing a Karakul hat. After a long search, he finally spotted a man, but he declined to speak.

Qudratullah, 64, a resident of Kalola Pushta locality, has worn the Karakul hats for many years. Talking about Karakul

stirred memories of earlier times. He recalled how the hats were traditionally worn at celebratory events and a man without it was once considered unfit for marriage.

He added: "Karakul hats were mostly worn by the affluent. Poor people couldn't afford them. Government officials and those in power frequently wore them. Now, although poorer people can afford them, hardly anyone dons such caps and the craft is slowly dying."

Historically, the Karakul industry served not only the domestic market but also had international value.

However, due to lack of market demand and government support, the industry is now on the brink of extinction.

Economist Abdul Nasir Reshtia wants the government to pay special attention to the craft by arranging exhibitions, offering financial support and finding access to international

markets.

He believes if such steps are taken, Karakul could once again become a proud and enduring symbol of Afghanistan's economy and cultural heritage.

"Unfortunately, in past years, the government's neglect led to the decline of this industry. Now is the time to organise international exhibitions to revive this craft and encourage new investments. This would also strengthen the livestock sector and rescue our heritage from collapse."

Although the Karakul hat industry is barely surviving, some tailors are still striving to keep the craft alive. Yet, they admit doing so alone is beyond their capability.

Pajhwok Afghan News attempted to obtain comments from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) regarding the current state of the Karakul industry, but received no response before the publication of this report.

Violence claims four lives in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, some former British soldiers admitted their colleagues committed war crimes in Afghanistan. Also last week, Afghan officials participated in the 16th Kazan International Economic Forum and also visited Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Meanwhile, Moscow announced that Kabul has nominated an ambassador to Moscow and they are evaluating the candidate.

**Casualties:** Four people were killed in various incidents of violence across Afghanistan last week.

Local official said a elderly man was killed after a verbal dispute in Takhar, a grandfather was killed by his grandson in Faryab and two children lost their life in a landmine blast in Badghis.

In the previous week, two people had been killed in Afghanistan.

Before the regime change in 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security personnel would get killed and maimed in clashes and bomb blasts every week.

Afghan delegations visit Tataristan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan

A high-level delegation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, led by deputy premier Mullah Ghani Baradar, travelled to the Republic of Tatarstan on Wednesday to attend the 16th Kazan International Economic Forum.

Baradar met President of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov on the sidelines of the Kazan forum after attending its official opening session, his office said in a statement.

During the meeting, both sides discussed strengthening bilateral economic and trade ties, as well as opportunities for Tatarstani investors in Afghanistan.

Mullah Baradar said the Islamic Emirate's foreign policy was independent, positive, neutral, balanced and focused on economic cooperation.

Mullah Baradar extended an official invitation to the President of Tatarstan to visit Afghanistan, considering such a visit a positive step toward strengthening bilateral cooperation.

The first Afghanistan-Russia trade forum was inaugurated on the sidelines of the 16th Kazan World Economic Forum on Friday in Russia.

Mullah Baradar and Russian Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Alexey Overchuk inaugurated the first Afghanistan-Russia trade forum.

At the conclusion of the Afghanistan-Russia forum, five cooperation agreements were signed between Afghanistan and Russia in the areas of transportation and transit, trade development, oil and gas, regional trade, and the establishment of an industrial-logistics complex.

Mullah Baradar held a meeting with Mordovian President Artjom Zdonov in Russia.

The 16th Kazan World Economic Forum offered a good opportunity to establish cooperation between the two countries in agriculture, trade, electricity and other fields.

The statement said that Mullah Baradar invited Mordovian investors to invest in the industrial,

mining and agricultural sectors in Afghanistan and assured them of all kinds of cooperation and support.

A high-ranking Afghan delegation, led by Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Abdul Bari Omar, travelled to Tajikistan to attend a meeting on a transnational power project CASA-1000.

CASA-1000 is a 1.2 billion US dollars transmission project designed to transfer power from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Work on the project is nearly complete in the other three countries.

According to DABS, CASA-1000 is the largest regional economic cooperation initiative for transmitting electricity from Central Asia to South Asia via Afghanistan.

Also last week, a delegation led by Acting Minister of Water and Energy of Afghanistan, Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor, traveled to Tashkent to participate in the 5th International Energy Conference of Uzbekistan.

According to reports, the conference focused on strengthening regional cooperation in the energy sector, assessing opportunities for investment in joint projects, expanding the regional energy market, exchanging experiences in green technology transfer, participating in electricity and gas transmission projects in Central Asia, promoting the use of renewable energy, and finding solutions to challenges in water and energy projects.

**Diplomatic ties** Russia's special envoy for Afghanistan stated that the Islamic Emirate has appointed its ambassador to Moscow.

Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special representative for Afghanistan, said that the Islamic Emirate has nominated a diplomat to serve as ambassador of the interim government in Moscow.

Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the 16th Kazan Forum, Kabulov said that Moscow was currently in the process of reviewing the nominee proposed for the Afghan

embassy.

Kabulov said: "This nominee is currently undergoing necessary approval procedures within Russian institutions. I hope that once the process is complete, an agreement will be signed."

Ambassador Mohammad Sohail Shaheen met Jean-Marie Schuh, the French chargé d'affaires for Afghanistan in Doha.

During the meeting, Shaheen urged the French diplomat to consider reopening France's political mission in Kabul.

The two sides also discussed the current political situation, bilateral relations between Afghanistan and France, humanitarian aid and other topics of common interest.

Afghan refugees

More than 128,000 Afghan returning refugees have been registered in just past 42 days, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Wednesday.

The deadline set for the deportation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan expired on March 31. Now, Afghan families in large numbers

are being forcibly deported from Pakistan on a daily basis.

On its X handle, IOM wrote that it registered more than 128,000 Afghan deportees from Pakistan from April 1 to May 12.

Parliamentary Secretary Mukhtar Ahmad Malik said around three million Afghan refugees were residing in Pakistan.

"Of these, 813,000 hold Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) while 1.3 million possess Proof of Registration (PoR) cards," he was quoted as saying.

The official emphasised that Afghan wishing to enter Pakistan for medical treatment, education or business purposes were welcome if they had visas and valid documents.

Confessions on war crimes in Afghanistan

Some former members of the British Special Forces have confessed to committing war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, stating that the elite units killed unarmed individuals "while sleeping at night" and even "executed" children who had not yet reached combat

age.

The BBC World Service today (Monday) published a report titled "Former British Special Forces Break Silence on War Crimes by Colleagues."

Giving their accounts publicly for the first time, the veterans described witnessing members of the SAS murder unarmed people in their sleep and execute handcuffed detainees, including minors.

Commenting on the report, Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for the IEA, said in an audio message the confessions confirmed the crimes the occupation forces committed in Afghanistan in the past 20 years.

He added American, British and all NATO forces with a military presence in Afghanistan were involved in the massacre of civilians and in repeatedly committing war crimes.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Richard Bennett, has also called for justice and accountability for the victims of these crimes and their families.





Bozhou (China): Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon in a group photo with Chinese delegation to discuss mini truck assembly line in Karachi in collaboration with China.

## Russia launches war's largest drone attack

KYIV (Reuters): Russia launched on Sunday its largest drone attack on Ukraine since the start of the war, destroying homes and killing at least one woman a day before U.S. President Donald Trump is due to discuss a proposed ceasefire with Russia's Vladimir Putin.

Ukraine's intelligence service said it also believed Moscow intended to fire an intercontinental ballistic missile later on Sunday as an attempt to intimidate the West. There was no immediate response from Moscow to the accusation.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, straining to restore ties with Washington after a disastrous February White House visit, met Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Rome on Sunday on the sidelines of Pope Leo's inauguration. Ukrainian media said the meeting lasted 40 minutes.

Ukraine and Russia held their first face-to-face talks in more than three years on Friday, under pressure from Trump to agree to a ceasefire in a war he has pledged to bring to a quick end. The warring sides agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners each but



failed to agree to a truce, after Moscow presented conditions that a member of Ukraine's delegation called "non-starters".

The leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Poland planned to speak to Trump before the U.S. and Russian presidents speak on Monday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Sunday. The four European leaders jointly visited Kyiv last week where they called for new sanctions on Russia unless Moscow accepts a ceasefire, and Zelenskyy has said they joined him in phoning Trump on Friday after the Russia-Ukraine talks.

After a night of air alerts, Ukraine's air force said that as of 8 a.m. on Sunday Russia had launched 273 drones at Ukrainian cities, more

than the previous record Moscow had set in February on the war's third anniversary.

In the ruins of her family home in the Obukhiv region west of Kyiv, Natalia Piven, 44, recounted how she squeezed into a cellar with her son after an air raid warning, just in time to survive a first wave of drones. They then ran out to a bomb shelter at a kindergarten, before another wave of drones bore down on the village. Their house was completely destroyed. A 28-year-old woman who lived next door was killed. Ukrainian authorities said three other people were injured including a four-year-old child.

"I cannot get over it. I simply cannot. I could clearly hear the drone flying right towards my

house," Piven told Reuters. Trump has shifted U.S. rhetoric from supporting Ukraine towards accepting some of Moscow's narrative about the war that Putin launched in 2022. But Kyiv and its European allies are working hard to persuade Trump that it is Moscow that is holding up a truce now.

Zelenskyy has said he would accept Trump's proposal for an immediate ceasefire of at least 30 days with no conditions. Moscow says it would consider a ceasefire but only if conditions are met, including a halt in arms supplies to Kyiv.

It also says any peace talks must address the "root causes" of the conflict, including its demands that Ukraine cede territory, be disarmed and accept neutral status. Kyiv calls that tantamount to capitulation and says it would be left defenceless in the face of future Russian attacks.

On Saturday, a Russian drone attack killed nine civilians after hitting a shuttle bus in the Sumy region in northeastern Ukraine, Kyiv said. Zelenskyy called the attack "deliberate" and urged stronger sanctions on Moscow, which said it had attacked a military facility.

## Relief to be provided to common men in new budget: Rana Sanaullah

KARACHI (APP): The Financial team of the federal government led by Advisor to Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah met with Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori and MQM-Pakistan's leadership here at Governor House on Sunday and discussed proposed measures to provide relief to common men in the upcoming federal budget.

Government team comprising of Federal Minister for Finance Aurangzeb, Awais Leghari and others also held meetings with business community to get proposals for the budget 2025-26.

Rana Sanaullah earlier

met Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Syed Naveed Qamar and leading representatives of the business community at the Chief Minister House and discussed the budget making process.

Talking to reporters after the meeting at the Governor House, Rana Sanaullah said that just as the entire nation has proved in its victory against India with unity that the country's defense is in strong hands, now we should have to move forward for economic prosperity in the country.

He said that like the defense sector, the country has now come out of the economic crisis and the

economic team headed by Federal Finance Minister Aurangzeb under the supervision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, also decided to provide relief to the common men in the upcoming budget.

He said that there will be good news for the people in the new budget. He hoped that a good budget will be presented in consultation with the coalition partners and the business community representatives, which will provide relief to the common men. Rana Sanaullah said that the meetings at the Chief Minister's House and the Governor's House have proved to be useful and its

effects will be visible in the new budget.

Earlier, the Sindh Governor said that on May 10, Pakistan has proved by giving an effective response to India that the defense of the nation is in strong hands and now we all have to stabilize the country's economy.

He said that we have to be determined to now free the country from debt.

MQM Pakistan leader Dr Farooq Sattar also spoke on the occasion. Federal Minister Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, MQM-P leaders Nasreen Jalil, Faisal Sabzwari and others were also present on the occasion.

# Sindh Govt to establish minit truck assembly line in Karachi

### E.P. Report

BOZHOU (CHINA): The Sindh government has announced plans to establish a mini truck assembly line in Karachi in collaboration with China. Chinese investors have agreed to set up the plant in the city.

On behalf of the Sindh government, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has also announced that charging stations for electric vehicles will soon be established across Sindh. He stated that these initiatives will greatly benefit various business groups and individuals.

The unveiling ceremony of the super mini truck was held in the Chinese city of Bozhou. The event was attended by Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam

Memon, Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Group CEO of Budget Petroleum Investment Holdings Company (Hong Kong) Zahid Bashir, Chairman of Chinese company Chery Holding Yin Tongyue, and other dignitaries.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Sindh Senior Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Super Mini Truck project is a remarkable example of Pakistan-China industrial collaboration and technical cooperation, which will open new avenues of development and prosperity for both countries.

He stated that the Super Mini Truck, developed in collaboration with the

Chinese company Chery Holding and Pedit Technology Company Limited, is a revolutionary innovation. The vehicle offers a solution to the logistics challenges faced in both urban and rural areas, while also serving as a model of sustainable, affordable, and accessible transport.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Mini Truck is a remarkable blend of modern engineering, intelligent design, and environmental adaptability, and is fully capable of meeting the growing demand for light commercial vehicles in Pakistan.

He stated that the assembly line for the Super Mini Truck will soon be established in Karachi, which will boost industrial development, promote

local component manufacturing, create employment opportunities, and facilitate technology transfer in Pakistan. This project marks the first practical step toward transforming Karachi into a regional hub for automobile manufacturing.

He said that the Sindh government will extend all possible support, including regulatory facilitation, infrastructure development, and training of local manpower. A key feature of the Super Mini Truck, he noted, is its ability to be easily converted into a Super Mini Car.

In his address, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon praised the visionary leadership of Yin Tongyue, Chairman of the Chinese company Chery Holding.

## Building fire kills 17 in southern India

HYDERABAD (AFP): At least 17 people were killed and several injured in a fire that broke out at a building near the historic Charminar monument in southern Hyderabad city, officials said Sunday.

Several people were found unconscious and rushed to various hospitals, according to local media. They said the building housed a jewelry store at ground level and residential space above.

"The accident happened due to a short circuit and many people have died," federal minister and Bharatiya Janata Party leader G Kishan Reddy told reporters at the site of the accident.

Director general of Telangana fire services Y Nagi Reddy told reporters that 21 people were in the three-story building when the fire started on the ground floor early on Sunday.

"17 people, who were shifted to the hospital in an unconscious state, could not survive. The staircase was very narrow, which made escape difficult. There was only one exit, and the fire had blocked it," he said.

The fire was brought under control.

Prime minister Narendra Modi announced financial compensation for the victims' families and said in a post on X that he was "deeply anguished by the loss of lives."

Fires are common in India, where building laws and safety norms are often flouted by builders and residents.

## Rain, thunderstorm cause tripping: IESCO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Stormy winds, thunderstorm and rain on Sunday evening in jurisdiction of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) caused tripping and faults on multiple feeders in various circles of the company.

According to IESCO's spokesperson, fault and tripping report, multiple feeders went offline due to the storm. Affected areas include Mumtaz Steel, Lohi Bhair, Mira Jafar, H-8 to I-9/4, I-8 Markaz, and Railway Road. Additional outages were reported in the Archer Scheme, Service Road, Chakra, Siam, New Race Course, Range Road, Jhingi Golra, C Block and Jail Park.

Power supply was also disrupted to feeders in Gulistan Colony, Scheme III, Shahpur, and Askari 14 areas. A total of 42 feeders supplying electricity to the Attack Circle and its surrounding regions have also been affected.

Strong winds led to the uprooting of trees in several locations, downed power lines, and damage to infrastructure.

Emergency teams from IESCO's operations and construction departments are actively working in the field to restore power as swiftly as possible. IESCO Chief Executive Mohammad Naeem Jan is personally overseeing the restoration process from the central control room.

## JI Chief slams India, praises Pakistan Army



### E.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan Ameer, Engr. Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, has said that after suffering a humiliating defeat, India has become a question mark in the eyes of the world, while the Pakistan Armed Forces gave a befitting response to the enemy, driven by the spirit of jihad and martyrdom.

He expressed these views while addressing participants of the "India-Israel Murdabad March" organized by JI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North at Pul Chowki in Chakdara. For the first time, hundreds of women from across Malakand Division took part in the march, alongside thousands of children, elderly citizens, and male and female party workers, making it a major show of strength.

Former JI chief Sirajul Haq, provincial Ameer Inayatullah Khan, Hamas

representative Bilal Asfaj, Bakhtiar Ma'ani, and others also addressed the gathering.

During his speech, Hafiz Naeem announced that JI will observe "Youn-e-Qadeer" (Qadeer Day) on May 28 in conjunction with Youm-e-Takbeer, to honour the services of Pakistan's late nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan. He criticized former Prime Minister Imran Khan and ex-Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa for not attending Dr. Qadeer's funeral, calling it a disgrace to a national hero.

While acknowledging serious disagreements with the current government on several issues, including deteriorating law and order in KP and Balochistan, the JI leader said his party stood united with the government and military when Pakistan was under external threat.

Hafiz Naeem lauded the

Pakistan military for downing French Rafale jets and Israeli drones, claiming it as a blow to their technological superiority. He said the U.S. remained a silent spectator while innocent Muslims were being killed daily in Gaza and Palestine, and only intervened when India and PM Narendra Modi suffered setbacks, with Donald Trump rushing to support his "friend India".

He urged Pakistan's leadership not to enter into any talks excluding Kashmir, warning that the nation would rise against any such move.

Speaking about JI's political future, Hafiz Naeem declared that the party would not form alliances with any political group but would stand only with the people. He pledged that if given a public mandate, JI would eliminate all foreign debt and stabilize the economy within ten years.

## US embassy in Tripoli denies report of relocation

TRIPOLI (Reuters): The US embassy in Libya denied on Sunday a report that the US government was working on a plan to relocate Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya.

On Thursday, NBC News said the Trump administration is working on a plan to permanently relocate as many as one million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya.

NBC News cited five people with knowledge of the matter, including two people with direct knowledge and a former US official.

"The report of alleged plans to relocate Gazans to Libya is untrue," the US embassy said on the X platform.

The Tripoli-based internationally-recognized Government of National Unity was not available for immediate comment.

Trump has previously said he would like the United States to take over the Gaza Strip and its Palestinian population resettled elsewhere.

Palestinians vehemently reject any plan involving

them leaving Gaza, comparing such ideas to the 1948 "Nakba," or "catastrophe," when hundreds of thousands were dispossessed of their homes in the war that led to the creation of Israel.

When Trump first floated his idea after taking the presidency, he said he wanted US allies Egypt and Jordan to take in people from Gaza. Both states rejected the idea, which drew global condemnation, with Palestinians, Arab nations and the UN saying it would amount to ethnic cleansing.

## Younge-Tashakkur observed in Ottawa

### E.P. Report

OTTAWA: The High Commission for Pakistan observed the "Youn-e-Tashakkur" to pay tribute to the entire Pakistani Nation and the Armed Forces for their profound national unity and bravery during "Operation Bunyaan-um-Marsos" and "Marka-e-Haq".

Members of the Pakistani diaspora and friends of Pakistan attended the event at the High Commission premises in Ottawa. Special prayers were held for the martyrs who laid their lives in defending the motherland.

In his remarks on the occasion, High Commissioner Muhammad Saleem lauded the relent-

