

CJCSC greets COAS
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) extended his heartfelt congratulations and felicitations to Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on his well-deserved promotion to the prestigious rank of Field Marshal. The CJCSC lauded the COAS' exceptional leadership.

Govt promotes COAS to Field Marshal rank

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government on Tuesday approved to promote Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal, recognizing his exceptional leadership and strategic brilliance during Operation Bunyanum Marsoos which led to a decisive defeat of the enemy while safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty.

The Federal Cabinet which met under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, lauded the operation as a monumental success in the nation's history, lauding the Armed Forces for their coordinated and courageous response to Indian aggression during the nights of May 6 and 7, 2025, according to a PM Office press release.

The Cabinet also decided to retain the service of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu upon completion of his tenure, recognizing his significant contributions to Pakistan's air defence. The meeting recalled that India launched an unprovoked and unjustified war, targeting civilian areas and inflicting casualties

among innocent men, women, and children.

In response, General Asim Munir led the Pakistan Army with outstanding courage and resolve, effectively uniting the Armed Forces under a singular, strategic command. "His exemplary leadership and battlefield coordination were instrumental in turning the tide and securing a historic victory for Pakistan, now referred to as the Marka-e-Haq."

The Federal Cabinet noted that the enemy's bids to violate Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity were thwarted with full force, crediting General Asim Munir's bold military leadership for the successful defence of the homeland.

In acknowledgment of his valour, strategic acumen, and unwavering dedication, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif proposed the promotion which was unanimously approved by the Cabinet. The prime minister also met with President Asif Ali Zardari to brief him about the decision and take him into confidence on this historic step.

Furthermore, the Federal Cabinet also announced plans to confer top

national honours on military officers, soldiers, martyrs, veterans, and civilians who played vital roles during Operation Bunyanum Marsoos.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif took President Asif Ali Zardari into confidence regarding the decision to promote General Syed Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal during a high level meeting here at the President House.

Federal Law Minister Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, and Planning Minister Professor Ahsan Iqbal were also present at the meeting, a press statement issued by the President House said. President Zardari said that under the leadership of General Syed Asim Munir, the armed forces successfully defended the country.

The president further said that General Asim Munir deserved promotion to the rank of Field Marshal for giving a strong response to Indian aggression, successfully defending the country, and demonstrating excellent military strategy. During the meeting, the leadership of the armed



forces and the Pakistan military was hailed for their effective response to Indian attacks.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif also extended his heartfelt congratulations to Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir on his promotion to the rank of Field Marshal.

During the 'Battle of Truth', the Army Chief foiled the enemy's nefarious designs through his leadership and professional capabilities in Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, the prime minister said in a statement

Field Marshal dedicates honour to nation, Armed Forces

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, expressing deep gratitude to Allah Almighty for being promoted to the rank, on Tuesday dedicated the honor to the people of Pakistan and Armed Forces. "This honor is not mine alone; it belongs to the entire nation and the Pakistan Armed Forces — especially our civil and military martyrs, and our veterans," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. He thanked President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the Federal Cabinet for their trust, calling the rank a "national trust". He said "millions of Asim Munirs stand ready to uphold it." "This is not just an individual recognition but a tribute to the entire nation and its Armed Forces," he said, and extended his sincere thanks to the people of Pakistan.

issued by the PM House.

He highlighted that Syed Asim Munir had been blessed by Allah Almighty with exceptional qualities and his courage and wisdom played a key role in the success of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos. "The Army Chief has been promoted to the rank of Field Marshal in recognition of his invaluable services in the defense of the homeland and for taking decisive steps to restore the balance of power in the region through Operation

Bunyan-um-Marsoos," the prime minister remarked.

He said that from the Army Chief to every soldier who bravely responded to enemy aggression on the borders during the Battle of Truth, all rendered courageous services in defense of the nation. I, along with the entire nation, take immense pride in Army Chief Syed Asim Munir, the brave warriors and martyrs of our armed forces under his command, and their families, he added.

PM orders anti-tax evasion measures

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed the immediate and effective implementation of ongoing reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), with a strong focus on digitization and automation of the tax system.

The prime minister while chairing a high-level review meeting here, emphasized the need for decisive action to correct what he described as "70 years of mismanagement" in the tax system. PM Shehbaz Sharif stated that while maximum facilitation would be provided to honest taxpayers and businesses, those involved in tax evasion would face strict legal action without any concessions.

The prime minister acknowledged the efforts of the FBR and its supporting enforcement agencies in enhancing tax revenue and appreciated their work as commendable. The meeting reviewed the introduction of a National Targeting System aimed at curbing sales tax evasion. This system will use e-tags and digital devices to track vehicles transporting goods and will be supported by an e-Bilty mechanism issued through the FBR's system. Digital

Premier speaks with President of Egypt

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with H.E. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, this evening. During their warm and cordial conversation, the Prime Minister conveyed his profound gratitude to President Al-Sisi for Egypt's constructive role, its balanced statements and proactive diplomacy throughout the recent crisis in South Asia that helped defuse tensions between Pakistan and India. The Prime Minister paid rich tribute to the valiant Armed Forces of Pakistan for courageously defending the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity and stressed that Pakistan remained committed to upholding the ceasefire understanding with India in the interest of regional peace. He also drew the Egyptian President's attention to the significance of the Indus Waters Treaty which India was threatening to hold in abeyance - a step that would constitute a red line for Pakistan.

monitoring systems will be installed at major highways and city entry points to reduce smuggling and save time for commuters.

The meeting was informed that a Customs Targeting System was also being introduced at ports and airports to automate the monitoring of imports and exports. The system will use artificial intelligence and integrate with domestic and international databases to combat smuggling and tax fraud.

The officials also briefed the meeting on plans to train FBR staff on the new

systems and outlined a phased roll out beginning with a pilot project in a major city. Sectors such as cement, hatcheries, poultry feed, tobacco, and beverages will come under stricter sales tax surveillance. It added that monitoring mechanisms similar to those used in the sugar industry were being extended to the tobacco, beverage, steel, and cement sectors.

The Prime Minister directed that all measures be implemented promptly, effectively, and in a sustainable manner.

Dar hails China's support to Pak sovereignty

BEIJING (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday lauded China's steadfast support for Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity during a high-level diplomatic meeting with Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC), held here.

The meeting comes at a critical time following the recent ceasefire between Pakistan and India. Both sides underscored the importance of adhering to the principles of the UN Charter and international law to uphold regional peace and stability, a DPM's Office news release said.

DPM Dar emphasized the country's inherent right and capability to safeguard its territorial sovereignty and the security of its people. He also drew attention to India's unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty, urging the international community to take serious note of what he described as an illegal and provocative move. The Foreign Minister reiterated that a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, is indispensable for lasting peace in South Asia.

Dar also expressed appreciation for the IDCPC's role in deepening ties between the Communist Party of China and Pakistan's political parties, noting its significance in further strengthening bilateral understanding. With Pakistan and China set to celebrate the 74th anniversary of diplomatic relations on 21 May, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to preserving the "ironclad" friendship and ensuring its transmission to future generations.

During the meeting, both leaders agreed to deepen linkages between the political parties of Pakistan and CPC. Drones The deputy prime minister appreciated China's firm support to Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and issues of its core interest. Liu Jianchao reiterated that as All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partner and ironclad friend, China would continue to prioritise its relations with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday held in-depth consultations here with the Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi.

The DPM/FM Dar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi hailed All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and ironclad friendship between Pakistan and China during the meeting, a DPM's Office news release said. During the meeting both the leaders expressed satisfaction at the commonality of views on all issues of mutual interest and expressed their firm resolve to continue bilateral cooperation for regional peace, development and stability.



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

Pakistan rejects Indian allegations of attempt to attack Golden Temple

Israel plans to control Gaza threaten peace efforts: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday categorically rejected the allegations by a senior Indian Army officer that Pakistan attempted to target the Golden Temple through drones and missiles on the intervening night of May 7 and 8, 2025.

"We categorically reject the allegations that Pakistan attempted to target the Golden Temple, the most revered place in the Sikh faith. We hold all places of worship in the highest esteem and cannot think of targeting a holy site like the Golden Temple," Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in a statement.

He said that in fact, it was India that targeted different places of worship in Pakistan in the intervening night of May 6 and 7, 2025. The allegations levelled by the Indian side cannot shift attention from this unacceptable act, he added. The spokesperson said that Pakistan was the proud custodian of many holy sites of the Sikh faith and annually welcomed thousands of Sikh pilgrims from across the world. Pakistan also provides visa-free access to the Gurdwara Sahib Kartarpur through the Kartarpur Corridor. In that backdrop, any claim concerning

Pakistan's attempt to target the Golden Temple is absolutely baseless and incorrect, he added.

Pakistan also said that the expansion of Israeli ground operations in Gaza, as well as its announcement to "take control of all" of Gaza, posed a grave threat to efforts aimed towards achieving peace and stability in the region. Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan, in a statement, condemned in the strongest possible terms the continued Israeli aggression in Gaza, resulting in the deaths of dozens of Palestinians, as well as deliberate targeting of hospitals and other critical infrastructure, along with mass evacuation orders.

"The expansion of Israeli ground operations in Gaza, as well as its announcement to 'take control of all' of Gaza, poses a grave threat to efforts aimed towards achieving peace and stability in the region. In addition, Israel also continues to deliberately obstruct critical humanitarian aid from reaching millions in dire need, which amounts to the imposition of collective punishment on the besieged Palestinian people," he remarked.

He said that the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, recently expressed his alarm at the prevailing situation, with one in every five peo-

ple in Gaza facing starvation, and the entire population facing high levels of acute food insecurity and the risk of famine. The spokesperson said that the latest actions by the occupying power yet again demonstrated Israeli impunity and its blatant disregard for international law and humanitarian principles.

He reiterated Pakistan's call for the international community for an immediate end to Israel's genocidal campaign, and to ensure a lasting ceasefire in Gaza. He also urged concrete steps towards the provision of unimpeded humanitarian supplies to millions of Palestinians in dire need, as well as to hold Israel accountable for its egregious crimes.

Spokesperson Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's unequivocal opposition to any attempts to displace the Palestinians from their ancestral lands, expand illegal Israeli settlements or to annex any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. "Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and calls for the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital," he added.

EU, Britain go ahead with new Russia curbs sans waiting for Trump

BRUSSELS, LONDON (Reuters): The European Union and Britain announced new sanctions against Russia on Tuesday without waiting for the United States to join them, a day after President Donald Trump spoke to Vladimir Putin without winning a promise for a ceasefire in Ukraine.

London and Brussels said their new measures would zero in on Moscow's "shadow fleet" of oil tankers and financial companies that have helped it avoid the impact of other sanctions imposed over the war. "Sanctions matter, and I am grateful to everyone who makes them more tangible for the perpetrators of the war," Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on Telegram.

But the new measures were unveiled without an immediate announcement of corresponding steps from Washington, despite intense public lobbying from leaders of European countries for the Trump administration to join them. "We have repeatedly made it clear that we expect one thing from Russia — an immediate ceasefire without preconditions," German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said on the side-

lines of a meeting with his EU counterparts in Brussels.

As Russia had not accepted a ceasefire, "we will have to react," he said. "We also expect our US allies not to tolerate this." Russia and Ukraine held their first direct talks in more than three years on Friday at Trump's behest, but failed to agree on a truce after Moscow presented conditions that a member of the Ukrainian delegation called "non-starters".

Ukraine says it is ready for an immediate ceasefire proposed by Trump, while Russia says it wants talks first. The Europeans say this is proof that Putin, who started the war by invading his neighbour in 2022, is not prepared to end it. "Putin is clearly playing for time, unfortunately, we have to say Putin is not really interested in peace," Germany's Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said.

Reacting to the new sanctions, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters that Russia would never bow to what she called ultimatums. Putin, after his call with Trump, said that Moscow was ready to work with Ukraine on a memorandum about a future peace accord.

"Now, accordingly, the ball is in Kyiv's court," Zakharova said. Europeans have been working hard in public to persuade the Trump administration to join them in imposing sanctions. The leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Poland jointly travelled to Kyiv earlier this month and were filmed speaking to Trump on speakerphone with Zelensky.

Several European leaders phoned Trump again on the eve of Monday's call with Putin, urging him to join them in imposing new sanctions if Russia rejected a ceasefire. Brussels and London both suggested that more sanctions could still follow, making clear they have not given up hope of persuading Washington to act.

"Let us push Vladimir Putin to put an end to his imperialist fantasy," France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said. Britain's Foreign Minister David Lammy said, "Delaying peace efforts will only redouble our resolve to help Ukraine to defend itself and use our sanctions to restrict Putin's war machine." EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said more sanctions were "in the works".

Pak-China committed to peace, progress: DG ISPR

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, has said that Pakistan and China are responsible nations that are strongly committed to peace, development, and the well-being of their people.

In an interview with China Media Group, he said both countries are working closely to promote peace and stability in the region. "True progress is only possible through peace," he said. "That is why we are fighting the menace of terrorism — because the very purpose of terrorism is to hinder development," said the DG ISPR.

He praised China's rapid growth despite its large population and said that the

people of Pakistan also want to move towards progress and stability.

"Peace is our top priority. If you walk through the streets of Pakistan today, you'll see people celebrating peace, not war," he said. To a question, he said, "After Allah, we rely most on ourselves. When our determination is firm, as we have already demonstrated, the international community also plays its role."

He said the Pakistani nation has never bowed to pressure and never will. "For us, martyrdom is a great honour, whether one wears a blue, white, or khaki uniform," he added. He said the world today faces many challenges, including climate change, overpopulation, and the spread of misinformation

— and larger nations are looking towards the welfare of humanity.

In such circumstances, he questioned, How can one country justify launching unwarranted attacks on another based on false narratives and without evidence?" "No country should attempt to impose its hegemony over its neighbours," he added. The DG ISPR reaffirmed that Pakistan's "iron wall" — made up of its people, armed forces, and all national institutions — stands united against terrorism. "We are determined to defeat this threat and turn our full attention towards national progress and prosperity," he said. "Insha'Allah, you will see Pakistan moving quickly towards development," he added.

President calls for further improving ties with Thailand

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday called for further improving bilateral ties with Thailand, the Philippines, Slovenia, Serbia, Burkina Faso, Zambia, and Latvia, in the fields of trade, economy, and culture.

The president expressed these views while talking to the Ambassadors-designates of Thailand, Philippines, Slovenia, Serbia, Burkina Faso, Zambia, and Latvia to Pakistan, who called on him

and presented their diplomatic credentials to him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The Ambassador-designate of Thailand, Mr Rongvudhi Virabutr, the Ambassador-designate of the Philippines, Dr Emmanuel R. Fernandez, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Slovenia, Mr Igor Jukic, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Serbia, Mr Damir Kovacevic, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Burkina Faso, Mr Mohamadi Kabore, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Zambia, Mr Ivan Zyuulu, and Non-Resident Ambassador of Latvia, Ms Dana Goldfinca, presented their diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari during a credentials ceremony at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Upon their arrival, the envoys were presented with the guard of honour by a smartly turned-out contingent of the Armed Forces. The president highlighted the need for further expanding bilateral trade and business relations with the respective countries.



PESHAWAR: Commandant FC Riaz Nazeer Ghara and Deputy Commandant Javed Iqbal Wazir presented badges of promotion to Mirza Ali Khan Wazir on his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Sacrifices of Kashmiris not to go in vain: governor Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people will not go in vain. Addressing a public gathering during his visit to Abbaspur Tehsil of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) along the Line of Control (LoC) on Tuesday, he said India has been remorselessly committing atrocities against the Kashmiri people.

He said that Modi cannot dent morale and spirit of the Kashmiri people, adding that Kashmiris and Pakistanis share an unbreakable bond. Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider said, "Kashmir is our jugular vein and now India would have realized after the

defeat at the hands of the armed forces of Pakistan."

He said the Indian government launched a cowardly attack on the Pakistani soil while India has not yet been able to provide evidence of the Pahalgam drama to the international community.

Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said the Pakistan Army gave a befitting reply to India, adding that after Pakistan's victory in the war, the morale of the Pakistan Army and the Kashmiri people has increased manifold.

He said commander of the Pakistan Army has made history by successfully launching Operation Bunyanum Marsoos.

The Governor Punjab

further said that all political parties are united for the security, integrity and stability of Pakistan.

Sardar reaffirmed nation's solidarity with its security forces, warning that any future aggression from India will be met with even greater force. He noted that Indian Sikhs have also expressed support for Pakistan, adding that Pakistanis hold the Sikh community in high esteem.

Earlier, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan was accorded a warm welcome upon arrival at Abbaspur. On this occasion, Sardar Saleem Haider Khan prayed for the high ranks of those martyred in the Indian attack during the Indo-Pak tension.

Mubeen appointed as DG Wildlife

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has appointed Mubeen Elahi as Director General (DG) Wildlife. Punjab Wild Life Department sources said that newly appointed Mubeen Elahi is a Grade-19 officer who recently came to Punjab from the federal government and has also served as DC Vehari.

The additional charge of DG Wildlife has been withdrawn from Rana Muhammad Saleem Afzal. In this connection a notification has also been issued.

Summer vacations announced

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has officially announced summer vacations in schools across the province in view of the intense heat. According to Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat, all government and private schools in Punjab will go on summer vacations from May 28, 2025.

School hours have been reduced before the vacations. Schools will open at 7:30 am and will close at 11:30 am. The Education Minister has appealed to parents, students and teachers to follow safety measures during the heat-wave to ensure the health and safety of children.

Meanwhile School Education department sources said that Rs.129 million has been released for Lahore schools. The last funds were released to the schools on January 25. The financial year is about to end, but the second and fourth quarter installments have not yet been released to the schools, the sources further said.

Commissioner vows to tackle transport issues

KARACHI (PPI): Commissioner Karachi, Syed Hasan Naqvi, reassured that he is committed to resolving the issues faced by the transport community and emphasized the importance of full compliance with transport regulations. He made these remarks while speaking at the Goods Transporters Association's thanksgiving and oath-taking ceremony at a local hotel.

During the ceremony, the commissioner expressed gratitude for the success of the Pakistan Armed Forces in the recent Indo-Pak war and appreciated the services of the transport community for the nation. He instructed the transporters to comply with Section 144 and to install IT SIMs and trackers in their vehicles as soon as possible.

The commissioner announced that the Mauripur Truck Stand is being relocated outside the city, and efforts are ongoing to resolve issues related to the Karachi Port Trust. On this occasion, the association's president, Tariq Gujar, presented the transport community's challenges to the commissioner.

Other speakers at the event included Haji Muhammad Yousuf Khan and Hamas Khan Lodhi. During the ceremony, the commissioner was presented with a beautiful souvenir, and prominent figures from the transport community were awarded performance awards.

CM meets British HC, agrees to expand bilateral ties

LAHORE (APP): British High Commissioner H.E Jane Marriott called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, here on Tuesday.

A luncheon was also hosted in the honour of outgoing Political Advisor to the British High Commission Zoe Ware on the occasion.

During the meeting, the CM appreciated the United Kingdom's balanced and constructive role during the recent period of strained Pakistan-India relations. A wide range of topics were

discussed, including matters of mutual interest, bilateral cooperation, education, investment, environmental protection, and governance reform.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz paid glowing tribute to Zoe Ware for her diplomatic service and her efforts to strengthen Pakistan-UK relations. She commended Zoe Ware's professionalism, integrity, and dedication, noting her instrumental role in fostering long-term collaboration between the two nations.

The CM especially acknowledged Zoe Ware's contributions to global environmental initiatives such as the Earthshot Prize, calling her involvement "highly commendable." She remarked that Zoe Ware will always be remembered as a valued friend of Punjab.

Speaking about High Commissioner Jane Marriott, the CM said, "The Punjab government holds in high regard Jane Marriott's diplomatic service. Her global experience has helped elevate

Pakistan-UK relations to a new level."

CM Maryam Nawaz reaffirmed Punjab's commitment to expanding cooperation with the UK in education, trade, investment, climate action, and governance. She also highlighted the deep-rooted connection between the two nations, underscored by the presence of over 1.7 million British-Pakistanis, most of whom trace their heritage to Punjab, an enduring testament to the strength of the bilateral relationship.

Tessori stresses need to break free from IMF dependencies

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori has underscored the Prime Minister's commitment to revitalizing Pakistan's economy through the "Uraan Pakistan" initiative.

Addressing the National Islamic Economic Forum 2025, he emphasized the nation's foundation on Islamic principles and the need to break free from IMF dependencies.

During his speech, Tessori commended Pakistan's armed forces for their daylight defense against recent threats, con-

trasting it with India's nocturnal assault that harmed civilians and a mosque. He highlighted Pakistan's inception on the 27th of Ramadan, attributing its endurance to divine support.

Tessori lauded Chief of Army Staff General Hafiz Syed Asim Munir for his dual role in border defense and economic stabilization. He credited the Pakistan Army with showcasing the nation's formidable defense.

He encouraged a shift towards a Shariah-compliant, interest-free economy, recognizing the forum's potential to

enhance the banking sector. Tessori advised focusing on the present rather than past grievances.

Stressing technology's role, he warned against neglecting Artificial Intelligence, noting successful collaborations with Saylani Welfare Trust to train youth in AI skills.

Tessori also addressed national responsibilities, urging citizens to embrace their duties rather than blaming the government. He concluded by highlighting the necessity of a strong military, referencing Palestine as a cautionary example.

FIA arrests 14 agents for cheating people outside Passport Office

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested 14 people involved in cheating citizens outside the Gujranwala Passport Office. These individuals that promised people quick passport services in exchange for money.

According to the FIA spokesperson, the operation was carried out in and around the passport office after reports of illegal activity. The arrested agents were taking advantage of people who were unaware of the official process and charging them

extra money.

The agents arrested during the raid include Mohsin Shehzad, Sajjad Ali, Muhammad Ali, Muhammad Afzal, Hafiz Usama Akhtar, Mehr Ali Hassan, and Muhammad Imran Siddiqui. Others arrested include Faisal Mushtaq, Babar Akram, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Tariq, Abdullah Saeed, Muhammad Asad Bhatti, and Muhammad Younas.

All of them belong to different areas of Gujranwala. During the operation, the FIA also recovered several suspicious items

from the agents, including empty bank challans, photocopies of passport tokens, MRP (Machine Readable Passport) fee receipts, and NADRA family tree certificates.

The FIA has started investigating the arrested suspects and is continuing operations to catch other people involved in the network. Officials have said that more arrests are expected in the coming days.

The FIA has urged citizens to avoid dealing with agents and to follow the official procedure for passport applications.

Child Marriage Bill against Shariah

LAHORE (PPI): Qari Muhammad Yaqub Sheikh, the Joint Secretary of Pakistan Central Muslim League and Chairman of the Scholars and Elders Wing, has declared the bill prohibiting child marriage as an attack on the Shariah of Muhammad the Quran and Sunnah, and the Islamic family system. He stated that according to Shariah, the condition for marriage is not age but puberty.

Qari Yaqub Sheikh expressed regret over the punishments included in this bill, such as imprisonment for officiating a marriage, fines, and declaring parents and guardians as criminals, considering them an anti-Islamic stance. He said that such laws promote social decay by criminalizing marriage.

He further stated that Islamic society ensures purity and protection through marriage, while this law is increasing social disorder. Qari Yaqub Sheikh demanded that the bill be immediately withdrawn and that any legislation be subject to the approval of the Islamic Ideology Council. He warned that the Pakistan Central Muslim League, along with religious and political parties, will determine the future course of action if the bill is not withdrawn.

Punjab waives birth, death certificate fees

LAHORE (APP): For a major relief for citizens, the Punjab government has announced the waiver of all fees related to the registration of birth and death as well as the issuance of computerized certificates for a period of up to seven years, under the newly enforced Birth and Death Registration Rules 2025.

The decision was made on the directives of the Punjab Chief Minister, as part of a broader initiative to streamline public service delivery and reduce the financial burden on citizens. The new rules, officially notified in the Punjab Gazette, aim to make the civil registration process more transparent, efficient and citizen-friendly.

According to a spokesperson for the Local Government Department, no fee will be charged for birth or death registrations within seven years of the event and citizens will also be able to obtain computerized certificates free of cost within this period. The initiative, officials say, aligns with the Chief Minister's vision to provide accessible and affordable governance to the people.

Under the updated framework, the window for regular registration has been extended from 60 days to one year. Furthermore, the requirement of a court decree for late registration has been abolished — except in cases where registration is delayed by more than seven years. In such cases, a newspaper advertisement will be mandatory and registration fee will be charged. However, for death registrations exceeding seven years, a court decree will remain a legal requirement.

The rules also re-define administrative authority over the registration process. Registrations for children up to one year of age will fall under the jurisdiction of the Union Council Secretary. Those between one and seven years will be handled by the Assistant Director of Local Government, while registrations delayed beyond seven years will require the approval of the Deputy Director concerned.

IGP reviews CCD performance in Gujranwala, Sheikhupura

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar on Tuesday chaired a high-level crime control meeting at the Central Police Office (CPO) where he reviewed the resources and performance of the Crime Control Departments (CCD) in Gujranwala and Sheikhupura.

The meeting was attended by Additional IG CCD Sohail Zafar Chattha, Additional IG Operations Punjab Shahzada Sultan, DIG CCD Umar Farooq Salamati, AIG Operations Abdul Rahim Shirazi and AIG Admin Asad Ijaz Malhi.

While regional police officers (RPOs), District Police Officers (DPOs), Regional Officers (ROs) and District Officers (DOs) from Gujranwala and Sheikhupura regions participated via video link. Officers from these regions presented briefings on their progress and achievements.

"CCD has become an integral part of district policing and is delivering remarkable results despite limited resources through effective coordination," said Dr. Usman.

He announced that within the next three months, CCD offices will be upgraded with modern infrastructure and facilities. Furthermore, he revealed plans for the launch of a cyber crime department and Punjab tourism police in the near future. "We have improved front-end services at special initiative police stations; now we will enhance the back-end operations as well," the IG added.

He expressed the vision to transform Punjab Police into a \$1 billion organization through modern infrastructure, technology and smart policing. The IGP appreciated the performance of CPO Gujranwala Rana Muhammad Ayaz,

DPO Sialkot Faisal Shahzad and SSP CCD Mansoor Aman. He also commended CCD officers for meeting targets in combating serious crimes.

"There is strong coordination and an effective working relationship between the district police and CCD for the eradication of serious crimes", Dr Usman emphasized. He noted that district police have fully supported CCD with human resources, transport, offices and logistics.

Additional IG CCD Sohail Zafar Chattha said that the department was focusing on serious crimes such as robbery-homicide, rape during robbery, sexual assault-murder, motorcycle theft and dangerous gang operations. Dr.Usman Anwar also directed the CCD to accelerate efforts to apprehend high-profile proclaimed offenders and gang members.

Sindh CS, UNICEF delegation discuss comprehensive roadmap for out-of-school children

KARACHI (APP): A high-level delegation of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Pakistan called on the Chief Secretary (CS) Sindh Asif Hyder Shah to discuss Sindh province's comprehensive five-year roadmap aimed at tackling the alarming number of out-of-school children and adolescents.

The meeting marked a significant milestone in Sindh's commitment to implementing the National Education Emergency declared in May 2024 and finalizing its Multi-Sectoral Roadmap for Out-of-School Children and Adolescents (OOSC/A) for the period of July 2025 to June 2030.

The Chief Secretary and UNICEF delegation reviewed the roadmap's strategic objectives, which aim to reduce the number of out-of-school children and adolescents in Sindh by 50 percent over the next five years. The roadmap identifies and addresses

the range of structural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers that hinder access to education. The roadmap has been developed through collaborative input from multiple departments including School Education, Health, Social Welfare, Local Government, Finance, Planning and Development, Public Health Engineering, and the Directorate of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPD).

It adopts a comprehensive life-cycle approach, linking education with healthcare, nutrition, child protection, and social services beginning from maternal and prenatal care and extending through early childhood to adolescence and employability.

The Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah reaffirmed the provincial government's unwavering commitment to the roadmap and highlighted the need for cross-sectoral leadership

and integration to achieve sustainable results. Speaking on the multifaceted nature of the issue, he stated, "The crisis of out-of-school children is not solely an education issue—it is, in fact, a deeply rooted, multi-sectoral challenge that begins even before a child is born.

It starts with the health and nutrition of the mother, continues with timely birth registration, and is influenced by poverty, social norms, child protection, and access to basic services. When a child is not in school, it often reflects systemic gaps across several sectors—healthcare, nutrition, social protection, civil registration, and community support systems. If we are to make meaningful progress, we must look beyond the classroom and adopt a holistic, life-cycle approach that integrates interventions from pre-conception through early childhood to adolescence.



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR LIVESTOCK & DAIRY DEVELOPMENT KOHAT
Ph: 0922-860404 - Email: ddlkohat@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders are invited from firms registered with income tax/sales tax department having active tax payer status for the supply of rural poultry birds under the district development initiative DDI scheme "Poverty Alleviation through development of Rural Poultry in Tehsil Gumbat District Kohat". The approximate value of the tender is Rs.8.00 million. The procurement procedure will be Single Stage Two Envelops. Bid Solicitation documents can be obtained from the office of the District Director Livestock Kohat on cash payment of Rs. 1000/- (non-refundable) during official timings till the last date of submission of bidding documents. The deadline for submission of Bidding documents is 10/06/2025 at 12:00 Noon which will be opened on the same day at 12:30 Noon in the presence of authorized representatives of the participating firms at office of the District Director Livestock Kohat, Near Saifullah Market, Tirah Bazar Kohat. The firm / importer/ Suppliers will have to submit the Call Deposit Receipt (refundable) amounting to Rs. 160,000/- in the name of the District Director Livestock Kohat", as bid security. A pre-bid meeting with the interested bidders will be held on 05/06/2025 at 11:00 AM at the office of the District Director Livestock Kohat. The tender documents received after due date and time will not be accepted.

INF(P)2051/25

DISTRICT DIRECTOR/LIVESTOCK KOHAT



Netherlands envoy meets Governor to discuss bilateral cooperation

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ambassador of the Netherlands to Pakistan, Henney Fokel de Vries, met with Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Faisal Karim Kundi, here at Governor House to discuss a range of mutual concerns including bilateral relations, security, Afghan refugees, and socio-developmental initiatives.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the impact of climate change on the province's agriculture and the associated risks.

Governor Kundi highlighted the efforts of the

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Red Crescent under his leadership during natural disasters and discussed future plans for disaster response.

Expressing concern over the growing insecurity and terrorism in the province, the Governor pointed to the presence of terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan and their cross-border influence.

He recalled the heavy sacrifices made by the people of KP, including schoolchildren, armed forces, police, and civilians, particularly referencing the Army Public School attack.

He emphasized the con-

tinued efforts of Pakistan's security forces to restore peace in the region.

The discussion also covered the promotion of technical education, including the establishment of a globally recognized hospitality institute in Swat with the support of NAVTTC (National Vocational and Technical Training Commission).

The Governor addressed issues arising from the presence of Afghan refugees, highlighting the economic and security challenges, while clarifying that those entering Pakistan with valid visas face no

obstacles.

Ambassador de Vries shed light on the Netherlands' ongoing social and developmental activities in Pakistan, particularly in KP. These include the promotion of human rights, women's empowerment, sustainable development, eco-friendly skill training, and cultural exchange.

Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in sectors such as higher education, healthcare, trade, environment, sports development, and humanitarian assistance in the province.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi called on by Ambassador of The Netherlands Ms Henny Fokel de Varies at Governor's House.

Former DG Information KP visits Hamza Foundation



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Former Director General Information and Public Relations, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Salim Khan visited the Hamza Foundation a well-regarded charitable organization based in the University Town here on Tuesday. During the visit, he received an in-depth brief-

ing on the foundation's services and operations and expressed appreciation for its continued dedication to patients battling thalassemia.

For several decades, Hamza Foundation has been providing free blood transfusions, essential medical care, and awareness programs for thalassemia patients—a mission that has

earned the institution wide respect and admiration.

Mr. Hassan Gul, representing the foundation, gave a detailed overview of its ongoing initiatives, social impact, and future plans.

Praising the foundation's humanitarian contributions, Mr. Salim Khan urged the privileged and philanthropic members of the society to come forward and support its efforts. "Institutions like Hamza Foundation are vital to ensuring that critical, life-saving care reaches the most vulnerable members of our community," he observed.

He concluded the visit by offering his best wishes for the foundation's continued growth and success and prayed for its lasting impact in serving the ailing humanity.

PHC grants protective bail to Mashal

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has granted three-week protective bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Mashal Yousafzai and directed the relevant parties to provide details of the cases registered against her, on Tuesday. PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Farah Jamsheed heard the petition. The Bashir Khan Wazir advocate informed the court that cases had been registered against the petitioner and requested for provision of details in this regard. PHC granted three-week protective bail to Mashal Yousafzai and directed the federal government and other parties to submit a report on the cases registered against her. The court also restrained law enforcement agencies from arresting Mashal Yousafzai in any registered case.

Kundi congratulates COAS

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Tuesday lauded the government's decision to appoint Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir as Field Marshal, calling it a timely step that reflects the nation's trust and affection for the Pakistan Armed Forces. In a statement, Governor Kundi said that General Munir's role in countering internal and external conspiracies and strengthening Pakistan's defense has been recognized globally.

Tordher chairs meeting on environmental issues of industries

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting on environmental matters related to industrial activities was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Abdul Karim Tordher, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Industries, convened in the committee room of the Industries Department here at Peshawar.

The meeting focused on growing complaints regarding environmental pollution from certain industrial units in Peshawar. It also reviewed concerns raised from the meeting participants regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) newly framed environmental quality standards by the Environmental Council. Participants discussed these standards and expressed their views on the matter.

Key attendees included Aamir Afaq, Secretary of Industries; Muhammad Anwar Khan, Special Secretary; Mujeeb-ur-Rehman, Additional Secretary and Jamshed Khan, Director of the Environmental Protection



Agency. Dr. Rashid Rehman from the University of Engineering and Technology; Mohammad Tahir, General Manager of industrial group ZRK; Fazal Muqem, President of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry; officials from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC) and representatives of the Hayatabad Industrial Association along with other relevant departments were also included in the attendees. During the meeting, the forum issued directives for

all stakeholders to take immediate and practical steps to resolve industrial pollution. Similarly, certain reservations were raised by the industrial department representative and industrial sector regarding the newly framed National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQs), emphasizing that stakeholders should have been consulted beforehand. Inclusion of expert opinion could have led to more robust and meaningful regulations.

The meeting also recommended that draft regulations be shared with relevant stakeholders to allow

for comprehensive input.

Additionally, in response to complaints about solvent adulteration in petrol at certain filling stations, Mr. Tordher directed the formation of a dedicated committee to investigate and curb this malpractice.

He further instructed that, moving forward, all participating organizations must ensure the attendance of technical experts from their respective sectors at such forums.

This would ensure meaningful and well-informed contributions to policy discussions.

Public hearing on Kohat Master Plan held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A Public Hearing on the Kohat Master Plan, was held at District Council Hall, KDA Kohat, organized by the Urban Policy and Planning Unit of the Planning and Development Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Mayor Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Assistant Commissioner Kohat Nimra Owais, President of Kohat Chamber Rasheed Paracha, Inamullah Jan, Ehsanullah Jan, Qasim Zubair, authorities concerned of the Traffic Police, Industry department

and Urban Area Development Authority and people from various sectors participated in the program.

The participants presented their best and viable suggestions in this regard. It was emphasized that in the preparation of the master plan, policies should be formulated keeping in view the ground realities so that these projects are realistic and effective. Likewise, comprehensive projects should be prepared on priority basis for the promotion of commercial projects and industrial estates. be included also.

On this occasion, it was suggested that new markets should be constructed outside the city to reduce the traffic problems in the city and increase the beauty of the city. In the master plan, attention should be paid to the convenience of the citizens and to provide them with a healthy environment.

The participants termed the master plan as the basis for the future development of Kohat and said that the consultation of the business community and the public can make this process more effective and comprehensive.

Pre-budget seminar sparks vital dialogue on KP's fiscal future



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA), in collaboration with the Development Insights Lab (DIL) and the Department of Economics, University of Peshawar on Tuesday hosted a high-level Pre-Budget Seminar to encourage inclusive discussions around Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) 2025-26 budget.

The seminar aimed to bring together diverse voices to explore fiscal priorities, transparency, and strategies for equitable public financing.

Held at the University of Peshawar's Economics Department Conference Hall, the event gathered policymakers, academics, economists, civil society members, students, and business leaders to deliberate on challenges and opportunities in KP's financial planning.

In her opening remarks

Shazadi Rubab, Program Officer at CGPA, opened the session by outlining the organization's commitment to transparency, accountability, and public engagement.

She acknowledged DIL and the Department of Economics for co-hosting the event.

Prof Dr Muhammad Taib, Dean of Social Sciences, emphasized the importance of data-driven, inclusive planning to ensure that budget allocations reflect the actual needs of the province.

Chairman of the Department of Economics Sajjad Ahmad Jan a comparative fiscal analysis, highlighting KP's record-high proposed budget of Rs. 1,754 billion.

He underscored climate change as a key disruptor to economic stability and called for climate-resilient development strategies.

MPA Ahmed Kundi addressed budget formula on challenges, advocating

for greater flexibility, clear performance indicators, and citizen-focused planning.

He encouraged the public to use social media platforms to voice budget-related concerns and participate in the policy process.

Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Fazal Moqem Khan stressed the need to retain local talent and promote innovation-led growth.

He pointed to the fiscal complications following the FATA merger and urged for improved funding and infrastructure in these areas.

Former MPA Ghazan Jamal praised the KP government's budget presentation but criticized the limited allocation for the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs).

He argued that the current National Finance Commission (NFC) resource allocation formula has failed to reflect the post-merger fiscal realities.

With 73.3 percent of the NMDs' population living below the poverty line, he called for a revision of the formula under the principle of "Finance Follows Function."

Renowned journalist Lehaaz Ali emphasized that despite KP's monthly budget of Rs. 83 billion and an annual Rs. 800 billion allocated for government salaries, budget mismanagement continues to hinder effective service delivery.

He highlighted systemic inefficiencies in planning, spending, and oversight as key issues.

During a question-answer session, CGPA Executive Director Muhammad Anwar questioned the transparency of funds allocated to education and health, specifically schools and Basic Health Units (BHUs).

He emphasized the need for audits and real-time tracking of expenditures to ensure accountability and effective service delivery.

The seminar concluded with a strong call for a transparent, participatory, and equitable budgeting process for KP.

Participants urged the government to prioritize marginalized communities, ensure climate resilience, and reinforce oversight mechanisms.

CGPA and its partners reaffirmed their commitment to continuing the dialogue to influence sound fiscal policy and governance in the province.

Seminar on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A one-day seminar organized about the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill by Pabbi Intellectual Forum. The seminar was attended by a large number of participants, including prominent figures from various fields.

Former Inspector General of Police, Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, discussed the legal aspects of the bill and highlighted its constitutional flaws. He

briefed the participants about the potential legal ambiguities that may arise in the future.

Senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Farkhtullah Babar, expressed his views on the bill's constitutional status and its potential impacts.

He stated that the non-implementation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment is causing political instability in the country, and certain forces

are trying to take the country back to the 1990s.

Former Vice Chancellor of Islamia University, Professor Dr. Noor Jehan, shed light on the bill from a professional perspective and highlighted the attempt to seize control of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's resources.

Maulana Khan Zeb, a senior leader of Awami National Party, briefed the participants about the bill and emphasized that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have the

first right over the province's minerals and mines. He urged the participants to raise their voices against the bill to protect their rights.

The seminar concluded with the distribution of commemorative shields to the speakers.

The participants expressed their determination to protect the rights of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to raise their voices against any attempt to deprive them of their rights.

Khattak family donates Rs 4m for KMU Islamic Center

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a generous act of legacy and community service, the Khattak family has donated Rs 4 million for the construction of an Islamic Center and Mosque at Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar. The contribution is made in memory of the late Engineer Muhammad Ishaq Khattak, whose vision was to integrate education with moral values.

The announcement was made by Mrs. Jameela Jan Khattak, wife of the late Engineer Khattak and founder of Country Grammar School and The Educators College, during a special ceremony at KMU.

The under-construction Islamic Center will include separate prayer halls for men and women, classrooms, and a research department focused on Islamic studies. The thoughtfully designed facility aims to serve as a peaceful and inclusive space for spiritual reflection and academic growth, promoting the well-being of students and the broader community.

Speaking at the event, Mrs. Jameela Jan Khattak said, "This donation brings

to life my husband's dream. He believed in societal upliftment through education and shared values. We hope this center reflects that spirit and continues to serve people for years to come."

Dr. Maria and Dr. Saad, children of the late Engineer Khattak and both medical professionals, shared how their father's values inspired their decision.

"Our father taught us the importance of giving back and building something that lasts," said Dr. Saad. Dr. Maria added, "His vision was inclusive, and this cen-

ter will be open to everyone encouraging understanding, reflection, and knowledge."

KMU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq praised the Khattak family's contribution, stating: "This center will go beyond being a space for prayer. It will foster dialogue, Islamic scholarship, and the integration of ethical values within academic life."

He further emphasized that investing in the construction of mosques and Islamic centers is a noble form of continuous charity (Sadaqah Jariyah), and congratulated the Khattak family for their generous initia-

tive. Professor Dr. Zia ul Haq also spoke about the relevance of Islamic knowledge in today's world and the critical need for community-focused projects like this.

"This donation reflects the late Engineer Khattak's commitment to education, public service, and the collective spirit of compassion and progress."

The KMU Islamic Center and Mosque is expected to be completed in 2025, serving as a lasting hub for both spiritual and academic enrichment," he remarked.





In brief

Rescue 1122 hosts workshop F.P. Report

BUNER: The Rescue Training Team organized a one-day training workshop for students at Ghazali School and College, Sawari, on Tuesday. In which, CPR, performing an object stuck in the respiratory tract, providing medical aid in case of bleeding and fractures, practical methods on how to control fire in case of fire erupted were taught and other methods were provided to the students through practical and lecture methods. The rescue male trainers especially the lady worker Ms.Zainab played well and the students admire their devotion and commitment to services. At the end of the training program, the school's director Syed Zeb said that for a safe society and immediate control of accidents, it is necessary for every individual to be trained and in this regard, Rescue 1122 is playing its role well.

Two alleged smugglers held F.P. Report

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Police arrested two alleged smugglers and recovered huge quantities of non-custom-paid items worth millions of rupees at Ghazi Ghat check post late last night. Police said here on Tuesday that the check post officials intercepted two cars -- LE-489 and BDO- 901. Upon checking, they found 2770 outers, cigarettes valuing over Rs 5.5 million and hot filter/cool filter for tobacco worth over Rs 600,000. From the second vehicle BDO-901, police recovered a 9mm pistol, magazine and bullets. Two accused were arrested and put in the lock-up for investigations. DPO Syed Ali commended Ghazi Ghat police post Incharge Muhammad Ayub Buzdar and his team for their vigilance that helped them arrest the alleged smugglers.

11 suspects arrested F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: The SSP of Shaheed Benazirabad, Shabbir Ahmed Sethar, has launched a large-scale crackdown against narcotics peddlers and successful operations were carried out in various police jurisdictions, resulting in the arrest of 11 suspects and the recovery of illegal drugs and weapons. According to police spokesperson, in the jurisdiction of B-Section Police Station, in two separate operations, two suspects were arrested. Ali Waris Khaskheli was apprehended with a large quantity of gutka and betel nut products. In another operation, suspect Mujahid Sheikh was arrested with similar narcotics, while his accomplice Ghulam Mustafa alias Musto Brohi managed to flee. FIRs under the Narcotics Act have been registered against the suspects. In the limits of Airport Police Station, in three separate operations, three suspects were arrested. Yasir Ali alias Joji Makrani was apprehended with 1,200 grams of cannabis. Ejaz Ali Kario was caught with five packets of Z21 betel nut. In another action, drug dealer Didar Ali Lakhha was arrested with 1,900 grams of cannabis. Separate FIRs have been filed under the Narcotics Act. Taluka Police Station team during snap checking, arrested Zohaib alias Zubair Jatoti with 1,050 grams of cannabis. A case under the Narcotics Act has been registered. On the other hand Jam Datar Police Station: team during snap checking, arrested suspect Gornand Meghwar with a large quantity of hazardous gutka and betel nut. FIR has been lodged under the Narcotics Act.

Out of 60 state-run girls' schools, 23 close in Landi Kotal

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Out of 60 government girls' schools, 23 are non-functioned in tehsil Landi Kotal due to absence and lack of female teachers, dwellers of the area said. Locals informed that eight and six girls' schools closed in Loy-Shelman and Kum-Shelman respectively while five of them were suspended in Landi Kotal.

In the same way four female schools shut in the Bazaar Zakha Khel area of Landi Kotal. Vice-Chairman Village Council, Pased Khel Shah Was Khan said that since March their girls' school was remained closed and approximately 465 girls had been deprived of education.

Ratio of female education in tribal society was already unsatisfactory, he added and said the prevailed poor condition of the girls schools further dismayed the parents who

were determined to decorate their female inherit with education. Transfer and posting on political bases in the education department was the main cause of devastation of the department, he remarked.

He urged the parliamentarians of the constituency to play their due role to refunction the girls' schools so that they could also become the useful citizens of the country. Some of the property owners of the schools said that because of prolonged absence of teaching staff, they permanently locked the schools.

On the condition of anonymity, an official in the District Education Office said that the unavailability of female staff locally, most of the females posted in the schools were out of Khyber who did not join their duties regularly. He suggested that if relaxation was granted to the local females in Educational Testing and

Evaluation Authority (ETEA) test, the education department would avail services of the female locally.

The issue of lack of female staff had been resolved previously through PTC funds by hiring local female staff but ironically the fund was suspended that suffered the female education in the area, he added. When Assistant District Education Officer (female) Landi Kotal Miss Dilshad was contacted on the matter she said that one each female volunteer teacher on daily wage (Rs. 7000 per month) had been deployed in 23 girls schools while one teacher each posted in 13 girls schools in tehsil Landi Kotal to keep the institutions functional. Plan underway to recommence the girls schools in Landi Kotal with support of United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), she added.

Boy scout units opens at govt middle schools

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Boy Scout units inaugurated at two government-run middle schools in Lakki Marwat district on Tuesday. District Scout Secretary Haji Naimatullah Khan Meenakhel performed the inauguration as a chief guest at separate ceremonies held in Government Middle Schools located in Wanda Saeedkhel and Multan Manjiwala areas.

Schools' headmasters Zakaullah Khan and Kaleemullah Khan, scout leaders, teachers and students were in attendance. The students sang patriotic songs and took oath to become active members of the scouting movement under the banner of district boy scouts association.

On the occasion, Meenakhel said that the scouts units were being activated in public sector schools on the special instructions of DEO Shoukat Ali Khan who also held the office of district scout commissioner. "Scouting is a movement that helps in building the character of students and making them good human beings and useful citizens of the society", he maintained and congratulated the students of both the

middle schools on becoming part of the scouting movement.

He called upon students to focus on education, serve their parents and teachers, obey their elders and make selfless service to humanity their motto of life. The district scout secretary said that the basic aim of the scouting was to promote good and help others in times of trouble and ensure provision of services to humanity and countrymen.

Later, he along with schools' heads planted trees in Government Middle School Multan Manjiwala and said that on the special instructions of DEO Shaukat Ali Khan, fruit trees would be planted in schools during the upcoming monsoon season. He asked the schools' bosses to mobilize their teachers, scout leaders, students and scouts to take active part in tree plantation activities. He also distributed sports certificates among the student athletes of the school.

Police held alleged culprits including 8 POS: Police have arrested scores of criminals and suspects during a search and strike operation in parts of Lakki Marwat district. District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Jawad Ishaq said that the operation and

snap checking was launched following credible reports about the presence of wanted men in rural areas of the district.

DPO said that the counter-terrorism department and AI-Barq force commandos, district special branch and bomb disposal unit personnel backed by armoured personnel carriers and drones also took part in the daylong offensive. "During the operation, the cops held 8 proclaimed offenders, 6 drug barons, 7 terrorists' facilitators, 15 carriers of illegal weapons and 60 suspects and seized arms and ammunition and other contraband from them", he claimed.

The district police chief said that the seizure items included two Kalashnikov rifles, one Kalakov rifle, 11 pistols, 2 repeater guns, one shotgun, 117 cartridges of different bore and 3.6kg hashish, one kg ice (crystal meth) and 800 grams heroin. He said that the policemen also checked the data of tenants in 41 houses and the record of 77 motorcycles and 86 other vehicles through the vehicle verification system. He said that police were fully vigilant and would leave no stone unturned to maintain law and order and prevent any criminal and subversive activity.

Tribesmen flay deplorable condition of govt schools

F.P. Report

WANA: Government-run educational institutions across South Waziristan are in a deplorable state, with schools in Wana and adjoining tehsils lacking teachers, textbooks, Class-IV staff, and basic infrastructure.

Except for Wana High School—considered functional due to its proximity to the FC camp and CCTV surveillance—most schools present a grim picture of neglect, reflecting the collapse of the region's education system. Parents, expressing frus-

tration, told local journalists that government textbooks are yet to reach many schools.

Classes beyond grade five are non-existent in most institutions, owing to a shortage of qualified teachers for key subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, and English. The situation at Government Girls High School Dabkot is reportedly worse. Students, speaking anonymously, said no classes are held beyond the fifth grade, and they have never seen a female teacher on campus. The school lacks even a watchman.

Educational activities in the tribal districts have remained crippled since the post-9/11 conflict. With private school fees beyond the reach of most families, over half of the children in the region remain out of school.

Parents have dismissed the provincial government's free admission campaign as a "hoax" and urged authorities to take immediate and concrete steps to revive the education sector, warning that failure to act would leave hundreds of children permanently out of the education system.

YTA urges for market based salary in case of pension abolishment

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Young Teachers Association (YTA) provincial president, Ata ur Rehman, demanded that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government introduce a market-based salary system for government employees if it plans to abolish the pension scheme.

Talking to the media at Timergara, Ata ur Rehman said that if either the federal or provincial government intends to end pensions, then it must compensate by shifting from the outdated Basic Pay Scale (BPS) system to a market-based salary (MBS) structure. He said this transition is not only fair but also a legal right of government employees in the absence of a pension.

He said, "The government often compares our system with foreign countries where pensions don't exist, but it conveniently ignores the fact that those countries offer market-based salaries and also provide old-age benefits to all senior citizens."

Criticizing the current dual policy, the YTA leader said that while the government pays salaries according to the BPS, it seeks to implement the Contributory Pension Fund (CP Fund) in place of the traditional pension system. "Such a double standard is unacceptable," he said. "The government must choose one system: either continue with the BPS along with pensions or implement the CP Fund alongside market-based salaries."

He further added that enforcing the CP Fund without offering market-based pay is an anti-employee policy and a 'black law' that no government employee is willing to accept. "A glance at the monthly salary slips clearly shows the injustice," he said.

The YTA president also shared examples of market-based salaries for new recruits and serving employees, stating, that fresh recruits should receive Rs150,000, after five years of service Rs305,520, after ten years of service Rs448,280, and after fifteen years of service: Rs900,090. He urged the government to end this disparity and adopt a fair system that ensures financial security for government employees during and after their service.

Road construction inaugurated: Construction work on a long-delayed road project in Union Council Shalkandai was finally commenced after years of public demand. The project, costing Rs 40 million, was formally inaugurated by chairman district development advisory committee MPA Ubaid ur Rehman during a ceremony held at Shalkandai here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, MPA Ubaid ur Rehman said the road was included in his development manifesto in response to the people's long-standing demand. "Today, we have fulfilled our promise," he added. Residents expressed satisfaction over the launch of the project, calling it a beacon of hope for the area. They said the road's construction would ease travel and boost local trade and economic activity.

Dr. Naeem secures HEREF project for KUST



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Associate Professor Dr. Naeem Khan at Department of Chemistry in Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), has achieved a significant milestone by securing a prestigious research project under the Higher Education Research Endowment Fund (HEREF).

The project, titled "Development of Low-Cost and Eco-Friendly Biogenic Films for the Preservation of Fruits and Vegetables," has been awarded a total funding of PKR 4.623 million. Dr. Nargis Jamila will serve as the Principal Investigator,

while Dr. Naeem Khan and Professor Dr. Safia Ahmed will contribute as Co-Principal Investigators.

Vice Chancellor of KUST, Professor Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, congratulated Dr. Naeem Khan on this remarkable achievement. He stated that the award is not only a recognition of Dr. Khan's outstanding research contributions but also a testament to the growing academic and research excellence of Kohat University.

DC assures Bistikhel coal lease issue: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Akram met a representative delegation of the elders of Bostikhel Tribe of the Tribal Sub Division Darra Adam Khel in his

office on Tuesday. Authorities concerned were also present on this occasion.

During the meeting, members of the delegation informed the Deputy Commissioner Kohat in detail about the Coal Lease issues of the area. Deputy Commissioner Kohat listened to the issues pertaining to Coal Leases of the delegation patiently and assured its early resolution.

Speaking on the occasion, DC Kohat said that the district administration is giving top priority to the public welfare and developmental works in the entire district, so the issues presented by the delegation will be resolved on priority basis.

Timely completion of sewerage project directed

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner has issued strict instructions for the timely and high-quality completion of the ongoing sewerage project in Kashmir Nagar, Alipur Road. During a comprehensive visit to the site, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized that the project must be completed in all respects by next month to alleviate the longstanding problems faced by residents of the area.

Addressing officials on-site, DC Abdul Razzaq underscored that the construction work, both for the sewerage and the road, must be executed strictly according to prescribed standards. He firmly stated that the use of substandard or poor-quality materials would not be tolerated under any circumstances. "If any substandard materials are found at any stage, the relevant department and the contractor will be held accountable," he warned.

Accompanied by CEO Municipal Committee Ikramullah Sandhu and other concerned officers, the Deputy Commissioner conducted a detailed inspection of the sewerage system currently being laid in Kashmir Nagar and adjacent areas of Alipur Road. He noted that this region has long suffered from inadequate sewerage and drainage, affecting daily life and mobility for local residents. However, with the launch of this new underground sewerage project by the Municipal Committee, there is renewed hope for lasting relief.

In addition to the sewerage initiative, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq also visited the bypass Railway Line

Flyover Project. He reviewed the progress of the construction and directed concerned authorities to expedite the work by ensuring continuous activity in two shifts daily.

"This is a vital mega project for the district and must be completed as soon as possible," he said, urging timely and uninterrupted construction. Later, the DC conducted a walk from Kassoki bypass to the inner railway gate, reviewing cleanliness, drainage, and the removal of encroachments under the Clean Punjab Programme. He inspected various sectors and monitored progress in waste management and urban maintenance efforts.

Daylight burglary spreads panic: A daring daylight burglary has shaken the residents of the densely populated 'Mohallah Purani Androon Ghalla Mandi', as unidentified criminals looted gold ornaments and cash worth over Rs. 1 million from a house in the area.

According to police sources, the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Sukheke Police Station. The house belongs to Iram Usman, daughter of well-known local businessman Seth Usman. At the time of the incident, Ms. Usman had locked her home and gone to visit relatives.

Taking advantage of the homeowner's absence, unknown assailants forcibly broke the main gate lock, as well as the locks on internal doors and safes. The culprits made off with approximately five tolas of gold ornaments and Rs. 1.05 million in cash. Upon returning and discovering the break-in, Ms. Usman immediately informed the police. A case has been registered, and the Sukheke Police have initiated

an investigation. However, as of now, no arrests have been made, and the culprits remain at large.

Pakistan commits for China's territorial sovereignty over Zangnan: Former President of the District Bar Association and senior leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muhammad Arshad Mehind advocate, strongly condemned India's recent assertions regarding China's province of Zangnan, calling them "baseless propaganda" and a reflection of India's expansionist mindset.

In an exclusive conversation with local media representatives, Mehind declared that Zangnan is an "integral constitutional and geographical part of the People's Republic of China." He emphasized that historical records, ground realities, and established international law unequivocally affirm China's sovereignty over the region. He described India's stance as misleading, aggressive, and detrimental to regional peace.

"India's unfounded claims are not only a blatant distortion of historical and legal facts but also an alarming indication of its expansionist ambitions," Mehind stated. "Such actions pose a serious threat to peace and stability in South Asia and are eroding India's credibility on the global stage."

Addressing a question on the ongoing Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsos, he praised China for its consistent diplomatic, moral, and political support for Pakistan. He lauded China's bold and principled stance in international forums, where it has consistently advocated for Pakistan's position.

Exploring new tourist destinations vital for robust economic development

SWAT (APP): Amid growing tourist congestion at popular destinations of KP like Swat's Kalam and Malam Jabba and Mansehra's Naran and Kaghan, the provincial government is now spotlighting lesser-known but equally breathtaking sites to diversify its tourism portfolio for robust rural economic development.

With traditional tourism sites such as Nathiagali and Thandiyan Abbottabad nearing saturation during peak summer seasons in the province, the KP Culture and Tourism Authority pivoted toward unlocking the potential of hidden gems—from the serene Chitral valleys to the untouched beauty of Gabin Jabba, Shahi Bagh in Swat, and Kumrat Dir Upper.

These breathtaking areas, once accessible only to seasoned trekkers and mountaineers of tour groups, are now being developed with eco-friendly infrastructure and modern amenities by increasing the flow of foreign and domestic tourists to northern KP.

In 2024 alone, KP has wel-

comed over 10 million domestic tourists, driven by interest in the province's natural beauty, lakes/waterfalls and historical landmarks such as the Gandhara civilization sites, Saiful Malook lake and Trich Mir, the highest peak in the Hindu Kush range in Chitral.

Building on this momentum, the government is expanding its tourism landscape with new projects in northern KP designed to absorb the increasing visitor volume especially during summer. According to Omair Khattak, GM Investment at KP Tourism Authority, four Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) ie Ghanool (Mansehra), Mankiyal (Swat), Madaklasht (Chitral), and Thandiyan (Abbottabad) are planned with World Bank support. Ghanool and Mankiyal are being prioritized as pilot projects, with budgets of Rs5.5 billion and Rs2.9 billion respectively.

"These ITZs, modeled after international benchmarks in Malaysia and Indonesia, will not only boost tourism but expected to reduce tourist load

on established hilly stations in KP," he said. He informed that these ITZ are expected to generate up to 200,000 direct and indirect job opportunities and attract \$2.8 billion in investment.

New facilities have been developed at emerging sites including Larum Top and Shahin Bin Shahi in Lower Dir, Broghal and Sorlaspur in Upper Chitral, and Shangla, Samana (Haripur), and Sulatharn (Swat). Road upgrades and visitor centers are being established to improve accessibility and visitor experience. Camping pods have also been introduced at scenic locations like Gabean Jabba, Jazz Banda and Sharan to provide budget-friendly accommodation for families. With daily rates between Rs3,500 to Rs5,000—significantly lower than hotel rates in Naran or Galiyat—these pods offer two to four beds, a washroom, a kitchenette, and security provided by tourism police.

Ten more such pods are set to become operational at various sites including Jargo, Sulatanr

(Swat), Broghal Valley, and Kalam, with more in the pipeline. Plans are underway for three new ski resorts in Kaghan, Chitral, and Swat, alongside the much-anticipated Battakundi-Lalazar chairlift and Dir-Chitral cable car project. Waterfalls like Sajkot, Noori, and Jarago are being upgraded, while trekking routes and eco-resorts in remote valleys such as Broghal, Kumrat, and Sheikh Badin are also seeing investment.

Dr. Muhammad Naeem, former Chair of Economics at the University of Peshawar, emphasized the economic significance of developing new destinations that not only spreads tourism footprint but revitalizes rural economies and controls price hikes in established areas. Habib Arif, Director General, KP Tourism and Culture Authority said the government's Host Tourism Project (HTP) empowers locals by offering interest-free loans of up to Rs3 million through the Bank of Khyber.

Residents can renovate or build rooms for tourist accom-

modation in areas such as upper Kalam, Kumrat, and Chitral. Special incentives are being extended to women and educated youth to encourage inclusive participation, he said. "The goal is not just promotion of tourism but rural development," said Zahid Chan Zab, KP's tourism advisor. "Through homestays, craft promotion, and community training, we're making tourism a tool for sustainable rural development."

In Chitral, the vibrant Kalash Valleys are experiencing renewed interest due to improved roads and digital marketing of cultural festivals. Similar initiatives are fostering growth in remote Kohistan, where eco-lodges and guided treks now attract nature lovers. With 2025 declared as Tirich Mir Mountain Year by the KP Govt, the government allocated Rs180 million for the repair of the Kalash Valley road, reinforcing its commitment to mountain tourism.

As KP positions itself as a premier destination for eco-tourism and adventure travel, its

focus on responsible development is crucial. International donors, private investors, and local communities are now co-authors of a shared vision where tourism not only entertains but empowers people. "Kalam's fresh air and Mahudhand Lake's tranquility are unmatched," said Noor Khan, a tourist from Peshawar. "But poor road conditions and hotel prices need urgent attention."

"Before Kalam visit, I travelled to Kumrat valley where road condition was pathetic and tourists were forced either to hire jeeps on very high rate ie Rs1000 per kilometers while many travelled miles for foot," he said, adding poor waste management, lack of healthcare services and reduced mobile network make communication difficult for tourists. However, with key initiatives like ITZs, community homestays, and nature-based tourism projects, KP is redefining the travel experience in Pakistan, offering not just a scenic escape, but a deeper connection to culture, nature, and local livelihoods.



Ambassador Tirmizi meets Bangladeshi envoy

F.P. Report

ABU DHABI: Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi held a meeting with Ambassador Tariq Ahmed of Bangladesh at the Embassy of Bangladesh in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

During the meeting, the two ambassadors discussed matters of mutual interest, focusing on strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh. They also exchanged views on the regional situation, reaffirming the importance of cooperation and constructive engagement between the two countries. The meeting reflected the shared desire of both sides to enhance diplomatic ties and explore new avenues of collaboration.



Taiwan wants peace, talks with China, president says

TAIPEI (Reuters): Taiwan wants peace and dialogue with China as war has no winners, but the government must continue to strengthen the island's defences, President Lai Ching-te said as he completed one year in office. China calls Lai a "separatist" and has rebuffed his multiple offers for talks. Lai rejects China's sovereignty claims over the democratic and separately governed island, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

A government spokesperson said last week that Taiwan could not rule out the possibility that China could mark the anniversary with military drills. Speaking to reporters at the presidential office in central Taipei, Lai said Taiwan's people loved peace. "I, too, am committed to peace. Because peace is priceless and war has no winners. But when it comes to seeking peace, we cannot have dreams nor illusions," he said.

Taiwan will continue to strengthen its defences as preparing for war is the best way to avoid it, Lai added. "I also reiterate here - Taiwan is happy to have exchanges and cooperation with China as long as there is reciprocal dignity. Using exchanges to replace hemming in, dialogue to replace confrontation." China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China's defence ministry last week said Lai was a "Taiwan Strait crisis maker" who had increased antagonism and confrontation and undermined peace and stability. Last month, China held war games code-named "Strait Thunder-2025A" around Taiwan, the "A" at its end suggesting there could be more to come. China called its May 2024 drills just after Lai took office "Joint Sword-2024A", and in October of that year staged "Joint Sword-2024B".

In a daily report detailing Chinese military activities, Taiwan's defence ministry said in the past 24 hours it had detected six Chinese planes and 11 vessels near the island.

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te marked his first year in office as his government grapples with Chinese military pressure, US tariff threats and domestic political turmoil. Lai, a staunch defender of Taiwan's sovereignty and detested by Beijing, delivered wide-ranging remarks on the need "to prepare for war to avoid war" and also bolster the island's economic resilience.

After promising to stand up to China and defend democracy at his inauguration, Lai insisted Taiwan was "willing" to talk to Beijing if there was "parity and dignity." "Peace is priceless and there are no winners in war," Lai said, but added "we cannot have

illusions" and vowed to continue "to strengthen our national defence capabilities". China, which claims Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to annex it, has held several rounds of large-scale military drills around the island since Lai took office. Taiwan's coast guard warned that China may use "cognitive warfare" to "disrupt public morale" as Lai marks the first anniversary of his inauguration.

As Taiwan comes under pressure from Washington to move more factories to US soil and reduce their trade imbalance, Lai said Taiwan would not "put all our eggs in one basket". Taiwan would increase its economic resilience by diversifying markets and boosting domestic demand. Lai also announced plans to set up a sovereign wealth fund to "boost Taiwan's economic momentum", but did not provide details about its size. The president has seen his first term in the top job engulfed in domestic political turmoil as opposition parties, which control the parliament, seek to stymie his agenda. The main opposition Kuomintang party (KMT) has called Lai a "dictator" and accused him of pushing Taiwan closer to war with China, while Lai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suggests the KMT is a tool of Beijing and is undermining Taiwan's security.

Spanish PM calls for Israel ban at Eurovision

MADRID (BBC): The Spanish prime minister has called for Israel to be banned from the Eurovision Song Contest over its military action in Gaza. Pedro Sánchez noted Russia has been banned from the contest since 2022 following its invasion of Ukraine, and said there should not be "double standards".

Israel came second in the contest's grand final in Switzerland, but topped the public vote - with Spanish viewers giving Israel the maximum 12 points. Israeli minister for diaspora affairs, Amichai Chikli, ridiculed Sánchez with a social media post that said the vote had been a "slap in the face" for the Spanish PM, "which we have heard here in Jerusalem". BBC News has asked Eurovision organisers the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) for comment. Speaking at a news conference in Madrid, Sánchez said: "Nobody was up in arms when the Russian invasion of Ukraine began three years ago and [Russia] had to leave international competitions and could not take part, as we have just seen, in Eurovision. "Therefore Israel shouldn't either, because what we cannot allow is double standards in culture." He also expressed solidarity with "the people of Palestine who are experiencing the injustice of war and bombardment". "Spain's commitment to international law and human rights must be constant and must be coherent," he said. "Europe's should be too." Sánchez and his government, which officially acknowledged a Palestinian state last year, have been harsh critics of Israel, and last week in Congress the prime minister referred to the country as "a genocidal state".

Israel has strenuously denied accusations of genocide, and its foreign ministry summoned the Spanish ambassador for a formal reprimand over Sánchez's "serious remarks". At Eurovision, Spain's televote saw the country award Israel maximum points for its song New Day Will Rise by Yuval Raphael. Spain's broadcast network RTVE has since requested an audit of the votes. Ahead of the Eurovision final, RTVE aired a message in support of Palestinians - despite being warned to avoid references to Gaza by the EBU. Spain's entry, Esa Diva by Melody, finished in 24th place in Basel.



GAZA: Palestinians flee with their belongings after Israeli military issued displacement orders for eastern Khan Younis.

Australia's Liberal-National coalition splits after thrashing

SYDNEY (BBC): Australia's conservative Liberal-National coalition - the nation's main opposition political party - has split after a partnership lasting almost 80 years. The move marks a seismic change in the country's political landscape and comes just weeks after a federal election that saw Labor win a second term in a landslide victory.

Nationals leader David Littleproud said his party would not re-enter a coalition agreement, amid policy disagreements with the Liberal Party as it goes on a journey of "rediscovery" after the empathic loss. The Coalition has been broken and repaired before, Mr Littleproud said, and he hoped the parties would be able to do it again. All except one of the 15 electorates the Liberal-National coalition lost at the election were ceded by the Liberals, who saw big swings against them right around the nation. Support nosedived in more moderate areas, particularly in cities, which analysts

largely put down to then-leader Peter Dutton's polarising persona and some Trump-like policies. His successor, Sussan Ley, has vowed to bring the party back to the centre-right.

The split comes after days of post-election talks between the Liberals and Nationals on what their future would look like, with Littleproud's party - who mainly represent regional communities and often have more conservative policy positions - failing to reach an agreement with their long-time political ally. A key issue that had strained their relationship with the Liberals was climate and energy, with sects of the National Party still opposed to net-zero emissions goals, and wedded to a nuclear power proposal which proved controversial at the election. Littleproud also pointed to regional infrastructure spending and policies to improve supermarket competition as points of conflict.

Describing it as "one of the hard-

est political decisions of his life", Littleproud said he had a "respectful conversation" with Ley to inform her of the split. "What this is about is taking a deep breath and saying to the Australian people, this is time apart [for] us to be better, [to] focus on them." "I gave [Ley] the commitment that I'll work with her every day to help to try to rebuild the relationship to the point we can re-enter a coalition before the next election." The Liberal-National partnership, which in its current form dates back to the 1940s, has broken down and been re-established several times over the decades. The last time the Coalition split was almost four decades ago, in 1987. The Liberal Party - which has the second largest number of seats in parliament - will remain the formal opposition party, though now in their own right. This means the Nationals will not hold any opposition roles.

France to open high-security prison in Amazon jungle

PARIS (BBC): France will build a new high-security prison in its overseas territory of French Guiana to house drug traffickers and radical Islamists, the country's justice minister announced during a visit to the territory.

Gérald Darmanin told Le Journal du Dimanche (JDD) newspaper that the prison would target organised crime "at all levels" of the drug supply chain. The 400m (£337m) facility, which could open as early as 2028, will be built in an isolated location deep in the Amazon jungle in the northwestern region of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni.

The plan was announced after a series of violent incidents linked to criminal gangs which saw prisons and staff targeted across France in recent months. The prison will hold up to 500 people, with a separate wing designed to house the most dangerous criminals. In an interview with JDD,

the minister said the new prison would be governed by an "extremely strict carceral regime" designed to "incapacitate the most dangerous drug traffickers". Darmanin said the facility would be used to detain people "at the beginning of the drug trail", as well as serving as a "lasting means of removing the heads of the drug trafficking networks" in mainland France. French Guiana is a region of France on the north-east coast of South America. Its residents are eligible to vote in French elections and have access to the French social security system, as well as other subsidies. Its distance from the French mainland means drug lords "will no longer be able to have any contact with their criminal networks", Darmanin told JDD.

French authorities have long struggled to control the infiltration of mobile phones into the prison net-

work. Tens of thousands are known to circulate through French jails.

Earlier this year, the French government announced new legislation designed to crack down on the activity of criminal gangs. The measures will create a dedicated branch of the prosecutors' office to deal with organised crime. It will also introduce extra powers for investigators, and a special protected status for informers. It will also see the creation of new high-security prisons - including the facility in French Guiana - to hold the most powerful drugs barons, with stricter rules governing visits and communication with the outside world. France has seen a series of attacks on prisons in recent months, which Darmanin has described as "terrorist" incidents that come in response to the government's new legislation. The perpetrators of these

attacks have set vehicles outside prisons alight, while Toulon's La Farlede prison was hit by gunfire. In some incidents the perpetrators of these attacks have styled themselves as defenders of prisoners' rights.

The proposed new facility in French Guiana is to be built at a "strategic crossroads" for drugs mules, particularly from Brazil and Suriname, according to AFP news agency. Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni is the former port of entry to the infamous Devil's Island penal colony, where 70,000 convicts from mainland France were sent between 1852 and 1954. The penal colony was the setting of French writer Henri Charrière's book Papillon, which was later made into a Hollywood film starring Steve McQueen and Dustin Hoffman. The BBC has contacted the French justice ministry for comment.

Tanzanian opposition leader appears in court

NAIROBI (Reuters): Tanzania's main opposition leader Tundu Lissu told his supporters to have no fear as he appeared in court on charges including treason, as President Samia Suluhu Hassan warned foreign rights activists against interference. Lissu, who was appearing in court for the first time since his arrest, had earlier refused to participate in a hearing on April 24 because authorities conducted a virtual, rather than an in-person trial.

He entered the court with his fist raised in the air as supporters chanted "No Reforms, No Election", according to a video of the courtroom shared by his CHADEMA party on X. "We will be fine. You should not fear," Lissu said as he took his place in the dock, waving victory signs.

Lissu, who was shot 16 times in a 2017 attack and came second in the last presidential poll, was

charged with treason last month over what prosecutors said was a speech calling on the public to rebel and disrupt elections due in October. During the proceedings, prosecutors informed the court that investigations into the case were still under way and the hearing was adjourned to June 2, Lissu's lawyer, Rugemeleza Nshala, told reporters. A series of high-profile arrests has highlighted the rights record of President Hassan, who plans to seek re-election. Hassan says her government is committed to respecting human rights.

In a televised speech, Hassan warned foreign human rights activists against "invading and interfering in our affairs," and asked the security services to block them from entering the country. Lissu's CHADEMA party has demanded changes to an electoral process they say favours the ruling party

before they participate in the ballot. Several Kenyan rights activists, including a former justice minister, said they were denied entry to Tanzania as they travelled to attend the trial. Kenya's former Justice Minister Martha Karua, a prominent lawyer and opposition politician, and former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga were among those detained when they landed at Tanzania's Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam, they said on X. Tanzania's immigration spokesperson Paul Mselle did not immediately respond to requests for comment. "Today was going to be a big day and we went out there in solidarity," Karua told Kenyan broadcaster NTV after she was denied entry and sent back to Nairobi. "The state cannot be used as a personal tool. You cannot deport people whom you don't like, who are not aligned to your views."

Marcos says open to reconciling with Dutertes

MANILA (Reuters): Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said he was open to reconciling with the Duterte family, one week after allies of his estranged Vice President, Sara Duterte, outperformed expectations in a fiercely contested and pivotal Senate race. In a podcast shared on his Facebook page, Marcos said he needed friends rather than enemies as he seeks to use the remaining three years of his term to deliver on his agenda. Philippine presidents are limited to a single six-year term.

"Yes," Marcos said when asked if he would be open to mending fences, after a bitter and very public falling-out between Marcos and the Duterte camps, which has fractured the once-powerful alliance that swept both to victory in 2022. "As much as possible, what I am after is stability... so that we can do our jobs. That is why I am always open to things like that," he told the podcast. Duterte's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Marcos' remarks.

Sara Duterte is facing a Senate impeachment trial that could see her removed from office and permanently barred from holding public office again, denying her a presidential run in 2028. Her father, former President Rodrigo Duterte, was elected mayor of Davao last week, even as he is detained at the International Criminal Court on charges of murder as a crime against humanity.

Poland seizes aircraft tyres bound for Russia in suspected sanctions breach

WARSAW (Reuters): Polish officials have seized 5 metric tons of tyres for Boeing passenger planes that were due to transit through Belarus and Russia, in what Poland's tax and customs office said constituted a breach of European sanctions.

Western countries have imposed broad-ranging sanctions against Russia and its ally Belarus since Moscow's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Heavily reliant on foreign-made planes, Russia's aviation industry is struggling to provide

enough planes to meet demand for air travel. "Officers... discovered during the inspection of a truck in Koroszczyń that the driver was transporting tyres used in Boeing civil planes instead of the declared car and bus tyres," Poland's National Revenue Administration said in a statement.

"The sender of the goods was a company from Spain, and the recipient was from Azerbaijan. Criminal fiscal proceedings were initiated in connection with customs fraud. The sanctioned goods were detained." It noted that

the transit of such goods through Belarusian and Russian territory is subject to European sanctions.

The statement did not identify the manufacturer of the tyres. Boeing did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Shortly after the invasion in 2022, Boeing said it was suspending parts, maintenance and technical support for Russian airlines as well as major operations in Moscow. It also said it was strictly adhering to export controls and restrictions. After an initial shock, Russian airlines established

new means of accessing foreign parts. Customs records show items such as cabin pressure valves and landing gear arriving in Russia through middlemen in countries that have not endorsed sanctions on Moscow, including Tajikistan, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, China and Kyrgyzstan.

A person working in Russia's aviation sector said airlines have mainly solved the spare parts issue, although the roundabout routes are more expensive and shipments take longer to arrive.

Scientists in a race to discover why our Universe exists

NEW YORK (BBC): Inside a laboratory nestled above the mist of the forests of South Dakota, scientists are searching for the answer to one of science's biggest questions: why does our Universe exist? They are in a race for the answer with a separate team of Japanese scientists - who are several years ahead.

The current theory of how the Universe came into being can't explain the existence of the planets, stars and galaxies we see around us. Both teams are building detectors that study a subatomic particle called a neutrino in the hope of

finding answers. The US-led international collaboration is hoping the answer lies deep underground, in the aptly named Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment (DUNE). The scientists will travel 1,500 metres below the surface into three vast underground caverns. Such is the scale that construction crews and their bulldozers seem like small plastic toys by comparison. The science director of this facility, Dr Jaret Heise describes the giant caves as "cathedrals to science". Dr Heise has been involved the construction of these caverns at the

Sanford Underground Research Facility (Surf) for nearly ten years. They seal DUNE off from the noise and radiation from the world above. Now, DUNE is now ready for the next stage. "We are poised to build the detector that will change our understanding of the Universe with instruments that will be deployed by a collaboration of more than 1,400 scientists from 35 countries who are eager to answer the question of why we exist," he says.

When the Universe was created two kinds of particles were created: matter - from which stars, planets

and everything around us are made - and, in equal amounts, antimatter, matter's exact opposite. Theoretically the two should have cancelled each other out, leaving nothing but a big burst of energy. And yet, here we - as matter - are. Scientists believe that the answer to understanding why matter won - and we exist - lies in studying a particle called the neutrino and its antimatter opposite, the anti-neutrino. They will be firing beams of both kinds of particles from deep underground in Illinois to the detectors at South Dakota, 800 miles away.

Record May heat scorches north, central China

BEIJING (AFP): Swathes of northern and central China are sweltering this week under record May heat, state media reported, as the country braces for another summer of extreme temperatures. China has endured spates of extreme weather events, from soaring temperatures to drought, downpours and floods, for several summers running.

The country is the world's largest greenhouse gas emit-

ter, but also a renewable energy powerhouse seeking to cut carbon dioxide emissions to net zero by 2060. State broadcaster CCTV reported that multiple cities logged all-time May highs this week as the mercury rose well above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). They included Zhengzhou, a metropolis of 13 million people in central Henan province, which saw a high of 41C, CCTV said. In

nearby Linzhou, temperatures rose to 43.2C, while the small city of Shahe in northern Hebei province logged 42.9C, the national weather office said in a social media post. But it said the extreme heat was set to dissipate, adding that some areas would see rapid drops of up to 15C. It urged people to "add extra layers of clothing in a timely way as the weather changes, (to avoid) catching a cold".

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Study questions presence of liquid water on Mars

IMAGES taken of Mars from orbit dating back as far as the 1970s have captured curious dark streaks running down the sides of cliffs and crater walls that some scientists have construed as possible evidence of flows of liquid water, suggesting that the planet harbors environments suitable for living organisms.

A new study casts doubt on that interpretation. Examining about 500,000 of these sinewy features spotted in satellite images, the researchers concluded they were created probably through dry processes that left the superficial appearance of liquid flows, underscoring the view of Mars as a desert planet currently inhospitable to life – at least on its surface.

The data indicated that formation of these streaks is driven by the accumulation of fine-grain dust from the Martian atmosphere on sloped terrain that is then knocked down the slopes by triggers such as wind gusts, meteorite impacts and marsquakes.

"The tiny dust particles can create flow-like patterns without liquid. This phenomenon occurs because extremely fine dust can behave similarly to a liquid when disturbed – flowing, branching and creating finger-like patterns as it moves downslope," said Adomas Valantinas, a postdoctoral researcher in planetary sciences at Brown University and co-leader of the study published on Monday in the journal Nature Communications.

"It's similar to how dry sand can flow like water when poured. But on Mars, the ultra-fine particles and low gravity enhance these fluid-like properties, creating features that might be mistaken for water flows when they're actually just dry material in motion," Valantinas added.

The study examined about 87,000 satellite images – including those obtained between 2006 and 2020 by a camera aboard NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter – of slope streaks, which form suddenly and fade over a period of years. They average roughly 1,970-2,540 feet (600-775 metres) long, sometimes branching out and going around obstacles, according to Reuters.

The slope streaks were concentrated mostly in the northern hemisphere, particularly in three major clusters: at the plains of Elysium Planitia, the highlands of Arabia Terra and the vast Tharsis volcanic plateau including the Olympus Mons volcano, towering about three times higher than Mount Everest.

The researchers said limitations in the resolution of the satellite images mean they account for only a fraction of slope streaks. They estimated the actual number at up to two million.

Water is considered an essential ingredient for life. Mars billions of years ago was wetter and warmer than it is today. The question remains whether Mars has any liquid water on its surface when temperatures seasonally can edge above the freezing point.

It remains possible that small amounts of water – perhaps sourced from buried ice, sub-surface aquifers or abnormally humid air – could mix with enough salt in the ground to create a flow even on the frigid Martian surface. That raises the possibility that the slope streaks, if caused by wet conditions, could be habitable niches.

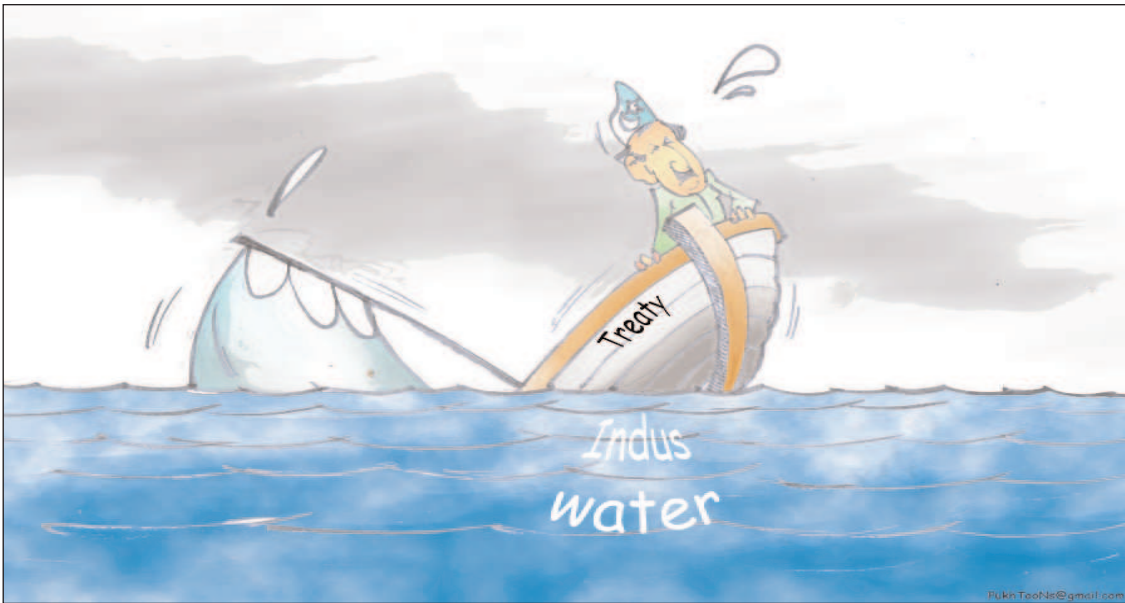
Given the massive volume of images, the researchers employed an advanced machine-learning method, looking for correlations involving temperature patterns, atmospheric dust deposition, meteorite impacts, the nature of the terrain and other factors. The geostatistical analysis found that slope streaks often appear in the dustiest regions and correlate with wind patterns, while some form near the sites of fresh impacts and quakes, the Reuters report adds.

The researchers also studied shorter-lived features called recurring slope lineae, or RSL, seen primarily in the Martian southern highlands. These grow in the summer and fade the following winter. The data suggested that these also were associated with dry processes such as dust devils – whirlwinds of dust – and rockfalls.

The analysis found that both types of features were not typically associated with factors indicative of a liquid or frost origin such as high surface temperature fluctuations, high humidity or specific slope orientations.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



The one thing Trump might be getting right

Andrew Mitrovica

Iam obliged to open with a disclaimer of sorts.

Faithful readers know of my visceral antipathy towards Donald Trump whose idea of governance is largely driven by vindictiveness and reprisal. So, the crux of this column should not be construed as an endorsement or hearty praise.

Still, there is one aspect of Trump's blunt, arbitrary determination to wield a fiscal machete to the federal government that, in my view, makes, dare I say it, some sense and that other presidents and prime ministers ought, belatedly, to consider.

For much of my career as an investigative reporter, I trained a jaundiced eye on the unchecked powers and unlimited resources of so-called "intelligence" services that rarely, if ever, suffered any tangible repercussions of their disastrous litany of errors and egregious, law-violating excesses. Often, those errors and excesses have had profound and lasting strategic and human consequences, yet the spies and the shrouded-in-unnecessary-secrecy institutions they work for have, invariably, been rewarded with more resources, rather than restrained or sanctioned.

Instead, for too long, both Republican and Democratic presidents have fuelled the security Leviathan without hesitation or pause.

For too long, intelligence agencies have operated as states within states, shielded from scrutiny by national security pretence and a complicit press. They lie with impunity. They leak selectively to tame reporters when it suits them. They destroy lives using the convenient cover of "top secret". For too long, oversight has been a punchline. Accountability is for whistleblowers, who are hunted, jailed or exiled.

In his own clumsy, erratic way, Trump is doing what Barack Obama and Joe Biden were too conditioned or culpable to do: he's pumping the emergency brake on a runaway train.

Trump's qualified insurgency deserves attention. Not because he's a principled reformer – he isn't. But because, by instinct or spite, he is threatening the sanctity of institutions that have earned and deserved a reckoning for decades. In this context, I welcomed the White House's decision to begin pruning America's pervasive national security state. It's a promising start.

In early May, there were two announcements that sent, I suspect, a shudder through the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and triggered a predictable bout of apoplexy among their many obsequious allies in the media, wailing about how the "cutbacks" would fatally undermine America's safety and embolden its adversaries. Reportedly, the Trump team is poised to ask Congress to trim the budgets of the DEA, FBI and other Justice Department law enforcement offices by \$585m in 2026.

The doomsday warnings are as silly as the wind-up marionettes issuing them, since the agencies will keep much of their multibillion-dollar coffers to "fight" crime and terrorism – home-grown or otherwise. Even the modest snipping is a welcome signal that the de rigueur annual budget increases may be over – finally. America's G-men and women should be relieved that the cuts do not go much deeper and wider, given Trump's belief that the FBI, in particular, was responsible for many of the tectonic legal troubles he

faced before a divided Supreme Court granted presidents broad immunity from prosecution.

Despite the parochial motivation and their limited scope, the proposed cropping of the FBI's brimming cash box is a necessary, long-overdue first step in clipping America's bloated national security bureaucracy. Towards that agreeable end, Trump and company also plan to cut thousands of jobs throughout the mushrooming US "intelligence community," including 1,200 positions at the CIA over the next several years.

On cue, news of the downsizing has provoked hysterical howls among Democrats and former members of the "intelligence community" who litter US cable news networks as national security "consultants" or "experts" and are treated with cloying deference by their CNN and MSNBC hosts.

The instructive irony, of course, is that congressional Democrats once chaired committee hearings that exposed the "intelligence community's" wanton disregard for the Constitution and the supposedly sacrosanct rights of Americans.

Those responsible days are decidedly over.

Supine Democrats and the "progressive" journalists who populate "progressive" TV news networks and the "progressive" editorial pages of The New York Times and The Washington Post, now rush to defend the spooks and their indispensable duties from a retributable rogue president intent on putting the CIA on a tardy diet. Oh, how times and attitudes have changed.

Apparently, the absent-minded liberal intelligentsia need reminding that the CIA has deceived politicians and reporters as a matter of standard protocol. It has subverted democracies abroad, and

its covert, blood-stained designs are well remembered from Santiago to Guatemala City and beyond.

It is an emetic sight watching career Democrats – who spent the better part of the Bush years denouncing illegal wiretaps and black sites – recoil in performative horror at the suggestion that the CIA and its brethren have grown too powerful, too arrogant and too dangerous.

And the FBI? The holy shrine of J Edgar Hoover? My goodness. These are the same vaunted, buttoned-down agents who tried to ruin Martin Luther King Jr, who infiltrated peace movements, who surveilled Muslims en masse after 9/11. Their sanctimonious defenders in newsrooms seem to have buried the blatant fact that the bureau only earned its halo when it became politically expedient to paint it as a bulwark against Trumpism.

This is the liberal establishment's hypocritical secret: they love order more than justice, power more than truth. So long as the right people are holding the guns and the surveillance keys, they'll cheer.

The status quo-friendly stable of malleable politicians in Ottawa, London and Canberra – even those who campaign on transparency and reform – cave once they're inside the palace. They start parroting the briefings, mouthing the jargon, justifying the surveillance. The machinery is too big, too opaque, too entrenched. Trump, for all his manifest ugliness and corrosive faults, has, in this important instance, bucked the stubborn orthodoxy.

It is possible to lassoo cops and spies. But this requires will, resolve, and an understanding that their authority is upheld by myths – myths of necessity, permanence, and the ruse that their power is natural or inevitable. It can and must be contested.

From the 'past' of summits to the economy of 'state builders'

LET us forget, for a moment, that the president of the US is the most powerful political leader in the world and that he can annihilate humanity at the press of a button or obliterate the global economy with an executive order.

For a moment, let us put that to one side and focus, instead, on two undeniable truths that we must address as Arabs during these extraordinary times in our contemporary history.

First, we have the truth of Arab affairs as they currently are, not as we would like them to be. Second, economic, technological, strategic and ideological shifts are sweeping the globe at astonishing speed.

The Arab states met on Saturday at a summit hosted by Baghdad, a city that had once been the capital of the greatest empire in history. Sadly, it hosted the 34th Arab League Summit under unfavorable circumstances that underlined the inertia of our Arab nation more than they showcased a capacity for overcoming existential challenges.

To begin with, state representation was modest. Several Arab capitals have reached the conviction that betting on joint Arab action is futile, with some even rejecting the very idea of a single shared Arab identity. Still, no one is willing to admit it explicitly and bear the consequences.

Indeed, the deep-seated distrust brewing "beneath the ashes" has become apparent to anyone keenly following regional issues and impending decisions. Having practiced obfuscation, denial, disregard and

willful neglect, we have become adept at papering over these truths, undermining most initiatives and political approaches that have any real substance or impact. The Arab failure to address chronic flashpoints and crises reflects this.

Although some signs of a breakthrough have emerged, tentatively and timidly, in Syria and Lebanon, it is painfully clear that the Arab states have no shared strategy for alleviating the pain of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. No practical approach for curbing Iranian influence has been developed either, be it Iran's more recent foothold in Yemen or its long-standing hegemony in Iraq, where Tehran-backed militias still have the final say on the ground. And certainly, there are no signs of an imminent end to the chaos in Libya, the escalating crisis in Sudan or the chronic conflict between Algeria and Morocco.

For all these reasons and others, Arab officials have concluded that there is no longer a need to burden the institution of the Arab League with tasks it can no longer undertake – that is, anything beyond the usual generous expressions of fraternity and solidarity and ritualized performative indignation.

As for the second truth – the astonishing pace of economic, technological, strategic and ideological global change – it will affect us. In fact, it has already begun to shape our lives in the Arab world and beyond. I began this piece by stating that the US president is the most powerful "political" leader in the world to set the stage

for developments we must be prepared for and learn to live with.

In my humble opinion, there are some people who are far more important than the "politician" Trump, despite the success of his Gulf tour.

They are the architects of America's future, its global influence and its political establishment: the executives and investors of technology companies and the industries of the future, particularly artificial intelligence. Among them are Elon Musk, who has now become bigger than a "king-maker," and executives from major corporations, such as Nvidia, Alphabet, OpenAI, BlackRock, Uber, Blackstone and others that dominate the Fortune 500 list. These are the people leading the charge in America's war against future challengers, chief among them China.

Whereas China synergizes the efforts of the public and private sectors in building its techno-economic arsenal, Trump's Washington seems to be armed solely with the power of the private sector, gradually eliminating every non-consumerist role for human beings. To put it plainly: Washington seeks neither obstacles, restraints nor regulatory standards on investment. It has no legal or organizational framework for investment and regulation, firmly opposing any regime or legislative framework that could slow the pace of liberalization and economic openness. This is a crucial dimension of its struggle for the future, particularly with China, and it has major

political implications for an era in which interests trump ideology.

The very concept of the state itself is now in doubt. The logic of accountability has become a burden on efficiency. The principle of civil liberties has become just a matter of opinion. The idea of a democracy safeguarded by a constitutional political system has become a contentious issue. At best, it is now debatable and applied with discretion.

How could things be otherwise? Indeed, the budgets of the giant corporations waging this global battle far exceed those of sovereign states. This brings me back to an American saying I first heard during my freshman year at university: "If ideology was the weapon of 20th-century wars, then technology is the weapon of 21st-century wars."

It is no coincidence, then, that the phrase "the chief business of the American people is business" (though it was said in a different context) is associated with Republican President Calvin Coolidge, who served from 1923 to 1929 and was a staunch believer in minimizing the role of the state in the economy. It sees noninterference in market mechanisms as the criteria for assessing government efficiency. In the world of the future, which is rushing toward us faster than we ever prepared for, we fear that our societies, unless our cultural awareness and patterns of thinking change, might not succeed in avoiding the pain and enormous costs that these transformations threaten.

We could pay a very high price for maturity.

Lifting Syria sanctions a complex, time-taking task

Michael Jansen

ON the regional political front, Donald Trump's Gulf tour yielded positive results for Syrians and negative consequences for Palestinians. Following a meeting with Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, Trump announced an end to 49 years of punishing US sanctions on Syria.

Following Trump's change of policy, US secretary of state Marco Rubio and Syrian foreign minister Asaad al-Shaibani met in Turkey to discuss normalisation between the two countries. Trump's surprise amounts to a major gain for Sharaa as well as Turkey, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia which have long favoured such a move.

This amounts to a snub to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu who had urged the retention of sanctions. Trump described Sharaa as a "young attractive guy – tough guy" with a "strong past." Trump argued he should have an opportunity to stabilise Syria.

Sharaa's "strong past" includes membership in al-Qaeda in Iraq before the 2003 US war on that country. He joined the insurgency against the US occupation of Iraq and was imprisoned by the US from 2006-2011. Upon his release he founded al-Qaeda's affiliate al-Nusra Front to battle the Assad government in Syria.

He refused to merge with Daesh, cut al-Nusra's connection to al-Qaeda, and, with Turkish backing, took over Syria's northwestern Idlib province where he founded Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). It was listed as a terrorist organisation by the US, and a \$10

score of bombing raids

Lifting sanctions is complicated and could take time. The Trump administration must secure the cooperation of the Treasury, Commerce and State departments as well as the lower house of Congress. In 1979, the US listed Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism and imposed an arms embargo on Syria because of Damascus' demand for the return of the Golan Heights occupied by Israel in 1967 and support for Palestinian resistance groups. Sanctions were tightened in 2004. After the government's crackdown on protests in 2011, sanctions were imposed on individuals associated with the Assads, foreign assets were frozen, US investments in Syria were prohibited, and restrictions were levelled on oil imports. Trump will have to deal with sanctions enacted by Congress in the 2019 Caesar Act which penalised individuals and firms engaging in business with the Syrian government. Sharaa has also to meet US conditions for normalisation of relations between Syria and the US. The US has demanded that Sunni HTS ensure the rights and security of Syria's Christian, Druze, Alawite, Shia, and Kurdish minorities and grant them representation in governance. The US has called for destruction of "weapons of mass destruction." As Syria does not have an arsenal of such weapons, this means facilities for the manufacture and stocks of chemical weapons. The US has demanded the disarmament and demobilisation of foreign groups which joined HTS in the battle against the government. At the end of December, Sharaa announced the dissolution of HTS and all armed groups and called for militia fighters' submission to the Defence Ministry.

million price was put on his head. After the HTS ouster of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad last December, senior US diplomats visited Damascus to discuss Syria's future and remove the bounty.

Lifting sanctions is complicated and could take time. The Trump administration must secure the cooperation of the Treasury, Commerce and State departments as well as the lower house of Congress. In 1979, the US listed Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism and imposed an arms embargo on Syria because of Damascus' demand for the return of the Golan Heights occupied by Israel in 1967 and support for Palestinian resistance groups.

Sanctions were tightened in 2004. After the government's crackdown on protests in 2011, sanctions were imposed on individuals associated with the Assads, foreign assets were frozen, US investments in Syria were prohibited, and restrictions were levelled on oil imports. Trump will have to deal with sanctions enacted by Congress in the 2019 Caesar Act which penalised individuals and firms engaging in business with the Syrian government.

Sharaa has also to meet US conditions for normalisation of relations between Syria and the US. The US has demanded that Sunni HTS ensure the rights and security of Syria's Christian, Druze, Alawite, Shia, and Kurdish minorities and grant them representation in governance. The US has called for destruction of "weapons of mass destruction." As Syria does not have an arsenal of such weapons, this means facilities for the manufacture and stocks of chemical weapons. The US has demanded the disarmament and demobilisation of foreign groups which joined HTS in the battle against the government. At the end of December, Sharaa announced the dissolution of HTS and all armed groups and called for militia fighters' submission to the Defence Ministry. However, this has not taken place, resulting in attacks on Alawite and Druze civilians.

The US also seeks support for its 2,000 troops based in north-eastern Syria to eliminate Daesh remnants and for the new Syrian government to assume responsibility for 15,000 Daesh prisoners who are held by US-allied Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces. Washington urged Damascus to cancel connections with Palestinian resistance organisations and designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a terrorist organisation. Trump personally asked Sharaa to normalise ties with Israel. However, Israel has occupied the UN-controlled buffer zone between Syria and Israel and since the fall of the Assad dynasty conducted scores of bombing raids

against Syrian army facilities.

Instead of insisting that Israel end its Gaza war and more than ten-week blockade of the Strip, Trump has called for Gaza to be called a "freedom zone" – whatever that means for 2.3 million Palestinians.

Trump also joined Israel in proposing a plan for delivery of food, fuel, water, and medicine which the UN and allied international agencies argue would "weaponize aid" in violation of international law.

While Israel has said it would not allow aid into Gaza until it has full control, the UN children's agency UNICEF and the World Food programme warned of the risk of famine as long as Israel's blitz, siege and blockade continue. Norwegian Refugee Council head Jan Egeland posted on X, "It is totally wrong that a party to the conflict – in this case Israel – should be in control of lifesaving aid for civilians."

The UAE has refused to fund the plan, making it difficult to convince other potential donors to contribute. Emirati international cooperation minister Reem al-Hashimy told Israeli officials the plan does not address the increasingly dire humanitarian crisis.

Peace in Ukraine looks further away after Trump’s call with Putin

SO much for Donald Trump’s “force of personality” forcing Russian President Vladimir Putin to prove he wants to end the war in Ukraine.

The president’s hyped-up phone call with his Russian counterpart on Monday mostly served to highlight how far away any such breakthrough may be.

And more importantly, looking ahead, it raised new questions about how involved Trump really wants to be and widened transatlantic divisions on ending the war.

Ukraine and its European partners are pushing for a 30-day ceasefire to allow time for talks on a permanent peace agreement to start. Moscow has refused, insisting on talks now on a final deal. Since this process could take months, it looks like a ruse to allow Russia to press ahead with its offensives that are killing innocent civilians.

By announcing after his call with Putin that Ukraine and Russia would now hold talks “as only they can” on a ceasefire and ultimately an end to the war while the fighting rages, Trump sided with his friend in the Kremlin.

Trump also added new ambiguity to an increasingly toothless peace effort on Monday. He did nothing to quell an earlier suggestion by Vice President JD Vance that the US might simply wash its hands if there’s no progress. “I tell you, big egos involved, but I think something’s going to happen. And if it doesn’t, I just back away and they’re going to have to keep going,” the president told reporters in the Oval Office after the call.

Threatening to walk away is a classic dealmaker’s gambit. But given the administration’s extreme skepticism of aiding Ukraine, this might not be a bluff.

Trump also left the impression that the US would play a less direct role while Russia and Ukraine talked. He launched a vague trial balloon that the Vatican and the new American Pope Leo might get involved. Most observers believe that there will be no peace unless America exerts maximum leverage.

“It feels to me that the president maybe didn’t really try to pressure Putin at all. It’s good that they had a two-hour conversation but coming out of that what do we have?” asked Beth Sanner, a former deputy director of national intelligence.

“We have Putin continuing very maximalist

demands ... an agreement to talk about a framework for talking about a future peace deal and possibly a ceasefire that would come after agreements for many things,” Sanner told CNN’s Boris Sanchez.

“This is a call that I think it’s really hard to see this in any other way than Putin seemed to get exactly what he wanted.”

As ever, there was mystery about the full extent of Trump’s conversation with Putin, to whom he has often shown great deference.

Outsiders know only

.....
Threatening to walk away is a classic dealmaker’s gambit. But given the administration’s extreme skepticism of aiding Ukraine, this might not be a bluff. Trump also left the impression that the US would play a less direct role while Russia and Ukraine talked. He launched a vague trial balloon that the Vatican and the new American Pope Leo might get involved. Most observers believe that there will be no peace unless America exerts maximum leverage. “It feels to me that the president maybe didn’t really try to pressure Putin at all. It’s good that they had a two-hour conversation but coming out of that what do we have?” asked Beth Sanner, a former deputy director of national intelligence. “We have Putin continuing very maximalist demands ... an agreement to talk about a framework for talking about a future peace deal and possibly a ceasefire that would come after agreements for many things,” Sanner told CNN’s Boris Sanchez. “This is a call that I think it’s really hard to see this in any other way than Putin seemed to get exactly what he wanted.” As ever, there was mystery about the full extent of Trump’s conversation with Putin, to whom he has often shown great deference. Outsiders know only that the Kremlin and the White House want them to know about how it went. But Russian officials offered a few tantalizing hints of the atmosphere of the call. “I will tell you that conversations of such duration are rare when both presidents ... neither of them wanted to end the conversation and hang up,” Kremlin presidential aide Yury Ushakov said Monday in comments that will do little to stem concerns among Trump critics that he’s an easy mark for Putin. Before it took place, Monday’s call looked like it might mark a pivot point in the so-far fruitless US effort to end the war. After all, Trump told Fox News in an interview during his Middle East tour last week it was “turkey time,” raising expectations that he’d get tough with Putin. And on Sunday, the president’s envoy Steve Witkoff said on ABC News that “the president has a force of personality that is unmatched.”
.....

what the Kremlin and the White House want them to know about how it went.

But Russian officials offered a few tantalizing hints of the atmosphere of the call.

“I will tell you that conversations of such duration are rare when both presidents ... neither of them wanted to end the conversation and hang up,” Kremlin presidential aide Yury Ushakov said Monday in comments that will do little to stem concerns among Trump critics that he’s an easy mark for Putin.

Before it took place, Monday’s call looked like it might mark a pivot point in the so-far fruitless US effort to end the war. After all, Trump told Fox News in an interview during his Middle East tour last week it was “turkey time,” raising expectations that he’d get tough with Putin.

And on Sunday, the president’s envoy Steve Witkoff said on ABC News that “the president has a force of personality that is unmatched.” Witkoff added, “He’s got to get on the phone with President Putin, and that is going to clear up some of the logjam and get us to the place that we need to get to. And I think it’s going to be a very successful call.”

But Trump won’t use

Stephen Collinson

the leverage that the US does have – for instance, it could toughen sanctions against Russia or send more arms and ammunition to Ukraine.

Asked by reporters in the Oval Office why he wouldn’t impose new sanctions, Trump replied, “Because I think there’s a chance of getting something done, and if you do that, you could also make it much worse.” He cautioned, “But there could be a time where that’s going to happen.”

Absent a deadline or more specificity, howev-

Vatican, in Turkey or in Switzerland but said they must involve European and American representatives. And he warned, “It is crucial for all of us that the United States does not distance itself from the talks and the pursuit of peace, because the only one who benefits from that is Putin.”

“This is a defining moment. The world can now see whether its leaders are truly capable of securing a ceasefire and achieving real, lasting peace,” Zelensky wrote, in a comment that could be read at face value or

sive.

Such conflicts are brewed from decades of historical and nationalistic grievances. And each may be existential for the leaders concerned. So it’s hardly surprising that those involved are not being budged by Trump’s endeavors, which are superficial compared to the standards of historical peace US peace drives in places like the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia. Such wars run on generational clocks. Trump’s timetable is days and weeks. “I believe Putin wants more than \$3.2 trillion in investment commitments from Gulf states, including one of the largest civilian aviation deals in history with Qatar, the expansion of Al Udeid Air Base and the solidification of the US’ military presence in the Gulf. Trump’s administration

as a critique of Trump’s efforts.

Trump often says that he wants to devote his second term to peace-making. And if he’s sincere, he could leave the world in better shape.

“My whole life is like deals – one big deal,” Trump said Monday.

But his efforts so far are desultory. If anything, combat in Ukraine and Gaza has intensified since he took office. Trump claimed a notable humanitarian win last week by securing the release of the last living US hostage in Gaza by agreeing to indirect talks with Hamas that bypassed Israel.

But Trump’s receding interest in ending the war launched after the October 7, 2023, attacks has led to a vacuum. Now Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has opened a new offensive aimed at controlling the entire enclave, where tens of thousands of Palestinians are starving. Their plight is an ill omen for Ukraine if Washington loses interest there, too.

Elsewhere, the president claimed credit for ending a terrifying escalation between India and Pakistan over Kashmir this month. But India – despite its close ties to the White House – disputed claims that the US intervention was deci-

Trump’s Gulf tour: Engineering a new regional order or managing crises?

PRESIDENT Donald Trump’s trip to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar last week marked a pivotal moment in US Middle East policy and signaled a profound shift in the region’s emerging political landscape. As his first foreign tour during his second term in office, the trip aimed to secure massive investment and defense deals, while proposing new approaches to the long-standing crises in Syria, Gaza and Yemen – anchored in a pragmatic vision in which influence and transactional gains are seen as pathways to stability, rather than regime change.

For the US, the visit yielded major gains: more than \$3.2 trillion in investment commitments from Gulf states, including one of the largest civilian aviation deals in history with Qatar, the expansion of Al Udeid Air Base and the solidification of the US’ military presence in the Gulf. Trump’s administration

.....
Saudi Arabia emerged as the central Arab powerbroker, orchestrating the historic meeting between Trump and Al-Sharaa that led to Washington lifting sanctions on Syria. Riyadh also secured record-breaking economic and defense deals and welcomed a de-escalation in Yemen that aligned with its goal of ending the prolonged conflict. The Kingdom asserted itself as the engine of a new regional order, capitalizing on Iran’s declining influence. The UAE reinforced its status as a technological and financial hub, pledging \$1.4 trillion in US investments and benefiting from relaxed export restrictions on advanced artificial intelligence technologies. Abu Dhabi supported Washington’s regional agenda while promoting its image as a beacon of tolerance and modernization. Qatar leveraged the visit to reaffirm its role as a strategic ally. It played a key role in Gaza ceasefire efforts and hostage mediation, sealed a massive aviation deal with Boeing and modernized Al Udeid Air Base. Politically, Qatar positioned itself as a trusted mediator among all parties, maintaining autonomy while aligning with the broader Gulf consensus. On the front of regional issues, Syria took center stage. The unanticipated meeting between Trump and Al-Sharaa marked a turning point: the US announced the lifting of sanctions on Damascus, signaling the end of the Assad era. Al-Sharaa, a former militant turned political leader, pledged to expel foreign fighters, unify Syria and pursue eventual normalization with Israel. This US-backed endorsement, facilitated by Saudi and Turkish support, redefined the Syrian file and sent shock waves through traditional alliances. In Gaza, no political breakthrough was achieved. Instead, the focus remained on a humanitarian ceasefire, prisoner swaps and rebuilding efforts, led by Qatar and Egypt.
.....

emphasized a deal-oriented approach, focusing on deterring Iran, enforcing ceasefires and engaging with emerging regional players – even controversial ones, such as Syria’s new leadership under Ahmad Al-Sharaa.

Saudi Arabia emerged as the central Arab powerbroker, orchestrating the historic meeting between Trump and Al-Sharaa that led to Washington lifting sanctions on Syria. Riyadh also secured record-breaking economic and defense deals and welcomed a de-escalation in Yemen that aligned with its goal of ending the prolonged conflict. The Kingdom asserted itself as the engine of a new regional order, capitalizing on Iran’s declining influence.

The UAE reinforced its status as a technological and financial hub, pledging \$1.4 trillion in US investments and benefiting from relaxed export restrictions on

advanced artificial intelligence technologies. Abu Dhabi supported Washington’s regional agenda while promoting its image as a beacon of tolerance and modernization.

Qatar leveraged the visit to reaffirm its role as a strategic ally. It played a key role in Gaza ceasefire efforts and hostage mediation, sealed a massive aviation deal with Boeing and modernized Al Udeid Air Base. Politically, Qatar positioned itself as a trusted mediator among all parties, maintaining autonomy while aligning with the broader Gulf consensus.

On the front of regional issues, Syria took center stage. The unanticipated meeting between Trump and Al-Sharaa marked a turning point: the US announced the lifting of sanctions on Damascus, signaling the end of the Assad era. Al-Sharaa, a former militant turned political leader, pledged to expel foreign fighters, unify Syria and pursue eventual normalization with Israel. This US-backed endorsement, facilitated by Saudi and Turkish support, redefined the Syrian file and sent shock waves through traditional alliances. In Gaza, no political breakthrough was achieved. Instead, the focus remained on a humanitarian ceasefire, prisoner swaps and rebuilding efforts, led by Qatar and Egypt.

Iran, on the other hand, is facing strategic retreat, having lost ground in

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

The Nairobi family values conference: When tradition is a colonial trap

A CROSS Africa, debates about cultural preservation and traditional values are increasingly being influenced by forces that promote conservative social agendas rooted in colonial and missionary legacies. These movements, often backed by generous Western funding, seek to impose rigid, exclusionary values that contradict the continent’s diverse and historically dynamic cultures.

A recent example of this dynamic played out last week in Nairobi, where the second Pan-African Conference on Family Values organised by the Africa Christian Professionals Forum sparked controversy by claiming to defend “traditional” African family values.

The event’s foreign supporters, including the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam) and Family Watch International, are known for their opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive health, and comprehensive sex education.

These organisations,

some classified as hate groups by the United States-based Southern Poverty Law Center, often present their positions as inherently African, despite their deep connections to Western conservative funding.

This duplicity came to the fore ahead of the conference in Nairobi when it was revealed that the preliminary list of speakers consisted entirely of white men.

During the event, participants were urged to “resist growing trends that seek to redefine marriage, weaken the institution of family, or devalue human sexuality” and to rise up to defend the African family from a “new colonialism”.

Yet the fact is that the narrative of preserving tradition that was on full display at the conference is far from organic. Instead, it itself continues a pattern established during the colonial era, when imperial powers imposed patriarchal norms and strict social hierarchies under the guise of paradoxically both preserving and “civilising” indigene-

nous cultures.

In doing so, missionary and colonial institutions both reimagined and reframed African social structures to align with Victorian ideals, embedding rigid gender roles

.....
During the event, participants were urged to “resist growing trends that seek to redefine marriage, weaken the institution of family, or devalue human sexuality” and to rise up to defend the African family from a “new colonialism”. Yet the fact is that the narrative of preserving tradition that was on full display at the conference is far from organic. Instead, it itself continues a pattern established during the colonial era, when imperial powers imposed patriarchal norms and strict social hierarchies under the guise of paradoxically both preserving and “civilising” indigene-

and heteronormative family models into the social fabric and inventing supposedly ancient and unchanging “traditions” to support them.

The latter were themselves built on self-serving ideas of Africans as “noble savages”, living in happy conformity with supposedly “natural” values, trapped by petrified “culture”, and undisturbed by the moral questions that plagued their civilised Western counter-

Patrick Gathara

parts from whose corruption they needed to be protected.

As the conference demonstrated, local political actors and govern-

.....
During the event, participants were urged to “resist growing trends that seek to redefine marriage, weaken the institution of family, or devalue human sexuality” and to rise up to defend the African family from a “new colonialism”. Yet the fact is that the narrative of preserving tradition that was on full display at the conference is far from organic. Instead, it itself continues a pattern established during the colonial era, when imperial powers imposed patriarchal norms and strict social hierarchies under the guise of paradoxically both preserving and “civilising” indigene-

ments often support these agendas, either for political expediency or due to genuine alignment with their conservative worldview. There is also support from some quarters of the NGO sector, which gives the movements a veneer of legitimacy while obscuring their colonial roots.

The Nairobi conference put the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) in the spotlight when it was accused of endorsing the

event by allowing it to be hosted at the Boma Hotel, which it co-owns. Though KRCS has denied any direct involvement in the event, pointing out that it

.....
During the event, participants were urged to “resist growing trends that seek to redefine marriage, weaken the institution of family, or devalue human sexuality” and to rise up to defend the African family from a “new colonialism”. Yet the fact is that the narrative of preserving tradition that was on full display at the conference is far from organic. Instead, it itself continues a pattern established during the colonial era, when imperial powers imposed patriarchal norms and strict social hierarchies under the guise of paradoxically both preserving and “civilising” indigene-

was not involved in the day-to-day decisions of the hotel management, the controversy still highlights the challenges and dangers even well-meaning humanitarian organisations can face.

Humanitarian institutions have historically been complicit in the colonial enterprise, and it is perhaps not surprising that they struggle to see through narratives that seek to solidify colonial agendas under the guise

of protecting indigenous values.

Part of the problem is that there is increasing confusion about what approach needs to be taken to address growing calls to “decolonise” the

.....
During the event, participants were urged to “resist growing trends that seek to redefine marriage, weaken the institution of family, or devalue human sexuality” and to rise up to defend the African family from a “new colonialism”. Yet the fact is that the narrative of preserving tradition that was on full display at the conference is far from organic. Instead, it itself continues a pattern established during the colonial era, when imperial powers imposed patriarchal norms and strict social hierarchies under the guise of paradoxically both preserving and “civilising” indigene-

activities of the aid industry. One aspect of this process is a recognition of the primacy of indigenous values and local practices of mutual aid.

However, when organisations fail to critically examine whether the values coded as indigenous or, in this case, “African”, in reality reflect and embed colonial logics and assumptions about indigenous societies, they may inadvertently find themselves perpetuating

harmful agendas.

That is why, when faced with narratives such as the ones propagated at the Pan-African Conference on Family Values, it is important to understand the difference between decolonisation and decoloniality.

Though related, the two frameworks are distinct. The first largely focuses on transferring power to the formerly colonised, while the latter deals with the logics and values that are the legacy of colonisation.

In the aftermath of the 1960s’ decolonisation, the failure to address coloniality left many African countries saddled with elites, states, and governance arrangements that upheld colonial frameworks and approaches. Kenya itself was a case in point.

In 1967, nearly four years after independence, Masinde Muliro, a prominent Kenyan politician, observed: “Today we have a black man’s Government, and the black man’s Government administers exactly the same regulations, rigorously, as the colonial

through Oman, to explore a potential nuclear agreement. A “shadow ceasefire” was reached in Yemen, with the US pausing airstrikes on the Houthis in exchange for an end to Red Sea attacks. This convergence of Yemen and Iran strategies underscored a mutual desire to avoid full-scale conflict without conceding strategic ground.

Meanwhile, the visit accelerated the formation of a new regional order, anchored by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Turkiye, with US backing. This emerging coalition has effectively sidelined Iran and — more surprisingly — Israel. Tel Aviv was notably absent from all meetings and Trump’s overtures to Arab capitals without coordinating with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent a clear message: US interests in the region may no longer be tied solely to Israel’s preferences.

Iran, on the other hand, is facing strategic retreat, having lost ground in

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

— Aljazeera



Tobacco exporters seek Policy support in meeting with Commerce Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of leading tobacco exporters on Tuesday met with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Monday to discuss ways to enhance Pakistan's tobacco exports and address challenges related to tariffs and regulatory frameworks.

During the meeting, exporters appreciated the government's ongoing efforts to promote trade and highlighted the significant contribution of the tobacco industry to employment, rural development, and export earnings, said a release issued here.

They shared that with targeted facilitation, tobacco exports have the potential to increase substantially, supporting national revenue goals.

Exporters pointed out that the current tax structure which includes a Federal Excise Duty (FED) of Rs. 390 per kg,

Provincial Excise Duty (PED) of Rs. 50 per kg, Federal Tobacco Cess of Rs. 15.15 per kg, and a Provincial Development Cess of Rs. 25 per kg totals Rs. 480.15 per kg.

They said this cost poses a challenge particularly for smaller exporters and suggested that a more competitive taxation model would help enhance Pakistan's position in the global tobacco market.

The exporters emphasized that tobacco, like other agricultural commodities such as sugarcane, cotton, and citrus, should be supported through market-based policies. They noted that annual price adjustments are mandatory under current regulations, which can affect competitiveness in export destinations.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan acknowledged the concerns raised and reiterated the government's com-

mitment to balanced and growth-oriented policies.

He remarked that optimal revenue generation comes not only from taxation but also from encouraging industry expansion and boosting exports.

He noted that similar concerns have also been raised by other sectors, such as beverages, regarding the impact of high taxation on consumer demand and revenue collection.

The exporters also called for the revival of the Pakistan Tobacco Board (PTB) to support coordinated efforts in export promotion and policy facilitation.

In response, the Minister proposed the establishment of a Sectoral Council for Tobacco, similar to other existing sectoral councils, to provide a structured platform for industry dialogue and representation.

The Minister further informed the delegation that for the first time, the

revenue policy committee has been made independent of the revenue collection mechanism—an important step toward more informed and consultative policy-making.

Exporters appreciated the positive response from the Minister and expressed confidence that with continued government support, the industry could significantly increase its export footprint.

Pakistan's tobacco exports reached \$ 158.35 million in the current fiscal year (July–April), with promising growth in markets such as Belgium, UAE, Greece, and the Philippines.

The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to strengthening public-private cooperation for enhancing the country's tobacco export potential and creating a more enabling environment for industry stakeholders.



ISLAMABAD: Deloitte Advisory US delegation meeting Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik to discuss energy sector collaboration.

PSX witnesses bearish trend and loses 718 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 718.51 points, a negative change of 0.60 percent, closing at 118,971.13 points as compared to 119,689.63 points on the last trading day.

A total of 437,920,561 shares were traded during the day as compared to 425,372,280 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 20.811 billion against Rs 22.274 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 473 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 177 of them recorded gains and 232 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 64 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were At-Tahur Limited with 39,628,306 shares at Rs 49.69 per share, Fauji Foods Limited with 30,264,152 shares at Rs 15.81 per share and Gul Ahmed with 29,115,777 shares at Rs 23.97 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 1,370.34 per share closing at Rs 15,073.78 whereas runner-up was Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs 130.19 rise in its share price to close at Rs 1,432.07.

Hoechst Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 47.90 per share price, closing at Rs 3,150.14, whereas the runner-up Sapphire Textile Mills Limited with Rs 37.87 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,100.00.

Export of footwear increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The export of footwear from the country witnessed an increase of 11.79% during the first ten months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the exports of the corresponding months of last year.

The country exported footwear worth US\$ 148.439 million during July-April 2024-25 as opposed to the export of US\$ 132.788 million during July-April 2023-24, showing growth of 11.79 percent, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Among the footwear products, the exports of leather footwear witnessed an increase of 14.14 percent, from US\$ 100.982 million to US\$ 115.261 million during the months under review.

Canvas footwear exports however decreased by 18.25 percent by declining from US\$ 2,522 million last year to US\$ 2,062 million, the PBS data revealed.

The exports of all other footwear rose by 6.26 percent to US\$ 31.116 million from US\$ 29.284 million in the same months last year.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the footwear exports depreciated by 7.73 percent during the month of April 2025 as compared to the same month of last year.

The footwear exports during April 2025 were recorded at \$9.155 million against the export of \$9.922 million in April 2024.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports of footwear commodities also witnessed a decreased of 28.92 percent during April 2025 as compared to the exports of \$12.880 million in March 2025, the PBS data revealed.

SBP issues guidelines for RSB to foster innovation

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a bid to foster innovation and promote new technologies, products, and business models in line with its Vision 2028, the SBP has issued the Guidelines for the Regulatory Sandbox (RSB).

The RSB guidelines, issued under Section 3 of the Payment Systems and Electronic Fund Transfers (PS&EFT) Act, 2007, are aimed at facilitating new and existing entities, including startups, to test their financial solutions under a controlled regulatory environment, said a statement issued here.

The other objectives of the guidelines include, identifying the risks associated with innovative solutions and developing appropriate risk mitigation mechanisms; support evidence-based regulatory formulation, enhance regulatory clarity, coordination and collaboration with other

regulatory sandboxes from domestic and other jurisdictions to work on areas of mutual interest.

The potential impact of Fintech innovations on consumers and market are being studied by many regulators globally and those are adapting current regulatory frameworks to foster new opportunities without compromising consumer protection and financial stability through development of a Regulatory Sandbox.

The SBP is hopeful that the Regulatory Sandbox will enable the participants to test their products and the associated operational models around innovative ideas and technologies and it will also help SBP in refining and upgrading the regulatory environment in line with the evolving innovative technologies.

The Regulatory Sandbox will follow a cohort-based approach centered around innovative themes. SBP will soon invite applica-

tions for participation in its first cohort. The theme(s) of the first cohort will be announced by end June after completing the market engagement, which is already underway.

Eligibility Criteria allows SBP Regulated Entities as well as entities licensed by other national regulators, non-licensed local Start-Ups or individual applicants and entities incorporated outside Pakistan for participation in the Sandbox.

The applicants and their propositions would be evaluated based on the certain parameters which included, Innovation, Consumer Utility, Understanding of the Regulatory Barriers, Readiness for Testing, Scalability and Risk Management. The central bank encouraged all the interested parties to use the RSB platform for testing their innovative ideas and products and contribute to Pakistan's evolving Fintech landscape and digital financial ecosystem.

LCCI opposes proposed EDB's tariff rationalization

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) President Mian Abuzar Shad Tuesday opposed the proposed changes under the draft National Tariff Policy 2025–30 presented by Engineering Development Board (EDB).

He apprehended that the new policy could have serious repercussions for Pakistan's industrial base, trade balance and economic sovereignty. The LCCI President said that while reforming the tariff regime was important, the current proposal was likely to increase Pakistan's reliance on imports, shifting the country further away from a manufacturing-driven economy.

Mian Abuzar Shad was of the view that lower tariffs would lead to a surge in imports, thereby putting immense pressure on the current account and foreign exchange reserves, which were already under stress.

"Pakistan cannot afford such a liberalization at the cost of macroeconomic stability," he emphasized.

The LCCI also objected the proposed tariff spread of zero to 15 percent as too narrow to reflect the developmental needs of a diverse industrial landscape.

"Even globally competitive and specialized economies such as China maintain a much wider tariff spread to protect sensitive sectors.

This narrow spread will blur the line between manufacturers and importers, this discouraging local production," he asserted.

These changes, he said, would result in revenue losses for the government while exacerbating the public debt burden. "The expected drop in customs revenue will need to be compensated through indirect taxation or further borrowing, both of which will hurt the economy."

Pointing to the already high cost of doing business in Pakistan, the LCCI emphasized that this move would further deter industrial growth. "Our industries are already burdened by high energy tariffs, inefficient labour markets and a complex tax regime.

Gold prices increase Rs300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs.300 on Tuesday and was sold at Rs.342,800 against its sale at Rs.342,500 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.257 to Rs.293,895 from Rs.293,638 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat went up by Rs.236 to Rs.269,413.

The rates of per tola silver and ten gram remained unchanged and closed at Rs.3,410 and Rs.2,923.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$3 to \$3,244 from \$3,241 whereas that of silver went remained stagnant to \$32.52, the Association reported.

Youm-e-Tashkkur celebrated by PNSC



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The management and employees of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation celebrated

Youm-e-Tashkkur to pay tribute to the success of Pakistani forces in Indo-Pak war.

On this occasion, prayers were offered for the

stability and security of Pakistan.

Sweets were also distributed to employees on behalf of the PNSC administration.

Budget proposals FY 2025-26:

Moqeen asks govt to present a ‘business-friendly’ budget

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented its budget proposals for the fiscal year 2025-26.

In the budget proposals, the SCCI urged the government to rationalize taxes by making reduction in their ratio at optimal level, broadening tax-base and refraining from imposition of new taxes.

SCCI also sought reduction in duties on import of raw material/items and pragmatic steps for simplifying the existing taxation system. It emphasized that the government should announce a special budget for the development of small and medium industry.

The budget proposals said soft loans should be provided to SMEs, especially startup businesses, women entrepreneurs so that they will also equally contribute to the economic growth and development of the country.

The chamber demanded that a special fiscal relief package and tax cessions for next five years should be announced for war-torn Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Budget is a true reflection of the government policies, which should be made people as well as business-friendly, says Fazal Moqeen Khan, president of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry while giving interviews to various news channels on the upcoming budget here on Tuesday.

He said that the budget coming at the time of economic take-off will set the roadmap for the future and added that there is a need to build a sustainable basis for reducing electricity prices.

The SCCI chief urged the government to take new policy measures aimed at promoting the documented economy that would help improve the tax revenue collection and achieve sustainable growth.

Emphasizing on elimination of unregistered and illegal business/ trade as highly beneficial for the national economy, he said it is necessary that the informal economy sector should bring in formal economy.

Fazal Moqeen emphasized the need for reduction in electricity, gas tariff and urged the government to focus on renewable energy in a bid to significantly reduce the cost of production and pave the way for rapid revival of the economy.

Talking about the solar policy, he said that the policy should be prepared in a way that it covers the interest of both the government and consumers.

He sought repealing all agreements with IPPs.

Coordinated implementation of policies through SIFC and measures in the budget are essential, SCCI chief stressed.

Fazal Moqeen Khan while addressing during a pre-budget session in

Peshawar University asserted the industrial sector needs to be further promoted.

He highly backed privatizing loss-making State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), stating that it can provide long-term stability to the government's financial and budgetary position.

Regarding the agricultural sector, SCCI chief said it is the backbone of Pakistan's economy and suggested that the government should take maximum steps in the budget to facilitate farmers.

Sustainable water use system, construction of new water storages should be a priority, he added.

About the construction sector the president suggested that a special package should be announced in the budget for the revival of the construction sector.

Fazal Moqeen Khan emphasized that tariff policy should be made to discourage imports and promote local products.

MG Motors Line-Off Ceremony of 1000th MG HS PHEV



F.P. Report

KARACHI: MG Motors Pakistan proudly marked a significant milestone in its journey toward smarter, cleaner mobility with the Line-Off Ceremony of the 1000th locally assembled MG HS Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) at its state-of-the-art plant in Lahore.

This achievement reflects the brand's continued commitment to revolutionizing the automotive landscape in Pakistan with cutting-edge technology, luxury, and sustainability. Since its official launch in October 2024 and the start of local production in January 2025, the MG HS PHEV has rapidly gained popularity among Pakistani consumers, thanks to its design, low running costs, and eco-friendly drive.

With over 900 units already delivered and growing demand across Pakistan, the 1000th vehicle line-off stands as a testament to MG's growing impact on Pakistan's hybrid

vehicle segment. As part of its customer-first approach, MG Pakistan recently announced a major upgrade to the HS PHEV, replacing the standard portable charger with a powerful 7KW fast charger—completely free of additional cost to the customers. This enhancement addresses previous customer concerns about long charging durations and effectively reduces the vehicle's charging time by nearly half. The original portable charger will now be offered as an

accessory.

"We are proud to roll out the 1000th MG HS PHEV," said Syed Asif Ahmed, General Manager Marketing Division. "MG HS PHEV is an ideal solution for urban mobility. This moment not only highlights our production strength but also reinforces our promise to provide advanced, accessible hybrid technology that meets the evolving needs of Pakistani drivers. In response to the voice of customer MG has upgraded the Charger to 7KW for free with the aim to reduce the charging time significantly."

The MG HS PHEV continues to lead as a premium hybrid SUV, delivering over 50km of pure electric range, advanced safety features, modern tech, and an efficient driving experience-making it a smart choice for commuters seeking sustainable and stylish transportation.

MG Motors Pakistan remains at the forefront of hybrid and electric vehicle innovation and is committed to shaping a cleaner, smarter future for mobility in the country.

Seafood exports grew by 8.40%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of fish and fish preparations from the country recorded a notable increase of 8.40 per cent during the first 10 months of the current financial year as compared to exports of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-April, 2024-25, over 171,886 metric ton of fish and fish products valued at \$370.891 million were exported as compared to the exports of 166,242 metric tons worth of \$342.154

million of the same period of the last year.

According to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, this growth reflects rising global demand and enhanced processing and export capabilities within the domestic seafood industry.

Sector analysts attribute the positive trend to improved aquaculture practices, favorable international market conditions, and government support for export-oriented fisheries.

The sustained increase in seafood exports is expected

to contribute positively to the overall performance of the agriculture and food processing sectors, strengthening the country's position in the global seafood market.

On year on year basis, the seafood exports from the country grew by 10.09 percent as about 20,358 metric tons of fish and fish preparations worth of \$47.985 million were exported during the month of April, 2025 as against the exports of 20,571 metric tons valued at \$43.568 million of the same month

of the last year.

Meanwhile, the food group exports from the country during the last 10 months of the current financial year decreased by 1.04 per cent, whereas food imports grew by 0.56 per cent as compared to the imports and exports of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-April, 2024-25, the food commodities valued at \$6.164 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$6.229 billion of the same period of the last year.



In brief

Nagri scales Mount Everest

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani mountaineer Wajid Ullah Nagri successfully scaled Mount Everest, the world's highest peak on Tuesday, marking a moment of pride for the nation. According to Secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan, Nagri reached the 8,848.86-meter summit on Tuesday with the unwavering support of renowned Nepali climber Ang Tashi Sherpa. Hailing from Pakistan's mountaineering community, Nagri has previously scaled several challenging peaks, earning recognition for his determination and skill.

Shehla summits Mt. Kanchenjunga

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dr. Shehla Sheikh, a Pakistani-American physician and mountaineer has successfully summited Mount Kanchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak at 8,586 metres (28,169 feet). Renowned for its extreme difficulty, unpredictable weather and remote location, Kanchenjunga remains one of the most challenging 8,000-metre mountains to climb. "This is a proud moment for all Pakistanis," Karrar Haidri, Secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) said in a statement. He said Shehla's achievement was a symbol of national pride and progress in adventure sports. "Her climb also highlights the growing impact of Pakistani climbers, especially women in high-altitude mountaineering." A practicing physician based in the United States, Dr. Shehla continues to inspire with her dual dedication to science and exploration. Haidri lauded Shehla for her courage and raising the country's flag high atop one of the most perilous peaks on earth.

Man City unveil De Bruyne tribute

LONDON (AFP): Manchester City have established a permanent tribute to Kevin De Bruyne after unveiling a mosaic and dedicating a road at the club's academy to the departing midfielder. De Bruyne is set for his final City appearance at the Etihad Stadium during Tuesday's Premier League clash with Bournemouth before leaving when his contract expires in June. The mosaic, which has been installed by a training pitch at the City Football Academy, depicts a De Bruyne celebration and was revealed to the player by club chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak on Tuesday. Created by local Manchester artist and City fan Mark Kennedy, the artwork is the latest in a series of tributes to City greats, including Yaya Toure, Joe Hart, David Silva, Vincent Kompany, Sergio Aguero, Fernandinho and Ilkay Gundogan. The road which links the academy to the first-team centre has been renamed Kevin De Bruyne Crescent. Belgian international De Bruyne has scored 108 goals in 420 matches for City since joining from German club Wolfsburg in 2015. During his 10-year stay, the 33-year-old became City's most successful player, winning six Premier League titles, two FA Cups, five League Cups, the Champions League, the Super Cup and the Club World Cup.

PSL X returns to Gaddafi stadium for final glory

LAHORE (APP): The action of the HBL PSL X resumes at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium as it is set to host playoffs from May 21 (Wednesday) and the final on May 25 (Sunday). The top-placed Quetta Gladiators will take on second placed Islamabad United in the Qualifier. The first ball will be bowled at 7.30pm, with toss taking place at 7pm. The Eliminator 1 will be played between Lahore Qalandars and Karachi Kings on Thursday, 22 May, with the match starting at 7.30pm. Eliminator 2 will be played between the losing side of the Qualifier

and winning side of the Eliminator 1, scheduled on Friday, 23 May, followed by the final of the marquee event on Sunday, 25 May. Defending champions United's Sahibzada Farhan is leading the batting charts and currently holds the Hanif Mohammad Cap, with 394 runs from 10 matches, including one century and two half-centuries. Kings' James Vince occupies second spot, having accumulated 374 runs from 10 outings, including one century and three half-centuries. Qalandars' southpaw Fakhar Zaman has scored

369 runs, including four half-centuries. In the bowling charts, Kings' Mohammad Abbas Afridi has bagged 17 wickets and holds the Fazal Mahmood Cap. Gladiators' Abrar Ahmed, United's Jason Holder, and Kings' Hasan Ali have taken 15 wickets each. On the tickets, the PCB updated, that the fans who have bought tickets for Eliminators 1, 2 and the Final can use them as per the new announced dates of the respective matches, while fans can purchase Qualifier tickets from pcb.tcs.com.pk and TCS Express Centres.

Top seeds advance in Federal Cup Tennis C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Muhammad Shoaib, Aqeel Khan, Yousaf Khalil, Barkatullah, Muzammil Murtaza, Ahmad Nael Qureshi, Sami Zeb Khan, and M. Talha Khan have advanced into the quarterfinals of 37th OGDCL Federal Cup National Ranking Tennis Championships, here at the S. Dilwar Abbas PTF Tennis Complex on Tuesday. Fourth seed Yousaf Khalil faced a stiff challenge in his pre-quarterfinal match against wildcard entrant Ahmad Chaudhary. The opening set went down to the wire and was decided in a tiebreaker, which Khalil edged 7-5. Ahmad continued to fight hard in the second set but couldn't maintain the same intensity, eventually falling 6-4. In another pre-quarterfinal, M. Talha Khan overcame local talent M. Haziq Aasim in a three-set battle. After losing the first set 3-6, Talha bounced back strongly to take the next two sets 6-1, 6-2. Ladies Singles action saw top seed Sheeza Sajid secure a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over Lalarukh Sajid. Mehaq Khokhar also advanced after a competitive match, defeating her opponent 6-3, 6-1.

Mahrugh Sajid dominated her quarterfinal encounter, defeating Maryam Hussain in a clean sweep 6-0, 6-0, to book her place in the semifinals. In the Junior 18 & Under Singles, fifth seed Haziq Arejo rallied from a set down to beat local player Abdaar Ali in a thrilling three-set match. After losing the first set in a tiebreak 6-7(5), Arejo regrouped to claim the next two sets 6-2, 6-0. Men's Singles (Pre-Quarter Finals): Muhammad Shoaib beat Huzaima Abdul Rehman 6-1 6-3, Barkatullah beat Muhammad Yahya 6-2 6-0, Yousaf Khalil beat Ahmad Chaudhary 7-6(5) 6-4, M. Talha Khan beat M. Haziq Aasim 3-6 6-1 6-2, Sami Zeb Khan beat Saqib Hayat 7-5 6-2, Muzammil Murtaza beat M. Huzaima Khan 6-0 6-1, Ahmad Nael Qureshi beat Mohammad Ali 6-0 6-2, Aqeel Khan beat Muhammad Salar 6-0 (Retd). Men's Doubles Quarter Finals: Abdullah Adnan & Saifullah Khan beat M. Talha Khan & M. Huzaima Khan 7-5, 4-6, 10-6; Ahmad Nael Qureshi & Saqib Hayat beat M. Haziq Aasim & Muhammad Yahya 7-6(3)

6-3. Ladies Singles (Quarter Finals): Sheeza Sajid beat Lalarukh Sajid 6-3 6-4, Mehaq Khokhar beat Zunaisha Noor 6-3 6-1, Mahrugh Sajid beat Maryam Hussain 6-0 6-0. Junior 18&Under Singles (1st Round): Hassan Usmani beat Waqas Janas 6-1 6-3, M. Talha Khan beat Mahd Mahmood 6-2 6-2, Moazzam Babar beat Muhammad Hassan 6-3 6-1, Muhammad Ali beat Zohaib Afzal Malik 6-1 6-3. Junior 18&Under Singles (2nd Round): Rayyan Khan Khalil beat Lubaid Ahmad Khan 6-1 6-2, Haziq Arejo beat Abdaar Ali 6-7(5) 6-2 6-0. Boys 14&Under Singles (Pre-Quarter Final): Junaid Khan w/o Zalan Khan, Ibrahim Gill beat Behroze Wander 4-0 4-1, Razik Sultan beat M. Mauz Hussain 4-0 4-0, Janas Waqas beat M. Suhaib Javed 4-0 4-0, Muhammad Faizan w/o M. Zohaib Amjad, Rashid Ali beat M. Shakaib 4-0 4-0, Rayaan Khalil beat Muhammad Danyal 4-0 4-0, Shayaan Afridi beat Mahd Mahmood 4-0 4-1. Girls 12&Under Singles: Anaya Khan beat Amalia Aidrus 4-0 2-0 (Retd).

Sabrina to embark on peace journey across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four-time Olympian and World Judo Medalist Sabrina Filzmoser is arriving Pakistan on Wednesday to begin an extraordinary cross-country peace journey under the International Judo Federation's (IJF) "Judo for Peace" initiative. Filzmoser, who also serves as Chair of the IJF Athletes Commission and is a Climate Ambassador for the federation, will cycle from Sea View, Karachi, on Thursday aiming to reach the K2 Base Camp, a route that combines physical endurance with a powerful message of peace, environmental stewardship and gender empowerment. Her journey, which passes through the intense heat of Sindh and Punjab,

will culminate in a planned ascent of K2, the world's second-highest mountain. The Austrian judoka is no stranger to such missions. In 2023, she cycled from Islamabad to K2 Base Camp-II and in 2022, she pedaled from a coastal city to Everest Base Camp, where she ultimately summited Mount Everest carrying the "Judo for Peace" banner. "This initiative merges the philosophy of judo—the gentle way—with a broader message of harmony, resilience and hope," said a statement from the Pakistan Judo Federation (PJF), which is hosting the visit. "Her presence at this time, amid regional tensions is a symbol of unity through sport."

Along her route, Filzmoser will visit judo clubs to inspire young athletes, especially girls and scout potential talent. She is also expected to meet with officials from the Pakistan Olympic Association and the Pakistan Sports Board in Islamabad. Filzmoser has served as honorary brand ambassador for Takbeer Judo Club since 2023 and is a vocal proponent of empowering women through self-defense training. The PJF extended its deep appreciation to Filzmoser for choosing Pakistan for her latest expedition. "We wish her great success in this noble mission that exemplifies courage, perseverance, and peace through the spirit of sport," the federation added.

McCullum calls on England to improve 'humility'

LONDON (Agencies): Head coach Brendon McCullum has called on England to improve their "humility" as they begin a year that will define his spell in charge. England play a one-off Test against Zimbabwe at Trent Bridge on Thursday, before marquee series at home to India and away in Australia. They do so after a mixed winter. McCullum's side won a Test series in New Zealand 2-1, but lost by the same scoreline in Pakistan and endured a wretched time in white-ball cricket. Comments made by the players in the media have often come under scrutiny. In March, director of cricket Rob Key said the players need to "stop talking rubbish", while last month fast bowler Mark Wood admitted they can be "a bit dumb". Speaking on Tuesday, New Zealander McCullum said: "It's not just about what you do on the cricket field. It's how you carry yourself. It's how you interact with the public. It's the messaging that you give. "The ability these guys have to be able to play on the biggest stage, under the brightest lights and the pressure that takes is one thing, but also the ability to be humble and show some humility and not feel out of touch with the general population is something I'd like to see us improve on."



McCullum and captain Ben Stokes took charge in 2022 and immediately revolutionised England's style and results. From one win in 17 Tests prior to the McCullum-Stokes regime, England won 10 of their next 11. Although they are second in the

world rankings, England have developed a habit of producing sloppy performances. The final Test in each of their past three series - against Sri Lanka, Pakistan and New Zealand - have been dismal losses. In addition, McCullum is yet to improve limited-overs results since he assumed control of those teams at the beginning of the year. England lost every match at the Champions Trophy in February. "If we look at it at the start, people were excited by the way we played," said former New Zealand captain McCullum. "They were enthralled by the freewheeling type of cricket and they felt - I'm guessing here- a sense of belonging to that type of group. "With a bit of idle time, we get the opportunity to retrospectively look at things and see where things have been over the last few years, where we've come from, what we've achieved, opportunities we've let slip, and also looking at what we've done for the people that this team represents." Allied to the inconsistent results are the perception of the England team and some of the com-

ments they make in the media. During the Champions Trophy they were criticised for not training enough by former England captain Kevin Pietersen, who pointed to their love of golf. Wood said he was irritated by an external narrative of "golf, golf, golf", while Stokes said the idea their training is affected by too much golf is "utter rubbish". Any disconnect between England and some sections of their fans could also have been fuelled by comments in the media. Batters Ben Duckett and Harry Brook have most often been guilty of clumsy quotes. McCullum has therefore aligned with Key's view that the players need to take greater care with their public comments. Individual conversations between management and players have taken place, rather than collective instructions given to the group. "We've just got to be a bit smarter with some of our comments," said McCullum. "What we say in that dressing room is often very different to what you expect to come out in a public forum. "We've got we just got to be aware of that, smart enough to be able to make sure that we articulate things when we get the opportunity so that we don't we don't lose touch with the English people. "We want them along for the ride, particularly in the next few series, which could be quite amazing. We want people to look back and say, 'Crikey, that team in the mid-2020s was a hell of a team that we loved following, and we felt as if we were a part of that journey they went on.'"

Bangladesh to tour Pakistan for T20 series

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Bangladesh cricket team will visit Pakistan to play the series, as an agreement has successfully been reached among the Pakistan Cricket Board and Bangladesh were successful at Dubai. After a lengthy meeting between PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi and Bangladesh Cricket Board Chairman Nazmul Abedin and President Faruque Ahmed, it was decided that the Bangladesh cricket team will visit Pakistan, said a statement issued here. A total of three T20 matches will be played between Bangladesh and Pakistan, in Lahore. PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has expressed his gratitude to the Bangladesh Cricket Board Chairman and President for finalizing the tour to Pakistan.

Ahmed secures 17th Guinness World Record

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's martial artist Ahmed Amin Bodla, has achieved yet another historic milestone by breaking his 17th Guinness World Record, setting a new global benchmark for the most full-contact punches in one hour using one hand. Bodla delivered an astonishing 18,079 punches— a feat that speaks volumes about Bodla's endurance, discipline, and commitment. Already a holder of 16 Guinness World Records, Bodla is currently ranked world number one in three other Guinness categories including, most kicks in one minute (355), most kicks in three minutes (801), most kicks in one hour (6,970) etc. He is also the first Pakistani to be inducted into the United States Martial Arts Hall of Fame as an outstanding martial artist — a rare honor that solidifies his global stature. Beyond his physical prowess, Bodla is a committed academic. He holds

multiple international certifications in exercise science, has completed his MPhil with distinction, and is now set to begin his PhD in sports sciences. "I am very thankful to my friends and family who have supported me throughout, and I am especially grateful to the Chairman of Al-Kabir Developers, Chaudhary Aurangzeb, for his unconditional support. I have been training hard since 2011, and in these 14 years, I have not only broken many world records but have also become a known figure worldwide," he told APP. Bodla wants to continue bringing international recognition to Pakistan through his achievements.

Chinese 'sensation' Yu, 12, sets 200m record



BEIJING (Agencies): Chinese schoolgirl Yu Zidi has been hailed a "sensation" after setting the fastest time ever for a 12-year-old in the 200m individual medley at China's national championships. Yu finished second in the event with a time of two minutes and 10.63 seconds, behind 2024 Olympic finalist Yu Yuting. The time, if achieved in the heats at last year's Paris Olympics, would have resulted in the youngster reaching the semi-finals. Global governing body World Aquatics posted "12-

year-old sensation alert" on its official X account. Yu, who turns 13 in October, could earn a place in China's national squad for the World Championships in Singapore in July. The performance of elite Chinese swimmers has been in the spotlight since before the Paris Olympics. China selected 11 athletes for the Games in France from a group of 23 that had returned positive doping tests. As a result of the positives, the International Testing Agency (ITA) com-

mitted to testing Chinese athletes eight times - twice as often as standard - between the start of 2024 and the Games in Paris. After finishing fourth in the 4x100m relay with Great Britain, Adam Peaty questioned China's victory, saying: "There's no point winning if you're not winning fair." Two of the four gold medalists, Qin Haiyang and Sun Jiajun, were among the 23 Chinese swimmers who returned positive doping tests prior to the Tokyo Olympics. The China Anti-Doping Agency said the swimmers who failed tests before Paris 2024 had unintentionally ingested heart medication trimetazidine, and foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said the country "consistently adhered to the firm stance of zero tolerance for doping".

Novak Djokovic says 'not in need of a coach' as French Open looms



GENEVA (AFP): Novak Djokovic said Tuesday he is in no hurry to find a coach to replace Andy Murray as he searches for his first win on clay this season ahead of the French Open. Djokovic last week part-

ed company with Murray after a tough start to the season for the 24-time Grand Slam champion. "At the moment, I'm not in need of a coach," said Djokovic who opens his title bid at the Roland Garros warm-up event in

Genova against 134th-ranked Hungarian Marton Fucsovics on Wednesday. "I don't need to rush in any context. I feel comfortable with the people around me ... in the next few tournaments, and we'll see what happens."

Djokovic told journalists that Dusan Vemic, previously part of his coaching team had arrived in Geneva from the US, and would be working alongside Boris Bosnjakovic, his assistant coach and analyst. The partnership with Murray started well, with Djokovic defeating Carlos Alcaraz at the Australian Open, only to be forced to retire during his semi-final against Alexander Zverev as a result of injury. "We felt like we couldn't get more out of that partnership on the court, and that's all there is to it," explained Djokovic, who turns 38 on Thursday. "My respect towards Andy remains the same, even more actually, I got to know him as a person. "I think he has a bril-

liant tennis IQ, he has a very rare mind of a champion that obviously has achieved what he has achieved, and he sees the game incredibly well." "Motivation still there" The Serb's wait for a 100th ATP title goes on after his withdrawal from the Italian Open. Djokovic has not won a single match on clay this season, losing his openers at Monte Carlo and Madrid. His hopes of a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam triumph, which would take him clear of Australian Margaret Court's tally of 24 singles major titles, appear to be fading. "It's a different chapter of my life that I'm trying to navigate myself through," said the three-

time French Open champion. "And yes, I'm not particularly used to having this kind of circumstances where I would lose a consecutive match, tournaments, first rounds and so forth. I don't think it ever happened for me in the last 20 years. "But I knew that eventually that moment will come." After missing the event in Rome, Djokovic explained that he is competing in Geneva to prepare for the upcoming French Open. "That's why I'm here, that's why I'm playing the Geneva tournament, because I'm trying to do well, I'm trying to win more trophies, I'm trying to build my form for Roland Garros, and perform at the desired, neces-

sary level in order to go far in the tournament and challenge the best players in the world. "So yes, the motivation is still there." Nonetheless, Djokovic added he was comfortable with this new phase of his career. "I know what it takes to be a Grand Slam champion. It's not as smooth and easy for me as it was 10 years ago. Obviously, things change and my life has changed a lot, but for (the) better, to be honest," he said. "It's just a new chapter that I'm embracing. I'm still connected to tennis and still want to express myself on the court. I feel that I still have the game, that I can be one of the contenders for the top Grand Slam titles."



In brief

Police arrest suspect in murder case

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a man wanted in murder case in the jurisdiction of Waris Khan police station. According to police, the suspect had opened fire during a fight, injuring a citizen who later died during treatment at the hospital. The incident took place four days ago and a case was registered at Waris Khan police station. After the shooting, the suspect went into hiding, but police used all available resources to track him down and arrest him. The other accomplice of suspect will also be arrested soon. SP Rawal, Muhammad Haseeb Raja, said the accused will be presented in court with solid evidence.

CTO urges bikers to use helmet

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Fatima Beenish on Tuesday urged motorcyclists to use helmet for their own safety. The motorcyclists must wear helmet to avoid road fatal accidents, said a news release issued here. The CTO said that traffic wardens had been directed to take strict action in accordance with the law against the violators. She said wearing a helmet could save a driver's life in case of an accident. "Sometimes it's the only difference between life and death," she added. The CTO said all traffic issues could be resolved by observing traffic rules which are for the safety and protection of the road users. On the other hand, the City Traffic Police have issued hundreds of challan tickets and also imposed fine to the motorcyclists not wearing helmet. The CTP also impounded a number of motorbikes in different police stations due to violation. As part of the drive, over 20,000 motorcyclists were fined for not wearing helmets, she concluded.

IFA seizes 100kg of harmful tea

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Tuesday launched a major crackdown on vendors using substandard tea leaves, raising concerns about food safety in the federal capital and confiscated 100 kilograms of substandard tea leaves. Talking to APP, Deputy Director of Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr. Tahira Siddique said that the authority's food safety teams took a major action against the unsafe tea being sold at local tea stalls. She said that the Islamabad Food Authority has acted against tea sellers using low-quality and harmful tea leaves across the city. In a recent operation, the authority's food safety teams confiscated 100 kilograms of substandard tea leaves from the F-10 area. The tea unit was also sealed during the inspection. Dr. Tahira Siddique said that the operation was carried out after the vendor failed to follow previously issued instructions. During the inspection, samples of the tea were tested on the spot and found to be unfit for consumption. The deputy director said that the confiscated tea leaves had already been used once. They were then reprocessed by adding banned coloring agents, making them unsafe. Dr. Tahira further said the tea leaves were found lying on a broken and unclean floor, showing the poor condition of hygiene at the site. She added that the use of such tea could cause health issues, especially affecting the stomach and intestines. The IFA is continuing its inspections to prevent such harmful practices in the city.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Saleem Mandviwalla Chief Whip Senate, in a meeting with Ambassador Of Bosnia And Herzegovina Emin Cohodarevic. —APP Photo

Chairman Senate meets President of Italian Chamber of Deputies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday held a productive meeting with Lorenzo Fontana, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (Speaker of the Lower House).

During the meeting, Gilani highlighted the importance Pakistan places on its friendly relations with Italy, which are built on mutual trust and cooperation at multilateral forums.

He thanked Italy for its principled support within the European Parliament, said a news release. Both leaders appreciated the longstanding friendship between their countries and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening parliamentary

cooperation and exchanges, viewing them as key to fostering people-to-people ties.

Gilani welcomed the recent visit of the Italian Interior Minister to Pakistan (6-7 May 2025) and noted the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Migration and Labor Mobility as a significant step forward.

He also briefed his Italian counterpart on the recent tensions with India, stating that Pakistan acted with restraint and in accordance with the UN Charter, defending itself responsibly.

On regional issues, the two sides exchanged views on Afghanistan. The Chairman said that Afghanistan is a brotherly country, and Pakistan wish-

es to see it stable, peaceful, and prosperous.

Speaker Fontana thanked the Chairman for the meeting and expressed interest in accepting the invitation extended by National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for a bilateral visit to Pakistan.

He also underlined the importance of formalizing inter-parliamentary cooperation through an agreement between the two legislatures.

The meeting marked a significant step toward revitalizing high-level parliamentary engagement between Pakistan and Italy. Both sides concluded the interaction by reaffirming their commitment to continued political and parliamentary dialogue.

Law minister meets speaker Balochistan assembly

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday met with Speaker Balochistan Assembly Captain (R) Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai.

The meeting discussed in detail various aspects related to the parliamentary affairs of the Balochistan Assembly, the legislative process and the rule of law in the province. On this occasion, the two personalities also discussed the overall law and order situation in the province and the legal aspects related to it.

The Law Minister assured all possible cooperation from the federal government for the improvement of legislation, judicial system and governance in Balochistan.

Katari Park attracting visitors; DG PHA

RAWALPINDI (APP): Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) was constantly carrying out the enhancement of the city's parks and green belts, with planting colourful flowers.

Director General PHA Ahmed Hassan Ranjha on Tuesday told the media that appealing flower vases and small beds of beautiful plants have also been planted at the Katari Park, Satellite Town. He said that lush landscapes with spring flowers offered a charming scene to the visitors.

The DG said that various steps were taken for the beauty of the city, and PHA was committed to providing the best kind of hygienic and environment-friendly setting to the residents.

Ranjha further said that efforts were underway to make the city Clean and Green according to the mission of the Punjab government, adding, "Rawalpindi will be made the most beautiful city in Punjab. We want the people to breathe in the green atmosphere." He expressed hope that the residents would join hands with PHA to make the city more aesthetic and prestigious.

Drug trafficker jailed for 9 years

RAWALPINDI (APP): A local court on Tuesday sentenced 9 years imprisonment to a drug peddler involved in the illegal trade of narcotics.

The court sentenced the accused, Sajid, to 9 years in prison and imposed a fine of Rs. 80,000 after he was found guilty in a drug possession case.

The arrest was made by Wah Cantt Police in December 2024 after 2,500 grams of charas (cannabis) were recovered from the suspect.

CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani commended the legal teams, and investigative officers for their efforts in pursuing the case. "Strict measures are being taken to eradicate the menace of drugs. Rawalpindi Police remain committed to ensuring a drug-free society," said CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani.

Muqam backs Kashmiris' right to self-determination

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Engineer Amir Muqam on Tuesday reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, reaffirming the country's commitment to their legitimate struggle.

During a meeting with a high-level delegation from Jammu and Kashmir, led by PML-N Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Shah Ghulam Qadir and General Secretary Tariq Farooq, Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam emphasized Pakistan's firm resolve to raise the Kashmir dispute on all international forums.

He reiterated that Pakistan remains committed to supporting the Kashmiris' right to self-determination in accordance with United Nations

resolutions.

The delegation praised Federal Minister Amir Muqam's recent two-day visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir, describing it as a strong gesture of solidarity and support. On the occasion, Minister Engineer Amir Muqam expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality and reaffirmed his firm commitment to the Kashmir cause.

The delegation noted that this was Muqam's second visit to Azad Kashmir, aimed at expressing solidarity with the Kashmiri people and honoring the martyrs and those injured due to Indian aggression.

The federal minister stated, "We stand side by side with our Kashmiri brothers and sisters and will persist in supporting them at all forums." The delegation stated that Federal Minister

Amir Muqam's two-day visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir significantly boosted bilateral relations and demonstrated Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the Kashmiri people.

Minister Muqam emphasized that the visit made a positive impact, sending a clear message to the global community about Pakistan's steadfast commitment to supporting Kashmiris.

The meeting ended with a renewed resolve to intensify collaborative efforts for Azad Jammu and Kashmir's progress while vigorously advocating the Kashmir cause at all national and international platforms.

The delegation included senior PML-N leaders Najib Naqi, Chaudhry Rukhsar, Chaudhry Saeed, Sardar Umair Naeem, Coordination Board Chairman Sardar Tariq and Aitzaz.

Mustafa Kamal meets Saudi Health Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant step toward enhancing cooperation in the health sector, Federal Minister for Health of Pakistan, Mustafa Kamal on Tuesday met with the Minister of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Fahd Abdul Rahman Al-Jalajel.

The meeting, held in Riyadh, was marked by a warm welcome extended by Minister Al-Jalajel, symbolizing the enduring brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. During their discussions,

both ministers delved into a wide array of health-related issues. Key among them was the promotion of technical cooperation, with particular focus on expanding collaboration in vaccine production and telemedicine initiatives.

Minister Mustafa Kamal expressed his gratitude for Saudi Arabia's unwavering support and valuable contributions to Pakistan's health sector. The two sides also reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining close and consistent communication for the

welfare of the people of both nations.

A notable highlight of the meeting was the mutual appreciation of ongoing efforts in polio eradication. Both ministers pledged to continue working together to achieve broader improvements in public health and healthcare delivery systems. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both leaders expressing optimism about future collaboration and the potential for new joint ventures in health sector development.

ANF arrests 9 smugglers with over 77 kg of drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting 8 operations across the country, recovered as many as 77.271 kg of drugs worth more than Rs 25.7 million and arrested nine suspects, including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday.

He informed that 600 ecstasy pills were recovered from the possession of an accused near Alfalah Market in Peshawar.

The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to students of educational institutions. In another operation, 42 kg of ice tactfully concealed in bed-sheets and pillows in two parcels being sent to

Australia were recovered at the Upper Mall Scheme, Lahore, courier office.

As many as 72 capsules filled with ice weighing 436 grams were recovered from the stomach of a passenger departing for Karachi at Bacha Khan International Airport, Peshawar.

Similarly, 500 grams of hashish and 3.6 kg of ice were recovered from the secret compartments of a vehicle near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, and three suspects, including a woman, were arrested.

As much as 16.8 kg of hashish was recovered from a passenger travelling on a bus at Wadhu Wah Gate near Qasimabad, Hyderabad.

During another operation, 3.6 kg of hashish was recovered from the possession of two suspects riding a motorcycle on Ferozwalla Main GT Road, Lahore.

As many as two kg of ice was recovered from the possession of a suspect near Sakhi Sarwar Road, Tonmi Mor, Dera Ghazi Khan.

Similarly, 8 kg of heroin hidden for smuggling was recovered in the uninhabited area of Kech, Mand Road, Kech Kor.

Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Two kidnapped citizens recovered, eight held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police successfully recovered two kidnapped citizens and arrested eight suspects allegedly involved in multiple incidents of abduction and snatching.

An official told APP on Tuesday that the victims were abducted from the jurisdiction of Karachi Company Police Station. The police traced the kidnapped individuals using advanced technology, safe City cameras, and human intelligence sources.

He said the suspects had hidden the victims at a hideout within the jurisdiction of Koral Police Station. During the raid, the suspects opened indiscriminate fire on the police team.

He said due to the use of bulletproof jackets and other safety measures, the police team remained unharmed, while one of the suspects was injured in crossfire by their own group.

He said police recovered weapons and ammunition used in the crimes from the hideout. He said

investigations are underway and sensational revelations are expected during the interrogation of the suspects.

DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq commended the performance of all officers involved in the operation and announced cash rewards for the entire team.

DIG Tariq stated that Islamabad Police is a highly professional and hardworking force that will continue to serve the public with the same dedication and resolve.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displays crafted artificial bird nests for garden décor to attract customers at H-9 Nursery. —APP Photo

Group of sorcerers arrested

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Vice and Virtue and Complaints Hearing says a group of sorcerers involved in blackmailing women under the pretext of solving domestic problems has been arrested in Kabul. The ministry in a statement that Kabul city ombudsmen arrested the group involved in causing discord and problems between families through amulets and performing evil acts such as sorcery and magic in exchange for money.

22m afs road constructed

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): A road has been constructed at a cost of 22 million afghanis and put into service in southeastern Khost province, an official said on Tuesday. Located in the 6th police district near the Shaikh Zayed University in the provincial capital, the road is 610 metres long and 10 metres wide. Mayor Mufti Shahzad Noor Rashid said the project included 1,420 metres drains on both sides, a 690 metres footpath, three culverts and a 600-metre canal.

Afghanistan-Iran annual trade holds \$10b potential, says Nazari

KABUL (Pajhwok): Deputy Minister for Economy Abdul Latif Nazari has said Afghanistan and Iran have trade capacity of more than 10 billion US dollars and called on other countries to take practical steps to strengthen relations and increase economic and trade cooperation with Afghanistan. Nazari told Tasnim News Agency that Afghanistan and Iran are neighbors and have common interest and threats. "The closer our views and relations become, the more serious and constructive steps we can take," he added. According to him, Afghanistan expects Iran and other countries to take practical steps towards strengthening relations and increasing economic and

trade cooperation. Nazari pointed to the importance of regional cooperation in dealing with common crises and stated that cooperation and common perspectives could overcome regional problems. Regarding Iran's water rights, Nazari explained: "The IEA is committed to its international obligations and, if the drought is not serious, is ready to provide the water needed by the Iranian people". Climate change and recent droughts have created challenges that require special attention from both sides. Chabahar Port is of particular importance to Afghanistan, and the IEA wants to benefit from its capacity to strengthen the

country's economy and achieve sustainable growth. Afghanistan and Iran have a trade capacity of over \$10 billion and Khawaf-Herat railway is an example of transit cooperation that can increase economic and commercial trade between the two countries, the deputy minister explained. "The IEA is trying to reduce the effects of sanctions and pave the way for Afghanistan's economic development by relying on domestic resources and expanding cooperation with friendly countries such as Iran and China". The IEA has a balanced and economy-oriented policy and strives to develop its mutual relations with all countries, including Iran, China, Pakistan, and India.

Water dispute leaves 1 dead, 3 wounded

NEILI (Pajhwok): One man has been killed and three others have been wounded as a result of a dispute over irrigation water among three brothers in central Daikundi province, an official said on Tuesday. Police spokesman Ghulam Ali Javid said the incident took place in the Faizabad area of in Shahrastan district on Monday. He said a man lost his life and three others were wounded in the clash. The injured were evacuated to Alqan Hospital in the district and are said to be in critical condition. Security forces rushed to the scene and arrested the suspects, the police spokesman concluded.

Kabul, Ankara ink deal

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Commerce and Industry Nooruddin Azizi has underlined the importance of facilitating the export of Afghan carpets to European markets via Turkey. Azizi met President of Istanbul Carpet Exporters Association Ahmet Diler and the delegation accompanying him, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) said. A statement from the ministry said the meeting focused on enhancing mutual collaboration, particularly in boosting the export of Afghan carpets through Turkey as a key transit route to Europe. Ahmet Diler praised the quality of Afghan carpets and expressed the readiness of his association – representing nearly 500 members – to support Afghanistan's carpet sector. Azizi hoped increased cooperation between two countries and reduced tariffs on Afghan carpets by the Turkish government would facilitate exports to European markets, benefiting both nations. He said: "Afghanistan is ready to actively cooperate in areas such as joint marketing, advertising, launching websites and joint exhibitions, promoting the culture of carpet use and exchanging trade delegations." He also proposed the establishment of a joint initiative among carpet-producing nations, particularly Afghanistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan, to promote the global use of traditional carpets.

Efforts grow to achieve medical self-sufficiency

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting minister of public health has emphasized the importance of achieving self-sufficiency in the healthcare sector and announced that the ministry is working to begin vaccine production in Afghanistan in the near future.

Noor Jalal Jalali also called on countries with expertise in vaccine manufacturing to provide technical assistance to Afghanistan in this effort. "We plan to lay the foundation for producing several types of vaccines domestically in the future. We are seeking cooperation from countries experienced in this field. This is a significant step, but it is not impossible," he said. The Ministry also introduced three pharmaceutical factories that have received Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certification. GMP certification means these factories produce medicines according to international standards and can now export their products abroad. Hamidullah Zahid, deputy minister for drugs and food at the Ministry of Public Health, said: "We hope that in the near future, other factories will also be



granted this certification so they can further develop their industries." The economic deputy of the prime minister's office also reiterated the Islamic Emirate's support for the private sector and emphasized that increasing standard pharmaceutical production will benefit the country's economic growth. He called on all domestic institutions to support local products. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, economic deputy of the prime minister's office,

said: "I urge all departments to follow the order of the esteemed Amir al-Mu'minin by using domestic products, prioritizing standard local production, and giving serious attention to procurement processes." At the same time, the administrative deputy of the prime minister's office stated that relevant institutions are actively working across the country in the areas of medicine and food, and he called on importers and manufacturers to avoid importing or producing low-quality products.

Abdul Salam Hanafi, administrative deputy of the prime minister's office, said: "Do not produce or import low-quality medicines and food. If anyone violates this, the Islamic Emirate will take strict measures both in legislation and enforcement." Meanwhile, Afghanistan has already achieved self-sufficiency in serum production. On 7 May 2024, for the first time, nearly two million serum packets worth \$580,000 were exported to Iraq.

Statistics to be released in coordination with MoPH



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has rejected the statistics provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which claim that one woman dies every two hours due to preventable pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. The ministry spokesperson called them unfair, "inaccurate," and "far from reality." The spokesperson of the ministry emphasized that since the Islamic Emirate returned to power, special attention has been given to maternal and child health. He added that the ministry has requested both national and international organizations to coordinate with

experienced doctors and midwives must be present. A doctor, Hassina Barkzai, said: "Unfortunately, in our provinces and remote districts, pregnant women do not have access to standard health centers. In addition, there is a lack of experienced healthcare personnel, and harmful traditional practices have also contributed to the rise in maternal deaths." A midwife, Morsal Sadat, said: "If knowledgeable midwives and those capable of handling both normal and complicated deliveries are allowed to work, the maternal mortality rate will naturally decrease." This comes as Andrew Saberton, deputy executive director of UNFPA, expressed concern during a press conference following his visit to Afghanistan. He warned that the organization's funding for Afghanistan, which heavily depends on the United States, may be reduced. He also stated that one mother dies every two hours in Afghanistan due to preventable pregnancy-related complications.

Herat's int'l bus terminal to be completed in three years: Officials

KABUL (TOLONews): Local officials in Herat said that construction work on the province's international passenger terminal is progressing rapidly. The project, which will cost nearly \$20 million, is being built to international standards in the southern part of Herat city. Upon completion, the terminal is expected to provide an alternative for large passenger buses that otherwise

enter the city, causing traffic accidents. The terminal will be constructed in three phases over the course of three years. The first phase includes the terminal building and the asphaltting of ten kilometers of road. The second phase includes the construction of maintenance garages and a fire station, while the third phase will feature restaurants, a football field, and recreational parks. Engineer Abdul Khaliq Ahmadi, who is overseeing the project, said: "The terminal will be built in three phases. The first phase has a one-year contract and is expected to be completed in the next seven months. After completing the second and third phases, the entire project will be finalized."

The terminal is being built on a nearly 200-hectare plot of land. According to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, the terminal is being constructed to international standards and will provide necessary facilities for travelers. Mohammad Anwar Zahid, an engineer from the ministry, told TOLONews: "With the construction of this terminal, traffic congestion in the city will be reduced, and many conveniences will be provided to the public and passengers. This is an international terminal, and we will be able to use it extensively." Nearly 200 workers are currently employed on this large-scale project, many of whom gained employment after being deported from Iran.

Sayed Ahmad Yousufi, one of the workers, told TOLONews: "I spent several years in Iran and returned a year ago. The work here is good. I'm very happy to see such projects and even happier to be working in my own country." Another worker, Mohammad Alokozai, said: "Projects like this should be launched across the country so that our people can return from Iran and Pakistan and find employment. I'm very happy to see so many workers engaged here." Herat's current passenger terminal is located in the northern part of the city, and large passenger buses must pass through the city center. According to local residents, this has frequently led to deadly traffic accidents.

Russia to lift tariffs on Afghan fresh and dried fruits

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment says Russia plans to remove customs tariffs on fresh and dried fruits from Afghanistan—a move expected to significantly boost trade between the two countries. The announcement was made during a press conference in Kabul today (Tuesday), where the Chamber's officials shared the achievements of their participation in the 16th Kazan International Economic Forum. The event was attended by a high-ranking delegation of the Islamic Emirate, led by Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, with representatives from the Chamber also in attendance.

Younus Momand, First Deputy President of the Chamber, said: "Three days ago, we travelled to the Republic of Tatarstan in Russia, where we successfully signed the first official agreement between the Afghan and Russian Chambers of Commerce and Investment on trade and transit cooperation." He added that the agreement also covered cooperation in areas such as trade fairs, transit and mineral exploration. The agreement was signed in the presence of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and the First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia. According to Momand, the Afghan delegation invited Russian traders and

investors to participate in the Imam Abu Hanifa Exhibition in Kabul. In response, the Russian side committed to sharing a list of their business representatives. He announced that during the visit, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia announced that customs duties on Afghan fresh and dried fruits would be reduced to zero. Currently, annual trade between Afghanistan and Russia amounted to around 600 million US dollars, he said. Momand also revealed that during the visit, approximately 25 contracts were signed by private companies, with an estimated value of hundreds of millions of dollars. Further details on these

deals will be disclosed in due course. Mirza Popal, deputy for finance and administration at the Chamber, said that five more agreements were signed with Russian companies for the development of an industrial park in Mazar-i-Sharif, as well as in the areas of transportation and other sectors. He added that both Afghan and Russian Chambers reached agreements on mining, banking, logistics, and resolving visa issues, and the Russian side pledged full cooperation in these matters. The 16th Kazan International Economic Forum was attended by senior officials from nearly 90 countries and representatives of around 20,000 companies.

Termez dialogue focuses on trade, transit cooperation



KABUL (TOLONews): The first meeting of "Termez Dialogue" themed "Building a Shared Space of Peace, Friendship and Prosperity," was held with the participation of political, economic, and trade representatives from over 20 countries, aimed at reviewing mutual engagement between Central and South Asia. Mohammad Naeem, deputy minister of finance and administration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate, said during the meeting that Afghanistan should become a regional connector, a transit route, and a platform for trade and cultural cooperation among countries in the region. Abdul Ghafar, the Islamic Emirate's ambassador to Uzbekistan, also commented on the meeting: "The Termez Dialogue and similar events are not only important for Afghanistan

but for the entire region. These types of meetings are valuable for establishing new relations and expanding regional cooperation. The Termez meeting holds special significance for Afghanistan, as it enables Afghan traders and investors to directly connect with those in the region." Several members of the leadership of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment, who attended the Termez Dialogue on behalf of the Afghan private sector, believe the meeting plays a key role in strengthening trade, transit, and economic cooperation between Central and South Asia. Mohammad Younus Mohmand, first deputy of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "In this session, the Deputy for Trade of the Chamber, Mr. Alokozay, along with representatives from provincial chambers, were

present. We are all well aware of the existing problems in Termez. One of our major issues is obtaining transit visas, which are essential for trade and transit activities." This meeting was organized with the cooperation of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the country's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Around 200 representatives from political, economic, and commercial circles, financial institutions, international and regional organizations, and prominent experts from research centers across Central and South Asia, Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Asia-Pacific region, the United States, and the Middle East are participating. The forum will conclude on May 21.

NEPA inks agreement with REHA



KABUL (Pajhwok): The National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) has signed a cooperation agreement valued \$255,000 with an organization to prepare an environmental assessment report on

Afghanistan and carry out a number of environmental activities. In a statement, NEPA wrote the agreement was signed between NEPA chief Maulvi Matulhaq Khalis and head of Resilience,

Environment and Humanitarian Aid (REHA) organization Mohammad Yousuf Hamidian in Kabul. The agreement was signed to prepare an assessment report on environmental situation of Afghanistan and implement some environmental activities costing \$255,000, the statement added. This report would assess the current state of Afghanistan's environmental situation, take into account the challenges and proposed solutions, which will be prepared based on the agreement. Hamidian said this report would be based on research, surveys, and professional assessments, and

will analyze in detail the situation related to natural resources, air, water, forests, soil, urban pollution, and climate change. "This memorandum of understanding provides us with jobs to identify and analyze Afghanistan's environmental problems through an independent, scientific, and documented report", Khalis added. According to him, the report will not only be an important document for government agencies, but will also pave the way for cooperation from international aid organizations. The first draft of the report is expected to be completed within the next six months and published

after being shared with relevant agencies and experts. According to him, the report will include the impacts of climate change and environmental problems on people's lives, agriculture, livestock, and the economy, and will also make recommendations on how to create national and regional strategies for sustainable environmental protection. NEPA explained the agreement will pave the way for the development of an environmental policy, and in the future, a standard policy on environmental protection will be developed based on the analysis and research of the report.

Air Chief hails China’s role in assisting Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Jiang Zaidong called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, during his visit to Air Headquarters, Islamabad. Both dignitaries engaged in a comprehensive and in-depth discussion on a range of matters including corporate-level engagements, defence cooperation and the evolving geostrategic environment in the region. They underscored the importance of cohesive & collaborative approaches in responding to emerging challenges, emphasizing the necessity of maintaining peak operational readiness and swift coordination amidst the prevailing regional security dynamics.

The Air Chief extended a gracious welcome to the distinguished guest, reiterating that Pakistan and China enjoy historic and time-tested ties rooted in mutual trust, strategic convergence and shared aspirations for regional peace & stability. He described the two nations as "Iron Brothers," emphasizing that their bond has only strengthened over the decades and will continue to deepen through future cooperation and partnership. Chief of the Air Staff expressed his profound gratitude to China for its



continued support and unwavering friendship.

He also commended China's role in assisting Pakistan's defence modernization and technological advancement especially in areas of human resource development, technology transfer and collaborative research & development. Both the dignitaries reaffirmed their pledge to institutionalize regular high-level exchanges through expanded joint operational exercises and exploration of multilateral frameworks that bolster collective response mechanisms to emerging threats.

The Chinese Ambassador lauded the unmatched operational excellence demonstrated by PAF personnel during the recent standoff on the eastern front, terming it a reflection of PAF's high standards and unwavering commitment to national defence. He praised Pakistan Air Force for its exemplary professionalism and commendable utilization of Chinese-origin equipment & technology to

thwart enemy aggression.

The dignitary also acknowledged PAF's operational effectiveness and strategic acumen in employing indigenous solutions and advanced systems to safeguard national interests and deter potential threats under the current leadership. Reaffirming China's enduring support, the Ambassador assured full technical assistance to PAF in order to bolster its aerial defence capabilities. He also lauded Pakistan's commitment to self-reliance and emphasized that PAF's investment in indigenous processes had begun to yield promising results. He stressed that continued focus on home-grown technological development would further elevate the country's defence capabilities.

This meeting stands as a testament to the shared resolve of Pakistan and China to advance their time-tested strategic partnership through deepened cooperation and innovation-driven collaboration.

SC upholds Zahir’s death sentence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the appeal of Zahir Jaffer in the high-profile Noor Mukadam murder case, upholding his death sentence and fine.

The verdict was announced by Justice Hashim Khan Kakar, who headed a three-member bench comprising Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim and Justice Ali Baqar Najafi. During the hearing, Barrister Salman Safdar represented the convict Zahir Jaffer, while Advocate Shah Khawar appeared on behalf of the deceased's father, former diplomat Shaukat Mukadam.

Barrister Safdar argued that the prosecution's case relied heavily on CCTV footage and DVR evidence. He contended that any conviction must be based on evidence that is beyond a reasonable doubt and that the court should not consider anything outside of the submitted footage. He also noted that during proceedings at the Islamabad High Court, the prosecution's footage failed to play, and instead, a USB provided by the defense was used to show the video.

Following the conclusion of Safdar's arguments, legal representatives for the co-accused—the watchman and gardener—presented their defense. They argued that their clients were sentenced to ten years in prison merely for allegedly preventing the victim from leaving the premises.

Justice Baqar Najafi remarked that the outcome might have been different had the accused not stopped the victim, while Justice Hashim Kakar questioned why they performed duties beyond their job description. After the co-accused's counsel completed their arguments, Advocate Shah Khawar began presenting the case on behalf of the victim's family. While Zahir Jaffer's death sentence for murder was upheld, the Supreme Court converted his death sentence related to the rape charge into life imprisonment. The court also overturned his conviction for kidnapping and the sentence under that charge declared void.

WB team visit schemes in Badin

F.P. Report

BADIN: Bilal Khalid, task leader of World Bank during inspection of district headquarters 1122 Badin, directed that since rescue building was complete in all respects it needs to be handed over to Emergency Service 1122 without any delay for service of local population. The district headquarter is built to effectively manage affected communities during emergent situations relating to health, fire and road accidents in the jurisdiction of said district. The building is constructed over a plot size of 36000 sqft and has a covered area of 14430 sqft including offices and residential rooms.

The team also visited the water supply scheme situated at village Kario Ghanwar of Taluka Shaheed Fazil Rahu district Badin and was briefed by project officials that water storage from this scheme was discontinued due to heavy rains as water ponds were damaged badly and people forced to use contaminated water from other sources. Water storage ponds with 1.5 million gallons capacity have now been rehabilitated to ensure uninterrupted water supply to local community of 2000 households with a population of 14000 people.

The road rehabilitated at village Peeru Lashari to Machari village measuring 11 KMs with the beneficiary population of 25000 was also visited by the mission. During the briefing to the team, it was informed that level of road was raised by 1 meter keeping in view the future flood level. The shoulders of 2 meters have been provided on each side of the road for better traffic management. It may be pointed out that rehabilitation of this road would improve the economic uplift of the area through better farm to market access. The project director Mr. Muhammad Aslam Leghari, Mr. Waheed Mangi and other senior officials accompanied World Bank team.



GAZA CITY: Palestinian children filling water containers at a tent camp.

KP CM reviews progress of Annual Development Programme

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, a series of high-level meetings is currently underway to comprehensively review the progress of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) of the provincial departments. On Tuesday, a marathon session lasting over seven hours was convened to assess the status of ongoing development projects across several key departments, including Higher Education, Health, Livestock, Agriculture, Revenue, and Communication & Works.

The meeting was attended by relevant cabinet members, the Additional Chief Secretary (Planning), administrative secretaries of the concerned departments, and other senior officials. The administrative secretaries, in the meeting delivered a detailed briefing on the progress of projects under their respective jurisdictions. The forum also deliberated on proposed initiatives for inclusion in the upcoming fiscal year's development programme.

Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to ensure the timely achievement of targets for all ongoing development projects by the end of the current fiscal year. He emphasized that while meeting deadlines is essential, there must be no compromise on the quality of work. Additionally, he instructed that 100% utilization of allocated development funds must be ensured before the close of the financial year.

Looking ahead to the next budget cycle, the Chief Minister stressed that

top priority should be given to the timely completion of ongoing projects, particularly those that have achieved 80% or more physical progress. Such projects, he said, should be completed without delay.

He further directed that proposals for new development projects must be rooted in broader public interest and designed to deliver long-term, sustainable benefits. Highlighting the importance of responsible financial stewardship, the Chief Minister stated that development funds are derived from public taxes and must be used judiciously, strictly for projects that provide direct and tangible benefits to the people.

The Chief Minister has termed the food security as a critical issue facing not only the province but the entire nation. He called for proactive and solid steps to address this challenge. He underlined the significance of the livestock sector in achieving food self-sufficiency and emphasized the need to modernize and restructure the sector to fully harness its potential.

In line with this, Ali Amin Gandapur instructed that projects proposed for the livestock sector in the next ADP should aim to enhance productivity and simultaneously create employment opportunities. He noted the vast untapped potential in both agriculture and livestock sectors and called for a comprehensive, well-coordinated strategy to realize this potential.

The Chief Minister also emphasized the adoption of modern agricultural practices such as tunnel farming and vertical farming. He said that the importance of promoting agricultural

research and implementing measures to conserve water resources. In addition, he directed the initiation of digitization processes in the agriculture and livestock sectors-mirroring efforts in other departments-to ensure the availability of accurate and reliable data.

In the road infrastructure sector, the Chief Minister ordered the expedited completion of all schemes nearing finalization. He mentioned that consultations are underway with elected public representatives to formulate the upcoming development programme, given their close understanding of local needs. He affirmed that new schemes would be included in the next ADP based on genuine public demand.

He reaffirmed his government's commitment to prioritizing the health and education sectors and reiterated his commitment to significantly increase investment in these areas in the forthcoming budget, with a special focus on enhancing facilities in existing health centers, particularly in remote and underserved areas. He also stressed the need to address gaps in educational infrastructure and ensure the provision of missing facilities in schools and colleges.

Lastly, the Chief Minister underscored the importance of digitizing land records and establishing service delivery centers to enhance public convenience and transparency. He directed the concerned departments to accelerate progress on these projects and take all necessary steps to ensure their timely and effective completion.

PHC to hear arguments in LG Act 2022 Amend today

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court adjourned the hearing on a petition challenging the amendment to the Local Government Act 2022, which stripped local government representatives of their powers and reduced their funds. The hearing was adjourned until today (Wednesday) at the request of the Additional Advocate General, on Tuesday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Farah Jamshed heard the case. The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that the amendment made in the Local

Government Act 2022 was unconstitutional and violated the rights of local government representatives.

The lawyer informed the court that the local government elections were held in February 2022, and the representatives took oath. However, the provincial government amended the Local Government Act 2022, stripping local government representatives of their powers and reducing their funds. He argued that the amendment was made without consulting the local government representatives and was a clear violation of their rights.

However, Justice Syed Arshad Ali asked who had

been given the powers that were taken away from local government representatives. Babar Khan Yousafzai replied that the powers had been given to the government, and the amendment had been made to sections 23A and 25 of the Local Government Act.

The Additional Advocate General, Taimour Haider, requested the court to grant him time as the provincial government has submitted the reply. He assured the court that he would complete his arguments within 5 to 10 minutes the next day. Justice Syed Arshad Ali directed him to appear before the court at 1 pm the next day.

IHC judges transfer and seniority case; hearing to continue today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has adjourned hearing of the Islamabad High Court judges' transfer and seniority case until Wednesday, May 21.

The hearing was conducted by the five-member Constitutional Bench headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar. Other members of the bench included Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan, Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar, and Justice Shakeel Ahmed. During the proceedings, senior lawyer Hamid Khan, representing the Lahore High Court Bar, continued his arguments, stating that several legal aspects of judges' transfers from high courts need thorough consideration.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that, in India, judges' consent is not required for transfers, and such decisions are made in consultation with the Chief Justice. "In our system, however, obtaining a judge's consent for transfer is a constitutional

requirement," he noted. Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan observed that India follows a unified cadre system for high court judges, while Pakistan does not have a similar system for seniority. Justice Shakeel Ahmed added that in India, the seniority list for high court judges is uniform.

Hamid Khan argued that in India, consultation with the Chief Justice is mandatory prior to any transfer. He emphasized that consent is essential when transferring judges and that, under Section 3 of the Islamabad High Court Act, consultation is required before a transfer or new appointment. He further stated that the selection of judges for transfer must be based on merit and that the executive branch should not hold the authority to nominate judges for transfer. "This power should rest solely with the Chief Justice," he asserted.

Hamid Khan also pointed out that instead of transferring judges to the Islamabad High Court, new appointments are

often made. He noted that in a recent case, the acting Chief Justice was consulted regarding the transfer of a judge from Balochistan, but the advice for transfers was not approved by the Cabinet.

Following the conclusion of Hamid Khan's arguments, advocate Idrees Ashraf, representing the founder of PTI, began his submissions. He argued that the transfer notification did not mention the tenure of the transferred judges and claimed that such transfers could lead to discrimination among judges within the same high court.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar responded by asking if Article 25, which ensures equality before the law, should be considered in the process of judges' transfers. He further inquired whether the counsel would be satisfied if the transfer tenure was fixed at two years, noting that the core issue remains the matter of seniority. The court later adjourned the hearing until 9:30 AM on Wednesday, May 21.

No behind the scenes deal with Imran: Irfan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the Senate, Senator Irfan Siddiqui, on Tuesday said that that there are no ongoing talks or deals with the founder of PTI.

Speaking to media, he said that no external negotiations are affecting the ongoing legal cases of the PTI founder, labeling recent rumors of such deals as baseless. He firmly rejected any claims of behind-the-scenes discussions or relief through informal channels. "As far as I know, there have been no contacts with any officials, civilians, or other parties regarding any form of deal or relief," he clarified.

He further noted that over the past couple of years, there have been attempts to generate such stories, but these have been baseless, with no concrete developments occurring behind the scenes.

Answering a question, he dismissed the perception of any policy of retaliation being in place. "We are not pursuing a policy of vengeance," he said, pointing to the fact that during the PTI's government, several cases were filed, many of which were based on dubious or politically motivated charges.

"We have not filed any cases based on political hatred or conspiracy. PML-N does not believe in engaging in politics of vendetta," he stressed. Answering question, he said that the legal proceedings against the founder of PTI are ongoing in the courts, and if the courts decide to acquit him, their decision should be respected. "The cases against him are clear and transparent. If he is acquitted, then so be it. We are not intervening in that process," he said.

Army, paramilitaries clash near Sudan capital

KHARTOUM (AFP): Clashes erupted on Tuesday between the Sudanese regular army and rival paramilitaries in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city, with the army calling the fighting part of a "large-scale" offensive. An AFP correspondent at the scene said explosions rang out in the area, where the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had retreated after losing control of the Sudanese capital in March.

The army said its operation which began on Monday was aimed at driving the paramilitaries from their last positions in Khartoum state. "We are pressing a large-scale operation and we are close to clearing the whole of Khartoum state from dirty thugs," military spokesman Nabil Abdallah said in a statement.

The war since April 2023 has pitted the army headed by Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against the RSF under his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. The fighting comes as both the army and the RSF are attempting to establish their own governments. On Monday, army chief Burhan has tapped a former United Nations official, Kamil Idris, as a new prime

minister -- a move seen by analysts as an attempt to gain international recognition and present a functioning civilian-led government amid the ongoing war.

The African Union on Tuesday welcomed the appointment, calling it "a step toward inclusive governance" and expressing hope that the move will "restore constitutional order and democratic governance in Sudan". The RSF announced in April it would form a rival administration, a few weeks after signing a charter in Kenya with a coalition of military and political allies.

In recent weeks, the RSF has staged multiple drone attacks on areas around the country, including Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast, the seat of the army-aligned government since the war began. Omdurman, which is situated just across the River Nile from Khartoum, has been a focal point of fighting in recent days.

This week, a days-long electricity blackout hit the whole Khartoum state, following drone strikes blamed on the RSF on three power stations in Omdurman. Medical charity Doctors without Borders (MSF) said on Sunday that the power outages had dis-

rupted health services at the city's major hospitals.

"The magnitude of these drone attacks represents a major escalation in the conflict, with alarming implications for civilian protection," the UN's human rights expert on Sudan, Radhouane Nouicer, said in a statement on Monday. "The recurrent attacks on critical infrastructure place civilian lives at risk, worsen the humanitarian crisis, and undermine basic human rights."

The army has meanwhile launched attacks in areas controlled by the RSF in the country's south, trying to claim territory and cut off rival supply lines. The Emergency Lawyers, a monitoring group which has documented atrocities on both sides, on Sunday accused the army of killing 18 civilians, including four children, in an attack on Al-Hamadi village in South Kordofan state last week. The war has killed tens of thousands, displaced 13 million and sparked what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The conflict has carved up Sudan, with the army controlling the north, east, and centre, while the RSF dominates nearly all of Darfur and parts of the south.

UN has clearance for 100 more aid trucks to enter Gaza

GENEVA (AFP): The United Nations has received permission from Israel for about 100 more emergency aid trucks to enter Gaza, though the first supplies to have entered in weeks remained under Israeli control, a spokesperson said on Tuesday.

International humanitarian experts have warned of looming famine in the Palestinian enclave of 2.3 million people and the growing outcry has pushed Israel to lift an 11-week total blockade on aid supplies. "We have requested and received approval for more trucks to enter today, many more than were approved yesterday," Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN humanitarian office (OCHA) told a Geneva press briefing. Asked to specify how many, he said: "Around 100."

After weeks of blockade, Israel cleared nine trucks of goods on Monday to enter Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. However, Laerke said just five of those had so far entered Gaza and were still currently "under Israeli control" and subject to the last stage of checks. "The next step is to collect them, and then they will be distributed through the existing system," said Laerke, adding that those trucks contained baby food and nutritional products for children.

EU agrees to lift all economic sanctions on Syria

BRUSSELS (AFP): Syria's foreign minister said on Tuesday that the lifting of sanctions on his country shows an "international will" to support his country, after EU countries agreed to end most of its sanctions.

In a press conference in Damascus alongside his Jordanian counterpart, Assad Al-Shaibani said that "lifting sanctions expresses the regional and international will to support Syria," adding that "the Syrian people today have a very important and historic opportunity to rebuild their country." EU countries gave a green light to lifting all economic sanctions on Syria in a bid to help the war-torn country recover after the ouster of Bashar Assad, diplomats said. Ambassadors from the EU's 27 member states struck a preliminary agreement for the move, which should be formally unveiled by foreign ministers meeting in Brussels later in the day, diplomats said. The decision from the European Union comes after US President Donald Trump announced last week that Washington was lifting its sanctions against Syria.

"We know for a fact that there are babies in urgent life-saving need of these supplements. And if they do not get those, they will be in mortal danger," he said in response to a question about whether babies' lives were at risk. United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher previously called the aid deliveries approved so far "a drop in the ocean."

Israel says it plans to intensify military operations against Hamas and to control the whole of Gaza, which has been devastated by an Israeli air and ground war since Hamas' cross-border attack on Israeli communities in

October 2023. Israel has said its blockade is aimed in part at preventing Palestinian militants from diverting and seizing aid supplies. Hamas has denied doing so.

Malnutrition rates in the densely populated territory have risen during the Israeli blockade and could rise exponentially if food shortages continue, a health official at the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA said at the same briefing. "I have data until end of April and it shows malnutrition on the rise," said Akihiro Seitla, UNRWA Director of Health.