

Pleas against PM rejected
F.P. Report

LAHORE: A relief for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his two sons as Lahore High Court on Saturday rejected the petition filed against their acquittal by a central court in a money laundering case due to the non-perusal of the case. LHC Chief Justice rejected the petition filed by an assistant to Imran on the accountability, Shahzad Akbar against PM and his sons Hamza and Suleman Shehbaz.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 116

Regd. No. 241

ZIQAAD 27 1446 -- SUNDAY, MAY 25 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir during a dinner.

Field Marshal hosts dinner for leaders

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff, hosted a dinner to honour the political leadership, steadfast commitment of the Armed Forces, and the indomitable spirit of the people of Pakistan as demonstrated during Marka-e-Haq, Operation Bunyanum Marsoos.

According to an ISPR news release, the distinguished gathering was graced by the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister; Chairman Senate, Speaker National Assembly, Federal Ministers, Governors, Chief Min-

isters, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of Air & Naval Staff, senior leadership of major political parties, high-ranking government officials and senior officers from the three Services.

Participants paid tribute to the sagacious leadership that steered the nation through a defining moment, hailed the courage and sacrifice of the Armed Forces, and commended the resolute patriotism of the Pakistani people.

In his remarks, the Chief of Army Staff expressed profound gratitude to the political leadership for their strategic foresight during Marka-e-Haq and lauded the seamless inter-services

coordination that ensured operational success in Operation Bunyanum Marsoos.

He further acknowledged the unwavering role of Pakistani youth and media in countering the disinformation campaign waged by India, describing them as a 'steel wall' against malign propaganda.

The COAS also commended the outstanding contributions of Pakistani scientists, engineers, and diplomats, whose professionalism and resolve proved critical during the conflict.

The evening stood as a powerful affirmation of national unity and the collective resolve to advance with renewed strength and cohesion.

PM to embark on visit to four countries

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday will embark on a visit to Türkiye, Iran, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan from 25-30 May.

"During the visit, the Prime Minister will have wide-ranging discussions with the leaders of these countries on an entire range of issues covering bilateral relations and matters of regional and international importance," the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During his visit to these countries, the prime minister will have the opportunity to express the deepest appreciation and acknowledgement for the support extended to Pakistan by the friendly countries during the recent crisis with India. He will also attend the International Conference on Glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan to be held on 29-30 May.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif appreciated mountaineer Naila Kiani for scaling the world's third highest peak. The prime minister congratulated Naila Kiani on becoming the first Pakistani woman to summit Mount Kanchenjunga, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

"Pakistanis are making their country proud in every field of sports," he added. The prime minister further said that setting records in challenging sports like mountaineering by Pakistani women was a source of strength.

During his visit to these countries, the prime minister will have the opportunity to express the deepest appreciation and acknowledgement for the support extended to Pakistan by the friendly countries during the recent crisis with India. He will also attend the International Conference on Glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan to be held on 29-30 May.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif appreciated mountaineer Naila Kiani for scaling the world's third highest peak. The prime minister congratulated Naila Kiani on becoming the first Pakistani woman to summit Mount Kanchenjunga, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

"Pakistanis are making their country proud in every field of sports," he added. The prime minister further said that setting records in challenging sports like mountaineering by Pakistani women was a source of strength.

"Pakistanis are making their country proud in every field of sports," he added. The prime minister further said that setting records in challenging sports like mountaineering by Pakistani women was a source of strength.

1 killed, two injured in Wana blasts

F.P. Report

WANA: Rising insecurity continues to plague South Waziristan as fresh violence struck the region, leaving one civilian killed and two others injured in separate bomb attacks. A remote-controlled explosive targeted a security forces convoy at Saara Pal in Shakai tehsil, resulting in a powerful blast that martyred a local medical representative and injured a soldier. The incident highlights growing concerns over the resurgence of militant activity in the volatile tribal district.

The explosion occurred while the security convoy was on a routine patrol. The martyred civilian, Shamroze Khan Wazir, was a hard-working medical representative affiliated with the Pharma Association. He was reportedly on duty when he was tragically caught in the blast. On the same day, a separate roadside bomb exploded, severely injuring a passerby, Abdul Rabi, who was shifted to a nearby hospital in critical condition.

Meanwhile, in the remote and often overlooked region of Raghzai in South Waziristan, a grassroots movement is quietly transforming lives. Determined to break the cycle of ignorance and neglect, a young activist, Ehsan Wazir, has joined hands with local youth to launch a community-driven campaign offering free education to over 300 children.

wires and dilapidated structures. The PDMA emphasized that people should seek shelter in safe locations during such situation and avoid going outside during the rain. Earlier, the dark clouds covered the sky in Lahore with severe dust storm and winds. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also directed the authorities to remain alert in the rainy weather.

Meanwhile, the flight operation was severely disrupted at Lahore airport due to strong winds and thunderstorm. A flight from Karachi to Lahore (Flight 842) was diverted back to Karachi due to the weather conditions. The control tower instructed the aircraft to return back due to storm's intensity and the runway being unavailable for landing. Similarly, a PIA flight (6385), originally headed for Islamabad, was diverted because of bad weather. The authorities are closely monitoring the situation and passengers are advised to check with their airlines for updated flight status.

9 dead, several injured as rain lashes Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The torrential rains and strong winds caused widespread destruction across the Punjab as nine people lost their lives in several rain-related incidents. According to sources, various areas of Lahore received light to moderate rainfall.

Areas like Upper Mall, Lakshmi Chowk, Mughalpura, Tajpura, and Chowk Nakhuda recorded around 1 mm of rain. Light showers were reported from Jail Road, Airport, Gulberg, and Nishtar Town, whereas heavy downpours in areas like Pani Wala Talab, Farukhabad, Gulshan Ravi, Iqbal Town, Samanabad, and Johar Town led to power outages.

Strong winds and rain also disrupted the electricity supply in several areas. Many areas in Lahore experienced blackout resultant. The Orange Line Metro Train service was also suspended, and stations were evacuated as a precautionary measure.

In Raiwind Road near

Bhobtian Chowk, two people—25-year-old Usman and 20-year-old Hasnain—were injured when a wall collapsed due to strong winds. They were shifted to a local hospital. Meanwhile, the storm caused the roof and wall of a mud house to collapse, injuring six people in Attack. As many as 8 people were injured in Gujranwala due to the collapse of walls and signboards. Three people were dead in Jhelum due to rain-related incidents. Several solar panels and hoardings were reported to have fallen, damaging vehicles and motorcycles.

Meanwhile, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued high alert after strong winds and rain hit several parts of Punjab on Saturday. According to the PDMA spokesperson, all District Emergency Operation Centers have been put on alert.

The people have also been urged to exercise caution and stay away from electric poles, hanging

wires and dilapidated structures. The PDMA emphasized that people should seek shelter in safe locations during such situation and avoid going outside during the rain. Earlier, the dark clouds covered the sky in Lahore with severe dust storm and winds. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also directed the authorities to remain alert in the rainy weather.

Meanwhile, the flight operation was severely disrupted at Lahore airport due to strong winds and thunderstorm. A flight from Karachi to Lahore (Flight 842) was diverted back to Karachi due to the weather conditions. The control tower instructed the aircraft to return back due to storm's intensity and the runway being unavailable for landing. Similarly, a PIA flight (6385), originally headed for Islamabad, was diverted because of bad weather. The authorities are closely monitoring the situation and passengers are advised to check with their airlines for updated flight status.

Strong winds and rain also disrupted the electricity supply in several areas. Many areas in Lahore experienced blackout resultant. The Orange Line Metro Train service was also suspended, and stations were evacuated as a precautionary measure.

In Raiwind Road near

The Frontier Post

JI warns to besiege K-Electric
F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman has threatened to besiege K-Electric for overbilling and increase in electricity charges. Addressing a news conference at Idara Noor-ul-Haq in Karachi on Saturday, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman announced that Jamaat-e-Islami will stage a demonstration to express solidarity with Palestinian on May 31, 2025.

Terms of upcoming budget IMF, Pakistan to continue talks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it would continue discussions with Pakistan authorities towards agreeing over terms of the budget for the fiscal year 2025-26.

The global lender has issued a statement after its mission, led by Nathan Porter, concluded its staff visit to Islamabad which began on May 19. The staff visit focused on recent economic developments, programme implementation, and the budget strategy for fiscal year (FY) 2026.

The Ministry of Finance has announced that the federal budget will be presented on June 10 instead of June 2. Porter in a statement said, "We held constructive discussions with the authorities on their FY2026 budget proposals and broader economic policy, and reform agenda supported by the 2024 Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the 2025 Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF)".

He said the Pakistani authorities reaffirmed their commitment to fiscal consolidation while safeguarding social and priority expenditures, aiming for a primary surplus of 1.6 per-

cent of GDP in FY2026. Discussions focused on actions to enhance revenue—including by bolstering compliance and expanding the tax base—and prioritize expenditure. We will continue discussions towards agreeing over the authorities' FY26 budget over the coming days.

Discussions also covered ongoing energy sector reforms aimed at improving financial viability and reducing the high-cost structure of Pakistan's power sector as well as other structural reforms which will help foster sustainable growth and promote a more level playing field for business and investment. The authorities also emphasized their commitment to ensuring sound macroeconomic policy making and building buffers.

In this context, maintaining an appropriately tight and data-dependent monetary policy remains a priority to ensure inflation is anchored within the central bank's medium-term target range of 5–7 percent. At the same time, rebuilding foreign exchange reserve buffers, preserving a fully functioning FX market, and allowing for greater exchange rate flexibility are critical to strengthening resilience to external shocks.

cent of GDP in FY2026. Discussions focused on actions to enhance revenue—including by bolstering compliance and expanding the tax base—and prioritize expenditure. We will continue discussions towards agreeing over the authorities' FY26 budget over the coming days.

Discussions also covered ongoing energy sector reforms aimed at improving financial viability and reducing the high-cost structure of Pakistan's power sector as well as other structural reforms which will help foster sustainable growth and promote a more level playing field for business and investment. The authorities also emphasized their commitment to ensuring sound macroeconomic policy making and building buffers.

In this context, maintaining an appropriately tight and data-dependent monetary policy remains a priority to ensure inflation is anchored within the central bank's medium-term target range of 5–7 percent. At the same time, rebuilding foreign exchange reserve buffers, preserving a fully functioning FX market, and allowing for greater exchange rate flexibility are critical to strengthening resilience to external shocks.

cent of GDP in FY2026. Discussions focused on actions to enhance revenue—including by bolstering compliance and expanding the tax base—and prioritize expenditure. We will continue discussions towards agreeing over the authorities' FY26 budget over the coming days.

Discussions also covered ongoing energy sector reforms aimed at improving financial viability and reducing the high-cost structure of Pakistan's power sector as well as other structural reforms which will help foster sustainable growth and promote a more level playing field for business and investment. The authorities also emphasized their commitment to ensuring sound macroeconomic policy making and building buffers.

In this context, maintaining an appropriately tight and data-dependent monetary policy remains a priority to ensure inflation is anchored within the central bank's medium-term target range of 5–7 percent. At the same time, rebuilding foreign exchange reserve buffers, preserving a fully functioning FX market, and allowing for greater exchange rate flexibility are critical to strengthening resilience to external shocks.

Targeting of civilians Pakistan draws UN's attention to Indian military

UNITED NATIONS: Delegates of Pakistan and India engaged in a sharp verbal duel at the UN, after Pakistani Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad denounced the Indian military for targeting civilian areas, including homes and mosques, during its recent aggression against Pakistan.

The exchange took place at the UN Security Council during its debate on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Indian Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish reacted to his Pakistani counterpart's tough statement, and while repeating New Delhi's usual allegations, said Pakistan has no justification to talk about civilians when it is using terrorism as a policy.

Pakistani delegate Saima Saleem hit back, accusing the Indian envoy of relying on "disinformation, deflection and denial" as she said India is itself involved in acts of terrorism. "No amount of obfuscation can hide the facts, India brazenly kills and maims civilians in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, carried out blatant aggression against Pakistan targeting civilians and sponsors terrorism and assassinations in my country and across the globe,"

Ms Saleem, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, told the 15-member Council.

India, she said, had even stooped to a new low of impeding the flow of rivers that serve as a lifeline for the 240 million people of Pakistan. Ms Saleem pointed out that Pakistan, together with the international community, had condemned the Pahalgam incident.

"If India had nothing to hide, it should have agreed to credible, impartial and independent investigations into the incident," the Pakistani delegate said. "On the contrary" she added, "India continues to subject people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir to state-sponsored terrorism to suppress their legitimate freedom struggle."

Earlier this month, India also committed blatant aggression against Pakistan, launching unprovoked attacks on innocent civilians, killing 40 including 7 women and 15 children and injuring 121 others, including 10 women and 27 children. "India certainly has no credibility to lecture others on the protection of civilians," Ms Saleem told delegates.

Pakistan's counter terrorism efforts and sacrifices, she said, were well-known and acknowledged globally and Islamabad remains steadfast in its commitment to combat this menace. On the other hand, the Pakistani delegate said, India continues to actively fund and support terror proxies that include the Fitna Al Khawarij (TTP) (Teheek-i-Taliban Pakistan), BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army) and its Majeed Brigade to kill innocent civilians in Pakistan, drawing attention to the recent "savag" attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, that took the lives of innocent school-going children and left dozens injured.

"If India is genuinely committed to peace and security and good neighbourliness, it should end its state-sponsored terrorism, cease its oppression of Kashmiris, comply with its obligations under international law, UN Charter and bilateral treaties, and engage in meaningful dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the wishes of the Kashmiri people," Ms. Saleem added. — Agencies

Ms Saleem, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, told the 15-member Council.

India, she said, had even stooped to a new low of impeding the flow of rivers that serve as a lifeline for the 240 million people of Pakistan. Ms Saleem pointed out that Pakistan, together with the international community, had condemned the Pahalgam incident.

"If India had nothing to hide, it should have agreed to credible, impartial and independent investigations into the incident," the Pakistani delegate said. "On the contrary" she added, "India continues to subject people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir to state-sponsored terrorism to suppress their legitimate freedom struggle."

Earlier this month, India also committed blatant aggression against Pakistan, launching unprovoked attacks on innocent civilians, killing 40 including 7 women and 15 children and injuring 121 others, including 10 women and 27 children. "India certainly has no credibility to lecture others on the protection of civilians," Ms Saleem told delegates.

Pakistan's counter terrorism efforts and sacrifices, she said, were well-known and acknowledged globally and Islamabad remains steadfast in its commitment to combat this menace. On the other hand, the Pakistani delegate said, India continues to actively fund and support terror proxies that include the Fitna Al Khawarij (TTP) (Teheek-i-Taliban Pakistan), BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army) and its Majeed Brigade to kill innocent civilians in Pakistan, drawing attention to the recent "savag" attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, that took the lives of innocent school-going children and left dozens injured.

"If India is genuinely committed to peace and security and good neighbourliness, it should end its state-sponsored terrorism, cease its oppression of Kashmiris, comply with its obligations under international law, UN Charter and bilateral treaties, and engage in meaningful dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the wishes of the Kashmiri people," Ms. Saleem added. — Agencies

Ms Saleem, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, told the 15-member Council.

India, she said, had even stooped to a new low of impeding the flow of rivers that serve as a lifeline for the 240 million people of Pakistan. Ms Saleem pointed out that Pakistan, together with the international community, had condemned the Pahalgam incident.

"If India had nothing to hide, it should have agreed to credible, impartial and independent investigations into the incident," the Pakistani delegate said. "On the contrary" she added, "India continues to subject people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir to state-sponsored terrorism to suppress their legitimate freedom struggle."

Earlier this month, India also committed blatant aggression against Pakistan, launching unprovoked attacks on innocent civilians, killing 40 including 7 women and 15 children and injuring 121 others, including 10 women and 27 children. "India certainly has no credibility to lecture others on the protection of civilians," Ms Saleem told delegates.

Pakistan's counter terrorism efforts and sacrifices, she said, were well-known and acknowledged globally and Islamabad remains steadfast in its commitment to combat this menace. On the other hand, the Pakistani delegate said, India continues to actively fund and support terror proxies that include the Fitna Al Khawarij (TTP) (Teheek-i-Taliban Pakistan), BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army) and its Majeed Brigade to kill innocent civilians in Pakistan, drawing attention to the recent "savag" attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, that took the lives of innocent school-going children and left dozens injured.

"If India is genuinely committed to peace and security and good neighbourliness, it should end its state-sponsored terrorism, cease its oppression of Kashmiris, comply with its obligations under international law, UN Charter and bilateral treaties, and engage in meaningful dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the wishes of the Kashmiri people," Ms. Saleem added. — Agencies

Ms Saleem, a counsellor at the Pakistan Mission to the UN, told the 15-member Council.

India, she said, had even stooped to a new low of impeding the flow of rivers that serve as a lifeline for the 240 million people of Pakistan. Ms Saleem pointed out that Pakistan, together with the international community, had condemned the Pahalgam incident.

"If India had nothing to hide, it should have agreed to credible, impartial and independent investigations into the incident," the Pakistani delegate said. "On the contrary" she added, "India continues to subject people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir to state-sponsored terrorism to suppress their legitimate freedom struggle."

Earlier this month, India also committed blatant aggression against Pakistan, launching unprovoked attacks on innocent civilians, killing 40 including 7 women and 15 children and injuring 121 others, including 10 women and 27 children. "India certainly has no credibility to lecture others on the protection of civilians," Ms Saleem told delegates.

Pakistan's counter terrorism efforts and sacrifices, she said, were well-known and acknowledged globally and Islamabad remains steadfast in its commitment to combat this menace. On the other hand, the Pakistani delegate said, India continues to actively fund and support terror proxies that include the Fitna Al Khawarij (TTP) (Teheek-i-Taliban Pakistan), BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army) and its Majeed Brigade to kill innocent civilians in Pakistan, drawing attention to the recent "savag" attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan, that took the lives of innocent school-going children and left dozens injured.

"If India is genuinely committed to peace and security and good neighbourliness, it should end its state-sponsored terrorism, cease its oppression of Kashmiris, comply with its obligations under international law, UN Charter and bilateral treaties, and engage in meaningful dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the wishes of the Kashmiri people," Ms. Saleem added. — Agencies

Nine of Gazan doctor's 10 children killed in Israeli strike

GAZA: A pediatrician working in southern Gaza has lost nine of her 10 children in an Israeli air strike that hit her family home, in what fellow medics have described as an "unimaginable" tragedy.

Dr. Alaa Al-Najjar, who was on duty at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis at the time of the strike, also saw her husband, Dr. Hamdi Al-Najjar, critically injured. The couple's only surviving child, an 11-year-old boy, was severely wounded and underwent emergency surgery, according to reports.

"This is the reality our medical staff in Gaza endure. Words fall short in describing the pain," said Dr. Muneer Albours, director general of Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. "In Gaza, it is not only healthcare workers who are targeted, Israel's aggression goes further, wiping out entire families." Graphic footage shared by Palestinian Civil Defense, and verified by BBC, showed the remains of small children being pulled from the rubble of a collapsed building near a petrol station in Khan Younis.

British surgeon Dr. Graeme Groom, who is volunteering at Nasser hospital, said Dr Al-Najjar's surviving son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

British surgeon Dr. Graeme Groom, who is volunteering at Nasser hospital, said Dr Al-Najjar's surviving son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

British surgeon Dr. Graeme Groom, who is volunteering at Nasser hospital, said Dr Al-Najjar's surviving son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

British surgeon Dr. Graeme Groom, who is volunteering at Nasser hospital, said Dr Al-Najjar's surviving son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

Groom added that the child's father, also a physician son was his final patient of the day. "He was very badly injured and seemed much younger as we lifted him onto the operating table," he said in a video posted to social media.

lived near a petrol station and speculated that the strike may have caused or been worsened by a large explosion. "That is life in Gaza. That is the way it goes in Gaza," she said.

The Israel Defence Forces did not comment directly on the strike, but in a general statement said it had hit more than 100 targets across Gaza in a 24-hour period. The Hamas-run health ministry reported at least 74 Palestinian deaths in that time frame alone. The UN has warned that Gaza may be entering its "cruelest phase" of the war, with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denouncing Israel's restrictions on aid as exacerbating a humanitarian catastrophe.

Since Israel launched its offensive after Hamas militants stormed into Israel, killing around 1,200 people and abducting 251 others, on Oct. 7, 2023, more than 53,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza's health ministry, which includes women and children in its total but does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. — Aljazeera

lived near a petrol station and speculated that the strike may have caused or been worsened by a large explosion. "That is life in Gaza. That is the way it goes in Gaza," she said.

The Israel Defence Forces did not comment directly on the strike, but in a general statement said it had hit more than 100 targets across Gaza in a 24-hour period. The Hamas-run health ministry reported at least 74 Palestinian deaths in that time frame alone. The UN has warned that Gaza may be entering its "cruelest phase" of the war, with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres denouncing Israel's restrictions on aid as exacerbating a humanitarian catastrophe.

Since Israel launched its offensive after Hamas militants stormed into Israel, killing around 1,200 people and abducting 251 others, on Oct. 7, 2023, more than 53,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza's health ministry, which includes women and children in its total but does not differentiate between civilians and combatants. — Aljazeera

SC pushes for tech-driven justice

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to modernize the judiciary, the Supreme Court convened a high-level meeting at its Branch Registry in Peshawar on Saturday.

The session, chaired by Supreme Court Registrar Muhammad Saleem Khan, brought together senior officials from the apex court, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Communication and Works (C&W) Department, and the provincial Information Technology (IT) Department. The meeting was held to fast-track judicial reforms with a focus on technology integration and infrastructure development, in line with the vision of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi.

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar Saleem Khan said that the adoption of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judicial proceedings is no longer optional but essential for ensuring timely, transparent, and citizen-centric justice. Officials reviewed the rollout of various digital tools including automated case management systems, e-filing mechanisms, video link hearings, and AI-based legal research platforms. These innovations are designed to streamline court procedures, reduce case backlogs, and enhance public confidence in the legal system.

The Registrar reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to improving access to justice and reducing litigation costs. He emphasized the development of user-friendly systems that are easy to navigate for both lawyers and litigants. The efforts of the provincial IT Department were acknowledged, with further discussions focusing on bolstering cybersecurity, data integrity, and system reliability.

On the infrastructure front, the Registrar highlighted the crucial role of the C&W Department in maintaining and upgrading court facilities. He stressed that a dignified, clean, and accessible physical environment is vital to upholding the decorum and institutional stature of the judiciary.

Issues such as structural maintenance, energy efficiency, workplace functionality, and facilities for persons with disabilities were discussed in detail. The Registrar called for a coordinated and long-term approach to infrastructure planning that reflects both the prestige and the operational demands of the Supreme Court.

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to modernize the judiciary, the Supreme Court convened a high-level meeting at its Branch Registry in Peshawar on Saturday.

The session, chaired by Supreme Court Registrar Muhammad Saleem Khan, brought together senior officials from the apex court, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Communication and Works (C&W) Department, and the provincial Information Technology (IT) Department. The meeting was held to fast-track judicial reforms with a focus on technology integration and infrastructure development, in line with the vision of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi.

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar Saleem Khan said that the adoption of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judicial proceedings is no longer optional but essential for ensuring timely, transparent, and citizen-centric justice. Officials reviewed the rollout of various digital tools including automated case management systems, e-filing mechanisms, video link hearings, and AI-based legal research platforms. These innovations are designed to streamline court procedures, reduce case backlogs, and enhance public confidence in the legal system.

The Registrar reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to improving access to justice and reducing litigation costs. He emphasized the development of user-friendly systems that are easy to navigate for both lawyers and litigants. The efforts of the provincial IT Department were acknowledged, with further discussions focusing on bolstering cybersecurity, data integrity, and system reliability.

On the infrastructure front, the Registrar highlighted the crucial role of the C&W Department in maintaining and upgrading court facilities. He stressed that a dignified, clean, and accessible physical environment is vital to upholding the decorum and institutional stature of the judiciary.

Issues such as structural maintenance, energy efficiency, workplace functionality, and facilities for persons with disabilities were discussed in detail. The Registrar called for a coordinated and long-term approach to infrastructure planning that reflects both the prestige and the operational demands of the Supreme Court.

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to modernize the judiciary, the Supreme Court convened a high-level meeting at its Branch Registry in Peshawar on Saturday.

The session, chaired by Supreme Court Registrar Muhammad Saleem Khan, brought together senior officials from the apex court, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Communication and Works (C&W) Department, and the provincial Information Technology (IT) Department. The meeting was held to fast-track judicial reforms with a focus on technology integration and infrastructure development, in line with the vision of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi.

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar Saleem Khan said that the adoption of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judicial proceedings is no longer optional but essential for ensuring timely, transparent, and citizen-centric justice. Officials reviewed the rollout of various digital tools including automated case management systems, e-filing mechanisms, video link hearings, and AI-based legal research platforms. These innovations are designed to streamline court procedures, reduce case backlogs, and enhance public confidence in the legal system.

The Registrar reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to improving access to justice and reducing litigation costs. He emphasized the development of user-friendly systems that are easy to navigate for both lawyers and litigants. The efforts of the provincial IT Department were acknowledged, with further discussions focusing on bolstering cybersecurity, data integrity, and system reliability.

On the infrastructure front, the Registrar highlighted the crucial role of the C&W Department in maintaining and upgrading court facilities. He stressed that a dignified, clean, and accessible physical environment is vital to upholding the decorum and institutional stature of the judiciary.

Issues such as structural maintenance, energy efficiency, workplace functionality, and facilities for persons with disabilities were discussed in detail. The Registrar called for a coordinated and long-term approach to infrastructure planning that reflects both the prestige and the operational demands of the Supreme Court.

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to modernize the judiciary, the Supreme Court convened a high-level meeting at its Branch Registry in Peshawar on Saturday.

The session, chaired by Supreme Court Registrar Muhammad Saleem Khan, brought together senior officials from the apex court, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Communication and Works (C&W) Department, and the provincial Information Technology (IT) Department. The meeting was held to fast-track judicial reforms with a focus on technology integration and infrastructure development, in line with the vision of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi.

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar Saleem Khan said that the adoption of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judicial proceedings is no longer optional but essential for ensuring timely, transparent, and citizen-centric justice. Officials reviewed the rollout of various digital tools including automated case management systems, e-filing mechanisms, video link hearings, and AI-based legal research platforms. These innovations are designed to streamline court procedures, reduce case backlogs, and enhance public confidence in the legal system.

The Registrar reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to improving access to justice and reducing litigation costs. He emphasized the development of user-friendly systems that are easy to navigate for both lawyers and litigants. The efforts of the provincial IT Department were acknowledged, with further discussions focusing on bolstering cybersecurity, data integrity, and system reliability.

On the infrastructure front, the Registrar highlighted the crucial role of the C&W Department in maintaining and upgrading court facilities. He stressed that a dignified, clean, and accessible physical environment is vital to upholding the decorum and institutional stature of the judiciary.

Issues such as structural maintenance, energy efficiency, workplace functionality, and facilities for persons with disabilities were discussed in detail. The Registrar called for a coordinated and long-term approach to infrastructure planning that reflects both the prestige and the operational demands of the Supreme Court.

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to modernize the judiciary, the Supreme Court convened a high-level meeting at its Branch Registry in Peshawar on Saturday.

The session, chaired by Supreme Court Registrar Muhammad Saleem Khan, brought together senior officials from the apex court, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Communication and Works (C&W) Department, and the provincial Information Technology (IT) Department. The meeting was held to fast-track judicial reforms with a focus on technology integration and infrastructure development, in line with the vision of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi.

Speaking on the occasion, Registrar Saleem Khan said that the adoption of modern technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in judicial proceedings is no longer optional but essential for ensuring timely, transparent, and citizen-centric justice. Officials reviewed the rollout of various digital tools including automated case management systems, e-filing mechanisms, video link hearings, and AI-based legal research platforms. These innovations are designed to streamline court procedures, reduce case backlogs, and enhance public confidence in the legal system.

The Registrar reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to improving access to justice and reducing litigation costs. He emphasized the development of user-friendly systems that are easy to navigate for both lawyers and litigants. The efforts of the provincial IT Department were acknowledged, with further discussions focusing on bolstering cybersecurity, data integrity, and system reliability.

On the infrastructure front, the Registrar highlighted the crucial role of the C&W Department in maintaining and upgrading court facilities. He stressed that a dignified, clean, and accessible physical environment is vital to upholding the decorum and institutional stature of the judiciary.

Issues such as structural maintenance, energy efficiency, workplace functionality, and facilities for persons with disabilities were discussed in detail. The Registrar called for a coordinated and long-term approach to infrastructure planning that reflects both the prestige and the operational demands of the Supreme Court.

CM, WB discuss WASH project, flood relief housing

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah held a high-level meeting with a World Bank (WB) delegation led by Managing Director Anna Bejarred at CM House to discuss key development initiatives, including the launch of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) project and ongoing flood relief housing efforts.

The delegation included Country Director Naji Bin Hussein, Operations Manager Gileas J. Dragoulis, DRM Specialist Bilal Khalid, Hina Saleem Lotia, and Funk Patrick. The meeting was attended by provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon, Dr. Azra Pechuho, Nasir Hussain Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, Ali Hassan Zardari, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Haider Shah, Principal Secretary Agha Wasif, and Chairman P&D Najm Shah.

The parties agreed on the effective initiation of the WASH project aimed at improving access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene practices across Sindh. This initiative targets 3,200 flood-affected villages, providing essen-

tial facilities to enhance public health and living conditions.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the WASH project is being launched with a total budget of \$270 million, benefiting approximately 1.5 million people. The funding breakdown includes \$75 million from the World Bank, \$13 million from the Islamic Development Bank, \$100 million from the Asian Development Bank, and \$100 million from the Sindh government.

The meeting also focused on the Sindh People's Housing Project, a visionary initiative championed by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, aimed at rebuilding homes and fostering social transformation for flood victims. CM Shah emphasised that the 2022 floods submerged 70 per cent of Sindh, affecting 12.36 million people and destroying 2.1 million homes.

The housing project covers a rural population of 15 million. So far, 120,000 bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries have been opened, and financial assistance has been distributed to 1.15 million individuals,

Murad Shah said. He added that approximately 750,000 house foundations have been completed, with 500,000 homes in the final stages of construction. Additionally, 900,000 land ownership certificates have been issued in the names of women, empowering them economically and socially.

Shah said that the project has generated over one million employment opportunities, providing vital livelihoods for affected communities. During the visit, the World Bank delegation toured the Chief Minister's House, where CM Shah showcased a photo gallery featuring prominent Pakistani women, from Fatima Jinnah to other national icons, as well as portraits of all Chief Ministers before and after Pakistan's independence.

The delegation appreciated the historical architecture and artistic presentation of the residence. This collaborative effort between the Sindh government and international financial institutions marks a significant step towards sustainable development, disaster recovery, and social upliftment in the province.

Maryam most popular leader among youth: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has emerged as the most favoured and trusted leader among the younger generation, owing to her commitment to delivering real change through action rather than slogans.

In a statement issued on Saturday, she said the overwhelming enthusiasm witnessed among the youth at recent distribution events of electric bikes, scholarships, and laptops is a testament to CM Maryam Nawaz's growing popularity.

"Maryam Nawaz has not just made promises—she has won the hearts of young people through concrete steps," Bokhari said. She added that the youth of Pakistan are now turning away from politics based on violence and chaos, and are embracing leadership that offers progress and positivity. She emphasized that the future of Pakistan rests with its young generation, and it is their energy and potential that will shape the nation's destiny.

The minister concluded by highlighting Punjab's leading role in development, prosperity, and governance. "This progress reflects CM Maryam Nawaz's transparent, merit-based, and effective policies," she said.



LAHORE: A view of dense dust storm before rain that engulf the city. —APP Photo

Sharjeel vows action against transport violence

E.P. Report

KARACHI: An important meeting was organized with transporters at the Commissioner Karachi Office, presided over by Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon. Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Asif Haider Shah, Transport Secretary Asad Zamin, Karachi Commissioner Sayed Hassan Naqvi, and others were present at the meeting.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that transporters have incurred

significant financial losses due to the recent violent incidents. To address the issue, a committee has been formed, which will submit its recommendations within ten days.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that transport is a vital sector, and it is the government's responsibility to address the issues faced by transporters. He stated that setting vehicles on fire is not a solution to any problem but a serious crime. Expressing sorrow, he noted that four transporter drivers have lost their lives, and taking someone's life is equivalent to punishing an entire family.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that these acts fall under the category of terrorism, and the government will itself register cases under anti-terrorism laws against those who set the vehicles on fire. He mentioned that the ones who set the vehicles ablaze and martyred the drivers are being identified from CCTV cameras.

He said in unequivocal words that no one will be permitted to obstruct roads or indulge in hooliganism. Sharjeel Inam Memon stressed that the perpetrators of harming the public are not friends of country, but terrorists.

Govt taking historic steps to protect wildlife : CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has emphasized the importance of protecting the Markhor and preserving wildlife across the country.

In her message on International Day of the Markhor, Pakistan's national animal, she said, "The purpose of observing this day globally is to raise awareness about the conservation of the Markhor and to protect endangered wildlife species."

The CM noted that the Markhor, known for its majestic appearance, is native to regions such as Chitral, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kohistan, and Hunza. "The Markhor is not only a symbol of strength and beauty but also represents Pakistan's rich natural heritage," she added.

Highlighting the broader significance of conservation efforts, CM Maryam Nawaz said, "Protecting the Markhor is a reflection of our commitment to biodiversity and ecological balance." She reaffirmed the Punjab government's dedication to safeguarding wildlife and called for collective efforts in preserving endangered species. "We pledge to work together to protect not just the Markhor, but all vulnerable species," she said. "Historic steps are being taken in Punjab to ensure the protection and sustainability of our wildlife."

Highlighting the broader significance of conservation efforts, CM Maryam Nawaz said, "Protecting the Markhor is a reflection of our commitment to biodiversity and ecological balance." She reaffirmed the Punjab government's dedication to safeguarding wildlife and called for collective efforts in preserving endangered species. "We pledge to work together to protect not just the Markhor, but all vulnerable species," she said. "Historic steps are being taken in Punjab to ensure the protection and sustainability of our wildlife."

PFA imposes Rs 699,000 over poor hygiene

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) enforcement teams carried out surprise inspections at motorway service areas and roadside food outlets under the directions of PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javed.

During crackdown, food safety teams inspected 319 food points and imposed fines worth Rs 699,000 on 38 outlets over poor hygiene. As many as 259 food businesses were served improvement notices, while over 80kg of substandard milk, expired beverages and low-grade cooking oil were discarded on the spot.

The DG said that a strict ban has been enforced on the sale of unauthorized and low-quality food along highways, GT Road, bus terminals and lorry stands. He said that during inspections, adulterated milk and expired items were seized and several food outlets were found using low-quality frying oil.

He said that many food units failed to comply with earlier warnings and lacked proper documentation. In various locations, kitchen areas were found infested with flies, mosquitoes and lizards, while cooked food was stored uncovered.

بیان حنفی

یہ عطا فرماتے ہیں کہ گناہوں کو تاب نہ لے کر چلے جائے

میں میں روئے 35 مرلہ زمین ہمارے والدہ امیر دہلی بی

(مرحوم) کے نام ہے۔ جو ان کو اپنے والد سے ملی

ہے۔ وہ زمین بھائی فضل رحمان، نکاش رحمان اور جنید

ارحمان ولد عبد الرحمان (مرحوم) ہیں۔ تارے علاوہ

ہمارے والدہ امیر دہلی بی (مرحوم) کا کوئی نقش و کتابی

دارت نہیں ہے۔ نکاش رحمان ولد عبد الرحمان

(مرحوم) 0310-5040779

India cannot unilaterally exit Indus Treaty: Wattoo

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Water Resources Muhammad Moeen Wattoo has said that India has no legal authority to unilaterally withdraw from the Indus Waters Treaty and the India's actions regarding shared water resources constitute a clear violation of the treaty and pose a serious threat to regional peace.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peaceful resolution through international law and dialogue, while underscoring the need to safeguard national interests and ensure sustainable water security for future generations.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Indian Imperialism on Pakistan's Water: Are New War Clouds Lurking, Consequences and Way Forward", organized by the Institute of International Relations and Media Research (IIRMR) at a local hotel, on Saturday.

Speaking to a distinguished gathering of scholars, international affairs experts, media representatives, and civil society members, Federal Minister Moeen Wattoo said that the issue of water is not merely a technical or administrative matter, but one that touches the core of Pakistan's national sovereignty and survival. He also paid tribute to the IIRMR for organizing a timely and significant dialogue on an issue that, he said, is deeply linked to the nation's future and food security.

Highlighting the impor-

tance of the Indus Waters Treaty, the minister described it as a historic agreement that ensured equitable distribution of the Indus Basin rivers, forming the backbone of Pakistan's agrarian economy.

He noted that millions of Pakistanis depend on these waters for agriculture, livelihoods, and food security. He expressed grave concern over India's recent actions, including the formal notice issued in January 2023 seeking to modify the treaty, a move he termed as a clear step toward unilateral withdrawal.

He said India's claims of failed dispute resolution mechanisms were unjustified, pointing out that international legal experts and the World Bank, which supervises the treaty, have confirmed that India cannot unilaterally alter or abandon the agreement.

"India has not only delayed negotiations and arbitration," he noted, "but has also continued constructing dams on Western rivers such as Kishanganga, Ratle, and Pakal Dul, in violation of the treaty's provisions, which designate these waters for Pakistan."

The water resources minister stressed that this pattern of behavior is not just a treaty violation but a threat to peace and water security in South Asia. Referring to India's recent decisions following the Pahalgam incident, the minister called such unilateral actions "dangerous developments" that could

have serious regional repercussions. "Water is not just a natural resource, it is a fundamental human right and a matter of national sovereignty," he emphasized. "Weaponizing it is tantamount to aggression, and Pakistan views this extremely seriously."

The minister also warned that India's expansionist water policy could lead to a humanitarian crisis, increasing poverty and forcing displacement of millions, besides fuelling instability and the risk of conflict.

Outlining Pakistan's strategy, he said the government is actively engaging with international institutions and friendly countries to raise awareness about India's violations and their potential consequences. He called on the global community to uphold international treaties and prevent unilateralism.

Domestically, he said, Pakistan must build resilience by investing in modern irrigation systems, conserving water, and diversifying its water resources. "This is a national duty that requires a united effort," he remarked.

While reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to peaceful resolution and adherence to international law, the minister issued a firm warning: "If diplomacy and dialogue fail to protect our rights, Pakistan will not hesitate to take all necessary steps to safeguard its national interests and the welfare of its people."

3 die as dumper crushes Qingqi rickshaw, bike

LAHORE (INP): Three people died when a speeding sand-loaded dumper fell on a Qingqi rickshaw and a motorcycle in Lahore on Saturday morning.

Two people were dead on the spot while the third breathed his last in the hospital. The accident occurred near the traffic signal near LDA Avenue-I in Lahore.

Soon after receiving the report of the accident, a Rescue 1122 team and local police rushed the site and shifted the dead bodies and the injured to Jinnah Hospital. The deceased were later identified as Umair 32, Tayyab 25 and Waseem 30. Due to the accident, traffic was jammed on all the surrounding roads and commuters faced a lot of difficulties in reaching their destinations.

House on fire, two children injured

LAHORE (APP): A house caught a fire after a high-voltage electrical wire fell in Marghzar Colony and two children were burned. According to Rescue 1122 officials, a house caught the fire after a high-voltage electrical wire fell near Hussain Park in Marghzar Colony here.

Rescue workers said that two children were burned in the fire.

The injured children were shifted to Jinnah Hospital where their treatment is ongoing.

Over 10.6 million children to receive polio drops in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): The Government of Sindh, in collaboration with the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Sindh and national partners, is launching a polio vaccination campaign, aiming to reach more than 10.6 million children under the age of five across all 30 districts of Sindh.

The campaign is taking place from May 26 to June 1, 2025, and involves the efforts of over 80,000 trained polio workers going door-to-door with support from 25,539 law enforcement personnel to ensure that no child is missed. Children between the ages of 6 and 59 months will also receive Vitamin A

supplements to help boost their immunity.

This campaign follows the momentum of two well-executed vaccination drives earlier this year in February and April. With continued virus circulation in some environmental samples and four polio cases reported in Sindh so far this year, this latest round of vaccinations reinforces the province's resolve to interrupt transmission and protect children from the lifelong consequences of this preventable disease.

"Polio anywhere is a threat to children everywhere," said a spokesperson from EOC Sindh. "This campaign reflects our commitment to reach

every child, even in the hardest-to-reach communities, and to ensure that Pakistan moves closer to eradication."

Sindh's polio teams will be active in 1,292 Union Councils, supported by district administrations and healthcare partners, delivering polio drops and engaging families at the doorstep.

The EOC Sindh appeals to parents, teachers, religious leaders, community elders, and the media to join hands in this vital national effort.

To report missed children or ask questions about the vaccine, citizens can call the 1166 helpline or WhatsApp 0346-777-6546.

Khurshidi urges govt to take urgent steps for heatwave

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Opposition Leader Ali Khurshidi has called on the provincial government to take urgent and concrete measures to address the looming threat of a heatwave in Karachi, criticising authorities for inaction despite a formal alert from the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

In a statement issued from MQM-Pakistan's Bahadurabad headquarters on Saturday, Khurshidi warned that rising temperatures pose a serious risk to public health, particularly for daily commuters and vulnerable groups. "With the increasing intensity of heat, there is a real danger of heatstroke. The Sindh government must ensure that public hospitals are adequately equipped to

provide immediate medical assistance," he said.

Khurshidi urged the government to increase the deployment of traffic police personnel to manage the growing congestion in the city, which exacerbates heat-related stress for citizens. He also recommended setting up heatstroke prevention camps along busy roads, especially for motorcyclists, rickshaw drivers, and public transport users. "These camps should offer basic medical support to those affected by extreme heat," he added.

Criticising what he described as the Sindh government's complacency, Khurshidi remarked, "Despite the heatwave advisory issued for Karachi and other parts of the province, the government

remains in a deep slumber." He further called on all relevant departments — including the health department, local government bodies, and the police — to perform their duties responsibly during this critical period. "This is a time for coordinated action, not negligence," Khurshidi stressed.

The Meteorological Department has already issued advisories warning of severe heat conditions across Sindh, and health experts have emphasized the need for early prevention measures. The opposition's statement places renewed pressure on the provincial administration to act swiftly in order to mitigate the impact of extreme weather conditions on the population.

Gov't fails to provide facilities to citizens, Bilal Saleem Qadri

KARACHI (PPI): Sahibzada Allama Bilal Saleem Qadri, the central secretary-general of Pakistan Sunni Tehreek, has accused the government of failing to provide basic facilities to citizens. He stated that the government's poor strategy has led to difficulties for the public. Qadri highlighted that basic necessities such as electricity, water, and gas are now out of reach for the people. In many areas, water supply is unavailable for months. The tanker mafia is selling water at high prices, further exacerbating the problems faced by inflation-stricken citizens.

Additionally, Qadri expressed concern over the inadequate sanitation arrangements. He noted that diseases are spreading due to filth, and the situation could worsen with the upcoming Eid al-Adha and rains. Qadri accused government officials of only ensuring cleanliness on main roads while neglecting other areas, where piles of garbage are accumulating. He also expressed concern over the deteriorating condition of the sewage system. Qadri warned the government that if conditions do not improve, the public will hold them accountable in the next elections.

NUML, NADRA forge strategic collaboration to enhance research initiatives

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) has signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and Dream Sports Group Pvt Ltd, marking a strong step forward in promoting research, innovation, and youth development through collaborative efforts.

The MoU between NUML and NADRA aims to foster cooperation in innovative research projects and the exchange of expertise in areas of mutual interest. Both institutions agreed to jointly determine the scope and subject of collaborative research and development activities, in alignment with their respective objectives.

The agreement was signed by Director General NUML, Brigadier Shahzad Munir, and Ch Qaiser Iqbal Baryar, Chairman Dream Sports Group underscores the importance of engaging



ment, NUML also partnered with Dream Sports Group Pvt Ltd to promote sports and healthy activities among the youth.

The MoU, signed by DG NUML Brigadier Shahzad Munir and Ch Qaiser Iqbal Baryar, Chairman Dream Sports Group underscores the importance of engaging

students in physical and extracurricular development.

Rector NUML, Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani (Retd), graced both signing ceremonies with his presence. He appreciated the initiatives and expressed hope that these collaborations will lead to meaningful

outcomes, particularly in the fields of research, innovation, and youth empowerment.

NUML remains committed to expanding its collaborative horizons and providing its students and faculty with new opportunities for growth and engagement through strategic partnerships.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur chairing a consultative meeting regarding upcoming Annual Development Program of D.I.Khan Division.

PHC transferred seventeen Judges

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued transfer orders of 17 Additional District and Sessions Judges in different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Saturday. The transferred judges include Amin Syed from Timergara to Haripur. Amjad Hussain from Samar Bagh Dir Lower to Kurram, Lubna Zaman from Mardan to Timergara, Arif Shah from Peshawar to Sada Kurram, Muhammad Tay-

yab from Nowshera to Mansehra, Arbab Muhammad Kashif from Takhtbhai to Buner, Raja Muhammad Shoaib Khan from Upper Chitral to Nowshera and Kiran Naz from Mansehra to Dera Ismail Khan. Moreover, Syed Mudasir Shah Tarmezi from Dera Ismail Khan to Swabi, Abdul Wahab Qureshi from Haripur to Upper Chitral, Muhammad Tayyab Jan from Sada Kurram to Haripur, Abdul Salam Khan from Buner to North Waziristan, Syed Hassan

Raza Shah from Haripur to Takht Bhai, Muhammad Zahoor from North Waziristan to Mardan, Ijaz Younas from Haripur to Samar Bagh, Shah Faisal from Kurram to Haripur and Bakht Zada from Orakzai to Peshawar. PHC ordered all the transferred judges to assume charge within one week. Additionally, the cases pending before the Additional Sessions Judge Kurram have been transferred to Orakzai.

MoU signed on teachers' training

PESHAWAR (APP): A Pakistani delegation led by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Faisal Khan Tarakai on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Cambridge regarding teacher training, assessment, curriculum and early childhood education programs. Cambridge University Press and Assessments CEO Rod Smith and Secretary Education Masood Ahmad and Education Advisor Mian Saadduddin were present on the occasion. According to official release issued here, the Pakistani delegation, present in London, attending the World Education Forum, visited the University of Cambridge. They reviewed the teacher training and other educational programs and facilities and were given a detailed briefing about the university. KP Education Minister Faisal Khan Tarakai, on behalf of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department, signed the MoU aimed at enhancing teacher training, student assessment, and the promotion of early childhood education in the province. Under this Memorandum of Understanding, the University of Cambridge will provide technical assistance in training teachers and supporting other educational initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Education Department will benefit from Cambridge's expertise to bring innovation to the province's education system. Minister Faisal Khan Tarakai stated that the department was committed to equipping teachers in KP with modern skills and adopting advanced assessment methods for students, drawing on Cambridge's experience. He emphasized that early childhood education, which was considered the backbone of the education system, would be further strengthened to ensure students perform well in national and international competitions.

Rubina slams PTI for corruption, urges masses to join protest on May 26

PESHAWAR (APP): President Pakistan People's Party Women Wing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid has strongly criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for its corruption spree in KP and said people of the province were bearing the brunt of mega corruption scams of provincial government. Addressing a press conference in Peshawar Press Club, she announced that PPP would hold a massive protest campaign on May 26 to save the province. She urged people to support the protest for removal and accountability of corrupt elements. She said PTI has shattered the ideals of justice by engaging in large scale corruption, particularly in KP where the province has seen no progress in the past 13 years. "Instead of development, the region has plunged into decline due to poor governance and lawlessness," she said. Rubina Khalid urged the public to rise against those who looted national wealth. "It is the time for people to question how billions of rupees were gobbled overnight," she remarked calling for public trials of corrupt figures. She said that billions of rupees were misappropriated that were meant for development of Kohistan. She praised the Pakistan Army for its role in defend-

ing the country, stating, "We salute our armed forces for burying the enemy in their trenches. But it is unfortunate that some internal actors now question their sacrifices and demand proof just to seek the release of a corruption-tainted political leader."

She lauded PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for raising Pakistan's voice on international diplomatic fronts particularly highlighting the Kashmir issue globally. She reiterated that India has proven to be neither a friend nor a trustworthy neighbor. The PPP leader announced that the party's Women's Wing would actively participate in a

major protest rally on May 26. She appealed to women to join in large numbers alongside their brothers in what she described as a historic movement against injustice and exploitation. Criticizing the current state of governance, she highlighted increasing unemployment, failing education and healthcare systems and widespread lawlessness in KP. She accused the provincial administration of mismanaging the NFC Award funds and fostering a culture of corruption. "The time has come to unite and oust the group that has plundered the hard earned money of people," she said, adding that attacking the federation is treason and not patriotism.

KP govt striving to empower female through education

PESHAWAR (APP): Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) and Chairman Standing Committee of KP Assembly on Elementary Education, Taj Muhammad Tarand has said that provincial government is striving to empower female through education and has prioritized 70 percent of new schools for girls. Addressing a Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on "Education budget implementation and Challenges", Taj Muhammad Tarand said majority of the newly constructed primary schools are for girls which reflects preference of provincial government on improving female literacy rate in the province. The Multi-stakeholder Dialogue was organized by Blue Veins in collaboration with Pakistan Education Champion Network. The dialogue held discussion on education budget implementation, challenges and recommendations for effectively utilizing funds and resources for girls' secondary education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. MPA Taj Muhammad Tarand said for achieving Sustainable Development Goals we have to take measures on need based approach wherein girls education is on the top. He apprised participants that provincial government has issued directives for priority based reconstruction of schools damaged due to terrorist attacks or natural disasters. The KP government, he continued, has also allowed a substantial amount of Rs. 1.5 billion on starting WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) activities in schools. Similarly, funds have

been issued to PTC for arranging missing facilities in schools in their respective areas. Tarand said KP government has allocated an amount of Rs. 320 billion for Education sector which constitutes about 21 percent of the total budget of the province. Similarly, he added, the Elementary Department has utilized 89 percent of its annual budget of Rs. 23.8 billion in the current fiscal year. Earlier, Muhammad Ejaz Khalil, Advisor to Elementary Education in his presentation disclosed that around 1300 girl schools are damaged in KP due to terrorism and natural calamities. Out of these 1300 schools, 200 are included in Annual Development Plan (ADP) of the upcoming budget for reconstruction. He informed participants that the devastating floods of 2022 had damaged 380 schools in the province. To protect educational institutions from impacts of climate induced disasters, the KP government has chalked out a comprehensive policy. For overcoming shortage of 15000 schools, Education department is focusing on promoting the concept of Non-Formal Education through which students can get education on private schools or in rented buildings. For improving girl's education, free transport facility is also introduced on pilot project basis in nine districts while monthly stipend for girls studying in grade 6 to 9 is increased from Rs. 500 to 1000. In some areas double shifts have been started in government schools to overcome school shortage and for providing education facility to students at their door steps.

Over 6,000 Markhors thriving in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the occasion of World Markhor Day, Pir Maswar Khan, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Wildlife, on Saturday, emphasized the significance of raising public awareness about the importance of the Markhor, the threats it faces, its role in the ecosystem, and the urgent need for its conservation. In his official message, Pir Maswar Khan stated that the provincial government is fully committed to the preservation of this iconic wild goat species and has undertaken comprehensive measures to ensure its protection. He acknowledged the crucial role played not only by the government but also by local communities in areas such as Chitral and Kohistan in safeguarding the Markhor population. He proudly announced that due to the provincial government's continuous efforts, the population of Markhors in KP has now exceeded 6,000. He highlighted the success of the Markhor Trophy Hunting Program, which serves dual purposes: maintaining a sustainable population of Markhor in line with ecological requirements, and supporting local development. He explained that 80 percent of the revenue generated through the program is allocated to Village Conservation Committees (VCCs), which utilize the funds for community welfare and development initiatives. According to Pir Maswar Khan, Rs 170 million were distributed among the VCCs in Chitral and Kohistan from the trophy hunting income for the fiscal year 2024-25. He concluded by reaffirming the government's dedication to wildlife preservation adding that all possible resources were being utilized to ensure the long-term survival of the Markhor, Pakistan's national animal.

PPP-KP to lead massive protest on May 26

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced a major protest on May 26 in front of the Provincial Assembly here as part of its "Save the Province Movement." The demonstration is expected to draw between 10,000 to 20,000 participants from across the province. PPP KP President Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha will lead the protest. Osama Yawar, Advisor to the Provincial President on Media and Strategy, said here on Saturday that the protest represents the growing frustration of the people over rising inflation, unemployment, crippling load-shedding, worsening law and order, and widespread corruption. "The people of KP will no longer remain silent spectators. On May 26, they will take to the streets to hold the incompetent PTI government accountable," he stated. Highlighting several high-profile scandals, Yawar pointed to the Kohistan development scandal, where billions were allegedly stolen through fake contracts and ghost companies, leaving essential services in disrepair. He criticized the Solarization of Mosques Project, calling it a "political bribe" disguised as goodwill, with fraudulent firms and selected contractors allegedly embezzling millions. He also denounced the Peshawar BRT project, citing poor service, inflated costs, and stalled investigations. According to Yawar, governance in KP has collapsed. Hospitals lack basic medicines, schools suffer from teacher shortages, and the justice system has become ineffective under a politicized police force. He accused the PTI government of paralyzing local government structures and diverting development funds to politically motivated projects. Calling May 26 the "largest people's

referendum in KP," Yawar said the PTI has turned the province into an experiment in corruption, nepotism, and incompetence. He emphasized that only mass resistance could restore good governance and bring about change. "The PPP remains committed to restoring the people's rights, ending the rule of this corrupt clique, and transforming KP into a peaceful, prosperous province," he concluded.

Hamza Foundation held blood donation, awareness campaign

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Hamza Foundation organized blood donation and Thalassemia awareness campaign at Abasyn University Peshawar, on Saturday. During the Camp, a total of 90 bags of blood were collected including 60 bags from medical department and Department of Civil Engineering contributed 30 bags. RMOs of Hamza Foundation Ateeq Ur Rehman and Ibrar Ullah Jan delivered motivational speech to students about blood donation and also delivered awareness speech about Thalassemia disease and its prevention. Dr. Tariq Khan Medical Director, RMOs Ateeq Ur Rehman and Ibrar Ullah Jan delivered motivation speech to the students about blood donation and also delivered awareness speech about Thalassemia disease and its prevention. The management of Hamza Foundation has thanked and appreciated Dr. Usman Amin Sahib (Dean) and students of Abasyn University for their help and support for the ailing humanity.

Muhammad Ali Swati: Heroic rescuer lighting up Pakistan's youth humanitarian spirit

PESHAWAR (APP): From the serene hills of Mansehra to the global spotlight, Muhammad Ali Swati has emerged as one of Pakistan's most courageous and inspiring figures. An award-winning rescuer, entrepreneur, and dedicated philanthropist, Swati is known for his extraordinary bravery and unwavering commitment to humanitarian service. Swati rose to national prominence in August 2023 during the Battagram chairlift incident, widely recognized as the most complex civilian rescue operation in Pakistan's history, when a group of schoolchildren and a teacher were left suspended mid-air after a cable snapped. Swati played a heroic role in the 14-hour high-altitude rescue operation. His leadership and composure under extreme conditions helped save lives and captured the attention of both the nation and international media. Only weeks later, Swati led another large-scale operation in flood-hit Naran, where a collapsed bridge had left over 700 people stranded. Navigating unstable terrain and rising waters, he directed a coordinated rescue effort that ensured the safe evacuation of every individual. In recognition of these

life-saving efforts, Swati was awarded by then-Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar and received the Fakhre Hazara Award from the Commissioner Hazara for his service to the region. He also received the Pride of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Award, jointly presented by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Metrix Pakistan. Swati is the founder of Heavens Way Adventure, through which he introduced the world's highest and South Asia's longest zipline in the picturesque Kaghan Valley—significantly boosting adventure tourism and creating economic opportunities in the

work—and me." The moment, captured on video, went viral and has since reached millions online. Today, those words stand fulfilled: his name is now synonymous with courage and commitment across Pakistan. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif later praised him at the National Youth Convention, calling him an embodiment of the nation's youth potential. Swati's journey—from a determined young man in Mansehra to a national icon—is a powerful testament to what can be achieved through resilience, vision, and a devotion to serve others.

Hindko Academy publishes two Gojri language books

PESHAWAR (APP): The Gandhara Hindko Academy, Peshawar, has recently published two Gojri language books penned by Prof Muhammad Nazeer Miskeen, a known writer and poet of Gojri. According to a press release issued here, these works are collections of short stories and humorous poetry, respectively. The first book, titled "Gojri Afsaney," features 16 short stories. Spanning 121 pages, the book includes a six-page glossary at the end, where a

noted writer, Abdul Ghaffoor Chaudhry from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has translated 180 Gojri words used in the publication into Urdu to facilitate readers. The second book, "Sheesho," is a collection of humorous poetry comprising 120 pages. The books have been commented on by literary figures, including Muhammad Ziauddin, Chief of the Executive Committee of the Gandhara Hindko Academy, and Rana Fazal Hussain, regarded as Baba-e-Gojri. Ziauddin, who also serves as General Secretary of the Gandhara Hindko Board and is a prominent research scholar of the Hindko language, stated: "The Gandhara Hindko Board and the Academy have consistently worked for the promotion of Pakistan's diverse languages, literature, research, and cultural heritage. We have already published works in several languages spoken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These new publications are a valuable contribution to the preservation and development of Gojri literature." "Although the primary focus of the Gandhara Hindko Academy is Hindko, the second most spoken language in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the sixth largest in the country, we have always welcomed and supported other languages that lack official patronage," said Zia. Gojri is one such language, spoken across various parts of the country," he commented in the foreword to the books. The writer explained that Hindkowans and Gojars live close in regions like the Hazara Division, leading to rich social and cultural exchanges. "The Gojri language has a strong oral tradition, particularly in folktales, but this cultural wealth has remained under-documented. These books represent a step toward preserving that heritage," said the literatus who specializes in documentation. Ziauddin hoped that both "Gojri Afsaney" and "Sheesho" would enrich Gojri literature and become



In brief

2 bandits held in Shikarpur F.P. Report

SHIKARPUR: In two alleged police encounters at Thul in Kandhkot district, two bandits were apprehended in injured condition. According to district police officials, one bandit was captured near Bahoo Khosa, while the second incident unfolded at the bypass, leading to the arrest of another bandit. Police officials have identified the detained individuals as Shaukat Sarki and Munir Sarki. Weapons were seized from both, and further investigations have been initiated. A police statement highlighted that investigations into these incidents are ongoing to gather more evidence. Authorities have also appealed to the public for cooperation in crime prevention efforts.

Three children and father killed F.P. Report

OKARA: A father taking his children to school was killed along with his three children by a speeding trailer. According to details, the tragic accident occurred at 7:30 AM on Saturday, claiming the lives of 43-year-old Muhammad Nadeem and his three young children. Muhammad Nadeem was on his way to drop his children at school when a speeding trailer lost control and ran over their motorcycle. The deceased include Muhammad Nadeem, his 10-year-old son Aryan, 8-year-old son Ayan, and 6-year-old daughter Aiza Fatima. This heart-breaking incident took place on GT Road near a private college as they were leaving their village, 24/2R, to take the children to their educational institution. Rescue teams immediately transported the bodies to a hospital, while police arrived at the scene and initiated legal proceedings. The police have seized the trailer and further investigation is underway.

Man climbs pole in suicide bid F.P. Report

MULTAN: A man climbed a 132-kV electricity transmission pole at Adda Gardezai Mor on Bahawalpur Road, attempting suicide after a domestic dispute. Rescue 1122 reported. According to the Rescue Control Room, a call was received about a man trying to take his life by climbing a high-voltage pole. Emergency teams were immediately dispatched from the nearest station. Eyewitnesses at the scene told rescue personnel that the man identified as Bilal (45) had a heated argument with his wife and children and was demanding to be married again. He threatened to commit suicide if his demand was not met. Rescue officials, with the help of the man's relatives, managed to safely bring him down. Police also reached the site and took the individual into custody along with his family for further assistance and support.

19 netted over power stealing F.P. Report

SARGODHA: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) on Saturday caught 19 pilferers involved in electricity theft from main lines and meter tampering. According to a spokesperson, the task force team raided various areas of the district and caught --Ghulam Rasool, Tasawur, Sohail, Kifayatullah, Abdul Haleem, Waleed Khan, Khaleel, Khurram Shahzad, Farzand Ali, Naeem-ullah, Safdar, Nouman, Luqman and others. Police registered cases against them.

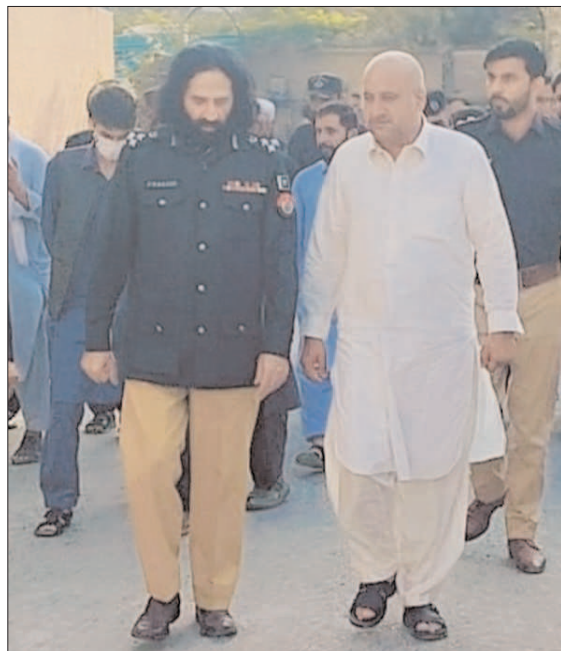
DIG Prisons resolves issue at Landikotal Jail

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: DIG Prisons Peshawar, Sahibzada Muhammad Qaiser, made an emergency visit to Landikotal Jail and successfully resolved an issue that arose between the Jail Superintendent, Tehsildar, and SHO due to a misunderstanding.

According to details, the issue emerged the previous day due to a misunderstanding between the Jail Superintendent, Tehsildar, and SHO. The DIG Prisons listened to both parties and resolved the matter amicably in the presence of the Assistant Commissioner Landikotal, Jail Superintendent, Tehsildar, and SHO.

During his visit, the DIG Prisons also met with prisoners, listened to their grievances, and issued instructions to address their



legitimate issues. He emphasized that resolving prisoners' issues is their responsibility and any negligence in this regard will not be tolerated.

MPhil scholars complete degrees



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Several MPhil scholars at the Institute of Education and Research, Kohat University of Science and Technology, have successfully defended their research thesis, marking a significant milestone in their academic journey.

Nazia Mustafa completed her research under the supervision of Dr. Muhammad Nisar, while

Nafeesa Bibi conducted her research under the guidance of Dr. Shah Jehan. Scholars Wazir Khan, Musaddiq Zaman, and Khalid ur Rehman defended their thesis under the supervision of Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the Institute, Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseer ud din.

The thesis defense sessions were held in the seminar hall of the Institute, attended by a large number

of faculty members, research scholars, and students. The audience appreciated the scholars' research efforts and applauded their achievements.

Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the Institute of Education and Research, Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseer ud din, congratulated the successful scholars and extended his best wishes for their future endeavors.

4 tourists from Gujrat die in GB road mishap

F.P. Report

GILGIT: Four tourists died when their car fell into a ravine while they were on their way to Gilgit-Baltistan from Gujrat. The accident occurred near Satak Police Station. All the dead persons were later identified as Wasif Shehzad, Umar Ehsan, Suleman Nasrullah and Usman Dar. Sources said that four young men were left for Northern Areas for recreational purpose on May 11, 2025.

Soon after receiving the report of the accident,

Rescue 1122 and Al-Khidmat teams reached the spot. Sources further revealed that all the four men reached Gilgit and then Hunza a few days earlier in a white Honda Civic, bearing registration plate, ANE 805. Earlier, the tourists made the final contact with their families on the night of May 15, when they departed from Gilgit for Skardu.

Their families confirmed that the last phone communication occurred near the Danyor area. One of the individuals had informed his family that they were

heading to Skardu. They had stayed at Mohsin Lodge before continuing their journey toward Skardu on the morning of May 16.

Since then, their mobile phones remained switched off, and they have not made any contact with any relative or friend. However, police said the car did not pass through any of the security checkpoints along the route. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Gilgit Zahoor Ahmed confirmed that police have expanded the search operation.

SZWH organizes seminar on Fistula disease

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Focal Person of the Fistula Center at Sheikh Zayed Women's Hospital (SZWH) Dr. Fauzia Chandio, and Vice Principal of Chandka Medical College Larkana, organized a seminar on the occasion of World Fistula Day.

While giving information about fistula disease in the seminar, Dr. Fauzia Chandio said that Fistula Day is celebrated every year in the last decade of May, which is to make everyone aware of the disease. According to an estimate, 2 million women in developing countries, while 40 percent of women out of 100 in Pakistan are suffering from fistula disease. She said that this disease occurs in women belonging to rural areas of the world due to various complications during cesarean section.

After this disease, the woman not have control over her bowels and urine, due to which 40 percent of women out of 100 suffer

from fistula disease. One precaution can be taken to avoid this. For this, a skilled obstetrician should perform the delivery and bladder and bowel surgery instead of a midwife or a doctor.

ASUEF polls held: An election ceremony of All Sindh Universities Employees FEDERATION (ASUEF) was held at the University of Larkana in Larkana city. The ceremony was attended by a large number of leaders of employee organizations of various universities of Sindh, including Mehran University, Sindh University Jamshoro, Sindh Agricultural University Tando Jam, Allah Bakhsh University Jamshoro, Q u a i d - e - A w a m Engineering University Nawabshah.

On this occasion, Siraj Ahmed Bhutto was elected as the Chairman of the Federation unopposed in this ceremony. Addressing the ceremony, the elected federation chairman had said that the Vice

Chancellor of Liaquat Medical University, Jamshoro, is harassing our employee brothers by filing false FIRs against them and sending police to their homes, which is strongly condemned.

Lady health workers hold protest F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: On Saturday, the lady health workers of Sindh protested in front of press clubs across the province due to unmet demands. The protesters displayed banners at the district health offices and wore black armbands while performing their duties.

Chairperson of the All Lady Health Workers Program, Bushra Arain, demanded that the 18-year contract period of employment be included in the workers' seniority.

Rally in support of Pak Army arranged F.P. Report

BUNER: Dr Savera Parkash PPP ex candidate PK 25 Buner on Saturday led "Shabash Pakistan and Shabash Pak Army" rally at the business hub in Sawari.

The rally was attended by PPPP activists, young and elder people who love Pakistan and Pakistan Army. The participants of the rally marched from College Masjid to Qaiser Wali Khan Chowk. The participants of the rally hold banners on which slogans of Pakistan's victory in the war against India and the bravery of the Pakistan Army were written. The participants of the rally also raised slogans of Shabash Pakistan, Shabash Pak Army. They also raised slogans "India, Indian Army and Modi Murda Bab".

The participants of the rally were addressed by Dr. Savera Parkash the PPP former candidate of PK-27 Shamsheer Bacha the Swari resident Bakht Muhammad Kaka and Rehman Zada Jilani of Jowar Salarzai. Dr. Savera Parkash in her speech congratulated the brave army and Pakistan for the resolute attacks of the brave soldiers of the Pakistan Army in the recent Indo-Pak war. Dr. Savera Parkash condemned the war madness of the Indian Army and Modi and strongly condemned the targeting of religious places, public places and homes during the attacks in Pakistan and the martyrdom of innocent Pakistani citizens, women and children. Dr. Savera Parkash has termed the continuation of Indian aggression despite the ceasefire and the conspiracy to target homes and school children in buses in Pakistan as a cowardly act. Dr. Savera Parkash has given a clear message to India that Pakistan is capable of giving a befitting reply to every aggression and the people of Pakistan, men and women, stand with the Pakistan Army and will continue to stand.

Deaf youth hold protest F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In a powerful yet peaceful demonstration at Fawara Chowk, a group of determined deaf and mute youth took to the streets of Hafizabad to demand their fundamental right to employment. Holding placards and banners inscribed with messages of dignity, equality, and justice, the protesters voiced their demand for fair job opportunities and social inclusion.

Despite their physical challenges, many of these young individuals have completed their Matriculation, Intermediate (FA), and even Bachelor's (BA) degrees. "We are also respectable citizens of this society," read one placard. Another declared, "We deserve the right to live with dignity and support our families."

The protesters expressed frustration over being repeatedly rejected from both government and private sector jobs solely due to their hearing and speech impairments. "We are not asking for charity," one participant indicated through sign language. "We want to earn our livelihood with dignity and contribute to society. Denying us jobs forces us toward a life of dependence or begging, which is humiliating."

The protesters made a heartfelt appeal to Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad, Abdul Razaq, as well as to all relevant government bodies. They especially called upon Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, to take urgent action to ensure job quotas and practical employment opportunities for differently-abled individuals.

The demonstration remained peaceful throughout. Protesters submitted a written charter of demands to the local administration, and the event saw support from many citizens, who stood in solidarity with the youth and echoed their call for justice. This protest underscores a growing awareness among Pakistan's differently-abled population, who are not just seeking inclusion but demanding it as their constitutional right.

Youth Jirga in calls for action on local development issues

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Vowing not to rest until the region's long-standing issues are addressed, the Youth Islahi Jirga Talash-Dushkhel on Saturday resolved to launch a coordinated campaign for the development of the area. The jirga announced that a committee of local elders would soon be formed to engage with elected representatives and relevant government departments to pursue concrete progress on key public demands.

This decision was made during a meeting held at a private school in Talash, presided over by Jirga President Muhammad Raziq. Among the attendees were General Secretary Engineer Noor Muhammad, former president Dr Fazal Wahab, chairman village council Noor Ahmad Jan, core committee members Muhammad Ali and Zakir Khan, youth representatives, local journalists, and

social media activists. Participants voiced serious concern over chronic problems that have remained unresolved for years. Chief among these was the long-delayed Talash Bypass project, which they said must be completed urgently to reduce traffic congestion and improve connectivity.

The jirga also demanded the establishment of a girls' degree college and a youth sports complex, noting the lack of higher education and recreational facilities in the area.

A dedicated transport service for female students of the Talash Commerce College was also sought to ensure safer access to education. Another major demand was the official recognition of Talash as a tehsil, in line with an earlier announcement by the provincial government. The jirga urged authorities to grant the area full administrative status and allocate development funds accordingly.

The pending Gopalum

Irrigation Scheme was highlighted as vital for the area's agriculture sector, with jirga members urging its immediate launch. Health concerns were also raised, with calls for the provision of an express power line to Talash Hospital and the appointment of a lab technician to improve medical services. In addition, the jirga called on the provincial government to promote tourism by including scenic spots such as Kamrani Sar, Goro, Barchari, and Pato in its official tourism development plans. Poor road conditions, especially from Bandagai to Japan Pul and Khadung, were also cited as barriers to progress.

Addressing the jirga, President Raziq said that these problems had been ignored for too long. "We, the youth of this region, demand justice for Talash," he said, pledging continued peaceful and constructive efforts to raise the voice of the people and ensure their rights are secured.

Solarization, pipeline work of WSS completed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Solarization and Pipelines work of the Water Supply Scheme Choralakki has been completed under the supervision of the Tehsil Mayor Gumbat Sajid Iqbal with the funds of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister on Law and Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Alam Advocate and former Federal Interior Minister Shehryar Afridi MNA, which will solve the long-standing problem of drinking water for the residents of Choralakki. The said scheme remained close for a long time.

It may be noted that the Provincial Law Minister, beyond any political affiliation, is completing the ongoing projects in the key sectors like education, health, communication and works, drinking water and irrigation on priority basis so that the government money is not wasted and the people can also benefit from them.

The elders of the area, while thanking the Provincial Minister Aftab Alam Advocate, Shehryar Afridi MNA, Tehsil Mayor

Gambat Sajid Iqbal and the PTI workers of Choralakki, said that the drinking water was the long-standing demand of the people of the area, which has been resolved with the efforts of the current PTI leadership. They expressed full confidence in the current PTI leadership and expressed the hope that other most important basic problems of the area would also be resolved during the current government.

Kuli Katchery held: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has on the special directions of the provincial government and the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah, held Kuli Katchery at Kalaya Headquarters, Lower Orakzai. The Katchery beside the Deputy Commissioner Orakzai Muhammad Irfan-Ud-din, Officers of the Administration, Police and Line Departments, was also attended by the tribal elders and elites of the area in large number.

During the Open Katchery, the residents of the area informed in detail the Commissioner Kohat of

their problems faced by them, public welfare, improvement of infrastructure, health, education, roads, water, electricity and other basic issues.

Commissioner Kohat, on this occasion, listened to the problems, complaints and demands of the people patiently and issued directions to the concerned departments for its immediate resolution. The District Administration, Police and government departments assured immediate steps at their respective levels to resolve public issues.

Commissioner Kohat maintained that the purpose of holding Kuli Katcheries is to provide relief to the people at their doorsteps and ensure resolution of their problems. He directed the officers concerned to immediately redress the grievances of the people and ensure transparency and accelerate the work on developmental projects. The elders and elites of the area while welcoming the holding of the Kuli Katchery, thanked the Commissioner Kohat and the district administration for taking keen interest in resolution of the public issues.

Owners demand probe into forest fires

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A series of wildfires in Lower Dir have destroyed large swathes of forest land over the past few days, prompting forest owners and officials to suspect arson and demand immediate action against those responsible.

Community leaders from Talash told reporters that the pattern and frequency of the fires suggest deliberate attempts to damage forests, wildlife, and the environment. They called on authorities to use modern technology to trace the culprits and bring them to justice.

Officials from the forest department and Rescue 1122 confirmed that fires in Shamshi Khan, Kamrani Talash, and Kaladak Maidan were brought under control after three days of operations. Several suspects have been taken into

custody.

Divisional Forest Officer Shabbir Jan said wildfires had also affected forests in Khanpur, Osakai, Tarnao, Asbanr, Baghkandai, Ramyal Ghazo, Badwan, and Kotigram, but were now largely contained. The DFO claimed that fire flames had also been controlled in the forests of Shamshi Khan Talash, Kamrani Talash and Kala Dak Maidan. Local journalist Mohammad Israr alleged the fires may be part of a conspiracy and urged stronger forest protection measures, particularly on privately owned land.

District Emergency Officer Sanaullah and DFO Shabbir Ahmad oversaw the operation, which involved Rescue 1122, the forest and wildlife departments, civil defense, Levies, and local volunteers. Firebreaks were used

to prevent the spread, and officials appealed to the public for cooperation in reporting suspicious activity. Officials said firebreaks were created using the starvation method to prevent the flames from spreading further, a strategy that proved effective in containing the fires. Despite soaring temperatures, strong winds, and rugged terrain, rescue teams continued their efforts with determination.

Authorities have appealed to local residents to cooperate with firefighting teams and report any suspicious activity. They assured the public that the identities of informants would be kept confidential. "Those responsible will face strict legal consequences," DFO Shabbir Jan said, adding the community must assist in protecting the forests and environment in the district.

Six drug traffickers arrested in Lakki Marwat

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Police have arrested six drug traffickers and seized a large quantity of narcotics from them during a crackdown in Lakki Marwat district on Saturday. District Police Officer Muhammad Jawad Ishaq told Dawn that the arrests were made from different parts of the district.

He said that a special campaign was underway across the district to eliminate narcotics dens and tighten noose around drug barons. He said that the police were imple-

menting a zero tolerance policy against narcotics dealers on the special instructions of provincial police officer Zulfiqar Hameed and RPO Bannu Sajjad Khan. "During the offensive, the cops also raided the hideouts of proclaimed offenders along with drug traffickers", he maintained.

The DPO said that the police seized 10.660kg hashish, one kg heroin and 800 grams ice (crystal meth) from the arrested drug peddlers and registered cases against them under relevant sections of law in the con-

cerned police stations. Jawad said that the police were determined to make the district narcotics-free and save youths from the menace at all costs.

In a separate action, the district police chief said, the police busted a gang of gamblers and arrested its two key members during a raid in the Kurrum Par area of the district. He said that after receiving a tip off, a party of Dadiwala police station raided a place in Landiwah where some suspects were found engaged in the gambling practice.



BEIRUT: People gathered as smoke billows near buildings following an Israeli strike in southern Lebanese town of Toul.

Kurds plan Damascus talks as visions for Syria collide

HASAKEH, Syria (Reuters): Syrian Kurdish parties will send a delegation to Damascus soon for talks over their region's political future, a leading Kurdish politician said, as they seek to advance their goal of regional autonomy despite opposition from the Islamist rulers.

More than six months after Bashar al-Assad was toppled, Kurdish demands for regional autonomy have emerged as one of the main fault lines in the new Syria, opposed by interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and his powerful allies in neighbouring Turkey.

Oppressed by Assad, rival Syrian Kurdish groups last month issued a shared vision calling for the unification of the Kurdish regions as a political and administrative unit within a federal Syria, aiming to safeguard Kurdish gains during the war. "Our Kurdish vision document will be the basis for negotiations with Damascus. The delegation is close to being ready to negotiate with Damascus," Aldar Xelil, a member of the presidential council of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the dominant faction in northeastern Syria, told Reuters.

But he added: "We may face some difficulties because their position is

still inflexible." His comments point to the limited progress in bridging gaps between the sides since they signed a deal in March aimed at integrating the Kurdish-led security forces and other governing bodies in northeastern Syria with the central state in Damascus.

The Kurdish-led authorities have already had contacts with Damascus, including via a committee tasked with discussing the future of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, a powerful security force backed by the United States. Last month's Kurdish declaration was adopted by both the PYD and its main rival, the Kurdish National Council (ENKS). Following the declaration, Sharaa's office issued a statement rejecting any attempt "to impose a partition or create separatist cantons" without a national consensus.

The Kurdish groups have in turn rejected the transitional arrangements drawn up by his administration, including a constitutional declaration that focused power in Sharaa's hands and strengthened the role of Islamic law. Xelil described the steps taken by Damascus as unilateral but added: "We seek discussion and participation." Calls for federal rule have gath-

ered momentum in Syria since March's mass killings of members of the Alawite minority by Islamist militants in western Syria's coastal region, with some Alawites also calling for decentralized rule. Xelil said the role of the Kurdish-led security forces was to ensure the "security and safety of this region" and if this is "not guaranteed constitutionally, legally, and politically, then discussing the issue of weapons will be futile".

Turkey, which has emerged with big influence in the new Syria, has long opposed Syrian Kurdish autonomy. After last month's announcement, President Tayyip Erdogan dismissed calls for federalism as "nothing more than a raw dream". Turkey's suspicion of the dominant Syrian Kurdish group stems from its ties to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which earlier this month decided to dissolve itself and end decades of armed struggle with Turkey. Xelil said he expected the PKK move to impact Turkey's position on Syria. "Turkey viewed the presence of the PKK or groups influenced by it as a pretext for attacking northeastern Syria," he said. "There will be no pretext for Turkey to attack the region."

Record floodwaters in Australia leave 4 dead

MELBOURNE (AP): Record floodwaters on Australia's east coast have left four people dead and one missing, officials said as rain eased over the disaster area. Some 50,000 people have been isolated by flooding along the coast of New South Wales state north of Sydney after days of heavy rain. The low-pressure weather system that brought the deluge had moved further south to Sydney and its surrounds.

Four bodies have been retrieved from floodwaters in New South Wales. Three of the victims had driven into floodwaters, while a man's body had been found on the verandah of his flooded home. The latest victim was a man in his 70s whose body was found in a car in floodwater near Coffs Harbour, a police statement said. The car had run off the road.

A 49-year-old man remains missing after walking near a flooded road at Nymboida night. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and New South Wales Premier Christopher Minns were inspecting devastated communities, some of which had been inundated by the highest floodwaters on record.

Bellingen Shire Council Mayor Steve Allan said landslides and damaged roads and bridges were complicating the process of reaching isolated communities in his rural local government region southwest of Coffs Harbour. "We've woken up to blue skies which is a great thing," Allan told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "Our rivers are slowly receding and I think we're probably transitioning from the response phase into the recovery phase this morning," he added.

Kenya says Tanzania released activist

DAR ES SALAAM (Reuters): Tanzania has released a Kenyan activist who had been arrested after he tried to attend a hearing in the treason case against a detained opposition leader in Dar es Salaam, Kenyan authorities said.

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) said it had received Boniface Mwangi in Kenya's southwestern Kwale County after noon. Kenya's foreign minister, Musalia Mudavadi, also confirmed Mwangi's release. Mwangi had attempted to observe opposition leader Tundu Lissu's first court appearance, in a case that has spotlighted a growing crackdown on opponents of President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

Lissu, who was shot 16 times in a 2017 attack and came second in Tanzania's last presidential poll, was charged with treason in April over what prosecutors said was a speech calling on the public to rebel and disrupt elections due in October. Mwangi was arrested on allegations of providing false information to gain entry into the country, an advocacy group said. ("Mwangi) is in high spirits. The Commission and other partners are making arrangements to transfer him to Nairobi for medical attention," KNCHR wrote on X, sharing a photograph of Mwangi alongside rights activist Hussein Khalid. Khalid said Mwangi had been severely tortured by Tanzanian security agents and could barely walk: "His body is broken but his spirit remains strong."

The chief spokesperson for Tanzania's Immigration Services Department, Paul Mselle, did not immediately respond to a message requesting comment on the torture accusations. It was not clear whether Ugandan lawyer and activist Agather Atuhaire, who was being held with Mwangi, had also been released.

President Hassan, who is seeking reelection in October, has said Tanzania's government is committed to respecting human rights following a series of high-profile arrests of political opponents. But in public remarks, she warned foreign activists against "invading and interfering in our affairs".

Sanctioned Ukrainian ex-politician shot dead

MADRID (Agencies): Former Ukrainian politician Andriy Portnov, who worked as a senior aide to pro-Russian former President Viktor Yanukovich, has been shot dead outside his children's school near the Spanish capital Madrid, Spanish authorities told CNN.

Portnov, 51, a lawyer and former lawmaker, was the deputy head of Yanukovich's administration before it was ousted in Ukraine's 2014 pro-democracy uprising. He was shot several times by multiple assailants as he was getting into a car around 9:15 a.m. local time (3:15 a.m. ET), a Spanish police source told CNN, adding that the assailants fled into a wooded area. The Madrid region's Summa emergency services said he had three gunshot wounds, including one to the head, and he died shortly after the first ambulance arrived on the scene.

The shooting took place outside the American School of Madrid, located in Pozuelo de Alarcon, an affluent suburb just west of Madrid. Portnov was the father of children who attend the school, a source close to the school told CNN. The school sent out various urgent messages to parents following the incident, which took place shortly after morning drop-off, noting that all students were safe, according to another source close to the school. Police cordoned off the area outside the elite school, which has just over 1,000 students from the United States, Spain and several dozen other countries. Portnov was sanctioned by the United States in 2021 for corruption and bribery under the Magnitsky Act. He was "credibly accused of using his influence to buy access and decisions in Ukraine's courts and undermining reform effort," according to the US Treasury Department.

The Magnitsky Act, signed into law in December 2012, blocks entry into the US and freezes the assets of certain Russian and pro-Russian government officials and businessmen accused of human rights violations. Ukraine's Foreign Ministry released a statement confirming that a Ukrainian citizen was killed in Pozuelo de Alarcon, and said its embassy in Spain is in constant contact with law enforcement. No suspects have been arrested, the statement added. The Security Service of Ukraine previously investigated Portnov's possible involvement in Russia's annexation of Crimea, but the case was later closed.

The former politician fled Ukraine months after Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, according to an investigation by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, when men of draft age were not permitted to leave. Canada also froze his assets in 2014 as part of a crackdown on "corrupt foreign officials," in relation to his work as a former adviser to ousted ex-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

Portnov was appointed deputy head of Yanukovich's administration in 2010, as well as the head of Ukraine's Main Directorate for Judicial Reform and Judicial System. At the same time, Portnov became a member of the board of the National Bank of Ukraine. Yanukovich was driven from office by mass demonstrations in Ukraine in 2014 after he turned his back on the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia.

Yanukovich then fled Ukraine for Russia, along with Portnov and other high-level former officials in the wake of the 2014 pro-democracy, pro-European Maidan protests. Portnov later returned to Ukraine in

2019. Ukraine itself never imposed sanctions on Portnov. In December 2024, media and civil society organizations in the country launched a petition demanding sanctions against him, alleging continued corruption aimed at controlling the Ukrainian judiciary, and highlighting concerns that he was going after critical journalists with lawsuits and threats. Portnov once released the personal data of several members of an investigative journalism project run by RFE/RL, who were looking into his dealings with the Ukrainian government.

The petition gathered 25,000 signatures, but Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers rejected it, citing insufficient grounds for sanctions. Portnov is not the only ally of former Ukrainian President Yanukovich who was killed after he was ousted from power. In 2015, CNN reported on two high-profile shooting deaths in the Ukrainian capital - one of a former member of parliament with ties to Yanukovich, the other of a Ukrainian journalist known for his pro-Russian views.

At the time, those killings renewed speculation about a conspiracy to kill people close to Yanukovich, after three former members of parliament from his political party died by suspected suicide, found dead in their homes. Spain has also experienced a recent spate of attacks related to the Russia-Ukraine war, and it has significant populations of expatriates from both countries.

In 2022, there was an explosion at Ukraine's embassy in Madrid, injuring one Ukrainian employee who was handling a letter addressed to Kyiv's ambassador to Spain, officials said. Other letter bombs followed, including one sent to the Spanish prime minister.

Stain of martial law bid deters use of South Korea Yoon's office

SEOUL (Reuters): Just three years after South Korea's former President Yoon Suk Yeol moved the presidential office from the historic Blue House, his potential successors are vowing to move again, as they seek to escape the taint of his martial law attempt. Yoon, stripped of office on April 4 over the bid that triggered a snap election on June 3, never set foot in the Blue House, having promised to abolish the "imperial presidency" that he said the old executive compound had come to embody.

His move to the defence ministry headquarters was estimated to have cost at least \$40 million, with renovations still in progress when he was removed. Critics of the move have said the total cost could reach 1 trillion won (\$721 million). Yoon's office denied that claim while saying indirect costs could take the total to 80 billion won. It has never released an official accounting.

"It is where a military coup was plotted," Kim Min-seok, a Democratic

Party lawmaker and a key ally of the presidential frontrunner Lee Jae-myung, said of Yoon's new office. Besides, it made little sense for the president to be in the same place as the military, he added. Both Lee and Kim Moon-soo, the candidate of the conservative People Power Party, say they would need to initially move into the office after the June 4 inauguration for lack of a secure alternative, but plan to move as soon as possible afterwards. Lee said his time spent there would be short, until the Blue House is ready for him to move back, before eventually taking the office permanently to Sejong, an administrative city hours away in the central region. Kim has also said he would set up an office in Sejong "soon".

Yoon could not immediately be reached for comment. The proposal to move the seat of government and parliament to Sejong, 113 km (70 miles) from Seoul, is not new, and it is unclear if the latest plans will go further than previous attempts. In 2003,

then-President Roh Moo-hyun pushed ahead with his campaign pledge to move the capital in a plan to ensure regional balance by reversing the concentration of political and economic activity in Seoul. But he was forced to scale back the plan a year later, when the Constitutional Court ruled the capital relocation plan unconstitutional. Government workers also proved reluctant to uproot their families from bustling Seoul.

Moving to Sejong would require passing a special law, which may need further review by the Constitutional Court, a process that would take a "tremendous amount of time", said political commentator Kim Sang-jin. "It is a long-term project at best for the new government," said Kim, a former Blue House official. After Yoon's fall, his Yongsan office has become a place to avoid for presidential hopefuls, as an emblem both of his abuse of power and the affinity for shamans many suspect the former first couple to have.

Taking its name from a central crossroads at Yongsan in the capital, the office has become a symbol of a closed and domineering presidency that critics said deepened an already bitter social divide in an otherwise vibrant democracy.

For nearly two months from May 2022, Yoon worked from a temporary space in the defence ministry headquarters until his new office there was ready, at times receiving intelligence briefings in a secure basement bunker. Some attributed the often haphazard decisions made there to advice from shamans the first couple was suspected to received, including even the office move to Yongsan. Yoon consistently denied that the couple had any involvement with a shaman. "Yongsan has become a symbol of bullheadedness and witchcraft," Hong Joon-pyo, who was a presidential candidate for Yoon's People Power Party, has said. "It is a question of national character."

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Leo XIV appealed for Israel to allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, calling the situation in the Palestinian enclave "yet more worrying and saddening". "I renew my fervent appeal to allow for the entry of fair humanitarian help and to bring to an end the hostilities, the devastating price of which is paid by children, the elderly and the sick," the new pope said during his first weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square.

Leo, the former Cardinal Robert Prevost, was elected the leader of the Catholic Church on May 8 to succeed the late Pope Francis. He has mentioned the situation in Gaza several times in the first weeks of his papacy. The appeal came at the end of the pope's audience, when he added a few words to his prepared text. The pope, who US President Donald Trump said had expressed interest in hosting Russia-Ukraine peace talks, did not mention that conflict.

In his first message on

Pope Leo appeals for Israel to allow aid in Gaza

whether there had been a genocide of the Palestinian people.

Reflecting a chill in Vatican-Israel relations after Francis' criticisms, Israel, unlike many other nations, did not send a high-level official to attend the late pope's funeral, but only its Vatican ambassador. In a sign of possible hopes for a reset of relations with the new pope, Israeli President Isaac Herzog attended Leo's inaugural Mass in St. Peter's Square. A delegation of 13 Jewish officials also took part in the Mass, including Rome's chief rabbi and the vice president of the Italian Union of Jewish Communities.

The pope, born in Chicago and the first US pontiff, spoke in fluent Italian for most of the audience but also addressed pilgrims in English and Spanish. It was the first weekly papal audience in more than three months. Francis held his last weekly audience on February 12, two days before beginning a five-week hospital stay.

US official's email on gang assessment sparks concern in intelligence agencies

NEW YORK (Reuters): A top adviser to Tulsi Gabbard, the US director of national intelligence, acknowledged in a March 24 email that the Venezuelan government may not have specifically directed the activities of a gang that the Trump administration has used to justify fast-tracking deportations of immigrants, but argued that a link between Caracas and the gang was "common sense."

US President Donald Trump has used a claim that Tren de Aragua is coordinating its US activities with the Venezuelan government of President Nicolas Maduro to invoke the Alien Enemies Act to justify deportations of alleged gang members to a maximum-security prison in El Salvador. Some legal scholars have argued invoking the act requires a connection to a foreign government. In the email, according to a person familiar with

the matter and confirmed by a second source, Gabbard's acting chief of staff Joe Kent asked for a "rethink" of an intelligence assessment contradicting the administration's argument that Venezuela is responsible for the US activities of Tren de Aragua gang members.

"I would like to understand how any IC (intelligence community) element arrived at the conclusion that the Venezuelan government doesn't support and did not orchestrate TDA operating in the US," Kent said in the email, referring to Tren de Aragua. "Flooding our nation with migrants and especially migrants who are part of a violent criminal gang is the action of a hostile nation even if the government of Venezuela isn't specifically tasking or enabling TDA operations."

He added that analysts needed to produce a new assessment on the gang that

"reflects basic common sense." The New York Times was the first to report on Kent's communications with the National Intelligence Council, the intelligence community's highest analytical body. Reuters is the first to publish the contents of that email in detail. The exchange underscores the extent to which Kent, a former CIA officer, pushed Michael Collins, the head of the National Intelligence Council, and other DNI officials to redo their assessment, taking into account points that had previously been articulated publicly by Trump.

A spokesperson for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence called the timeline presented in this story "false and fabricated," and called Kent "an American patriot who continues to honorably serve our country." "President Trump rightfully designated

Tren de Aragua as a foreign terrorist organization based on intelligence assessments and, frankly, common sense," said White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt. In his email, Kent argued that it would be logical for Venezuela, a US adversary, to send gang members across the border, saying that any country seeking to harm the United States "would naturally take their bad actions and send them to our nation."

"When Biden announced that the border was open I think we let a quest for ... direct links between the Venezuelan government and TDA obstruct basic common sense," he wrote, adding that the National Intelligence Council needed to start "looking at getting a new assessment written on TDA and their relationship with the government of Venezuela that reflects basic common sense."

BUCHAREST (Reuters): Romania's Constitutional Court said it had unanimously rejected a request to cancel the May 18 presidential election that was won by centrist Bucharest mayor Nicusor Dan. Romania's defeated hard-right contender George Simion, who emerged as the frontrunner in the first round of voting on May 4, had filed the request alleging interference by France and Moldova.

Election authorities and independent observers have said the election was well-organised. The Constitutional Court, which said Simion's challenge was unfounded, will officially validate the election result, with Dan in attendance. The court cancelled Romania's initial presidential election six months ago on suspicion of Russian interference - denied by Moscow - in favour of far-right candi-

date Calin Georgescu. He was barred from taking part in the re-run. The ensuing institutional crisis - including the fall of the Social Democrat-led government - stalled efforts to reduce Romania's budget deficit, the largest in the European Union, and unnerved financial markets.

Romania's European allies and investors welcomed Dan's presidential election victory over the eurosceptic Simion, who has called the cancellation of the initial ballot late last year a "coup" and took over the baton from Georgescu.

"The Constitutional Court has continued the coup d'etat by rejecting our appeal," Simion said on social media, reacting to the verdict. "Only thing left for us is to keep fighting." Simion had earlier conceded defeat, after initially saying he won. He later clung onto

Pavel Durov, the founder of the Telegram messaging app, who accused the head of France's foreign intelligence agency during ballot of asking him to ban Romanian conservative voices ahead of the elections. France's DGSE foreign spy agency denied the accusation.

President-elect Dan will be sworn in and will then face the daunting task of nominating a prime minister able to negotiate a ruling majority in a fragmented parliament. "It is certain that Romania will keep its pro-Western direction," Dan told a security conference. "Romania has not been sufficiently active in any of these structures (EU, NATO) but to be active you must have credibility. Romania must strengthen itself and be more active." Simion had wanted to end military aid for neighbouring Ukraine in its war with Russia.

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

Trump-Putin call signals

In a recent call with Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump made one thing clear: once the war in Ukraine is over, Washington should focus on "large-scale trade" with Russia. Forget sanctions. Forget holding Russia accountable for its war crimes. Trump's post-war vision is all about business. This dangerous shift toward appeasement threatens Western unity and exposes companies to serious risks. Trump's call for "large-scale trade" is nothing new. Under his presidency, US foreign policy is on sale to the highest bidder, with business deals, like securing a luxury airplane from Qatar, used to grease the wheels of diplomacy and prioritize profit over principle. Now, this approach takes on a more troubling dimension, especially when contrasted with the European Union's strategy. While Brussels remains firm, using sanctions as a clear message that aggression has consequences, Trump's plan is the opposite: to ditch the pressure and turn Russia into a trading partner once the dust settles.

This is where the risks start piling up. While Trump's trade-first mentality might sound appealing in theory - trade equals ties, ties equal stability - he's ignoring one major problem: Russia is the aggressor. The Kremlin has invaded Ukraine, carpet-bombed cities into rubble, and violated every international norm in the book. Rolling out the red carpet for trade while Russia is still on the warpath sends a dangerous message: aggression pays off. European leaders, poised to impose their 17th round of sanctions after Putin's dismissal of a ceasefire, now face a new challenge. They must move forward without US backing, as Trump's phone call with Putin saw him backtrack on previous empty threats of "large-scale" sanctions. If the US were to go along with Trump's plan, we could see a rush of American companies looking to cash in on Russia's vast natural resources, energy projects and manufacturing needs. Energy deals would be the obvious starting point. But there could be a wider re-engagement, from arms sales to tech exchanges.

The Kremlin's latest attempt to lure Trump into building a Trump Tower in Moscow and restart direct US flights is a clear attempt to normalize relations and attract American investment. It's also a brazen effort to exploit Trump's past business ties to bypass sanctions and global scrutiny. US businesses are already showing renewed interest in engaging with the Russian market. Several American companies are reportedly planning to attend next month's St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin's version of Davos.

The Kremlin is eager to capitalize on this, with figures like Robert Agee from the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia touting the forum as vital to rebuilding ties. Meanwhile, US investment banker Stephen Lynch is pushing to revive the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline. With the project under sanctions, he needs special approval from Washington to even discuss a potential purchase. He filed his request in early 2024, but it is still pending. However, with Trump now advocating for closer trade ties with Russia, Lynch's chances of approval may be improving. But hold up. Lynch and other speculators could be walking blindly into a minefield. The EU, which remains committed to isolating Russia, will likely keep sanctions in place, even if the US backs off. That means navigating a maze of regulations, not to mention the risk of secondary sanctions for those who do business with Moscow. Then there is the public image problem. Trade with a regime that has been condemned globally for its war crimes? That is a PR disaster waiting to happen. Consumers are increasingly aware of the companies they support and aligning with a pariah state could blow up a brand's reputation in Europe and beyond.

And we cannot ignore the corruption angle. Russia's government is one of the most opaque and corrupt in the world. When countries like the US start trading with Putin, it is not just about exchanging goods. It is about facilitating a system that is ripe for shady backdoor deals. Companies could find themselves caught in the crossfire of illicit financial flows, risking fines, scandals or worse. Then there is the bigger geopolitical picture. A post-war trade deal with Russia sends the wrong message: international law does not matter and aggressive behavior pays off. The West would be undermining its own position, rewarding Putin's aggression, and potentially opening the door for future autocrats to follow suit.

Trump's call for a "trade deal" with Russia is not only misguided but also dangerous. It is a recipe for destabilisation, not just in Eastern Europe, but in global trade. While the business community may salivate at the thought of access to a vast Russian market, they should proceed with caution due to the risks of sanctions, reputational damage and supporting a corrupt regime. The Trump administration's obsession with trade over sanctions on Russia mirrors its misguided approach to Gaza, where plans to build luxury condos take precedence over addressing a deepening humanitarian crisis. Just as Trump seeks to reopen business ties with Russia despite its war crimes in Ukraine, he has proposed crass real estate development in Gaza while turning a blind eye to Palestinian suffering and genocide by Israel.

Both strategies are driven by economic opportunism, sidelining morality and accountability for short-term profit, revealing a troubling pattern of appeasing aggressors at the expense of long-term peace and justice. Any foreign investors considering returning to Russia should listen to the salutary advice of Michael Calvey, the US private equity superstar. Calvey and his team at Baring Vostok made shrewd early bets in early Russian internet ventures, holding on even after the first tech boom imploded in the early 2000s. It paid off handsomely. Calvey once told me that they reaped an astonishing 500-fold return on their investment in the Russian tech giant Yandex. A thoughtful man who speaks fluent Russian, Calvey believed that adhering to both the written and unwritten rules of doing business in Russia would keep him safe, but that proved to be a false hope. It all started to go wrong for Calvey on Valentine's Day in 2019, when a dispute with a co-investor led to his arrest on spurious charges of embezzling \$38 million. In August 2021, a Moscow court handed Calvey a five-and-a-half-year suspended sentence in a trial that sent shockwaves through Russia's business community. After fleeing to Switzerland, Calvey, who chronicled his harrowing ordeal in a recently published book, predicted that some American businesses may return to Moscow. However, he is now adamant he will never invest in Russia again. "You may hope you're not going to get stepped on the head, but ultimately it could happen at any time," he recently remarked, underscoring the unpredictable risks of doing business there.

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.



Beijing sees a 'victory' with US tariffs truce

Simone McCarthy

A surprise truce in a spiraling tariff war between the US and China last week was hailed by Chinese pundits as a success for the country. But Beijing is gearing up for a rocky path in relations, and negotiations, ahead. Already, in the days immediately following the May 12 agreement between American and Chinese negotiators in Geneva, Beijing has been lashing out at Washington.

On Monday, China's Commerce Ministry accused the US of "undermining" the Geneva talks after the Trump administration warned companies against using AI chips made by national tech champion Huawei. Two days later, it said Washington was "abusing export controls to suppress and contain China" referring again to Trump guidelines on AI chips. Beijing has also stuck to its stance on fantanyl, calling the drug scourge the "US's problem, not China's" - even as further collaboration with Washington on curbing the production of chemicals that can be used to make the drug could help Beijing whittle down remaining US tariffs on its goods. China's tough talk sends a clear signal ahead of expected negotiations: That even as Beijing stands to face major economic pain from trade frictions, it's in no mood for quick concessions at the expense of its own image or interests.

It's also a reminder that despite the temporary dial down, an entrenched US-China strategic rivalry will cast a heavy shadow over those talks. Washington now views an increasingly assertive China as a threat and has moved to tighten controls on Chinese access to American tech and investment, while shoring up its Asian alliances - acts Beijing view as "containment." The clock is already ticking on trade negotiations, as the truce agreed by American and Chinese officials earlier this month lasts only 90 days. Under that deal, the two sides agreed to reduce by 115 percentage point tariffs that had amounted to a de facto trade embargo between two highly integrated economies - leaving assembly lines

stalled, ports quieted and companies on both sides reeling with how to cope. There has been no announcement of further trade talks between the US and China, though US trade representative Jamieson Greer and Chinese trade envoy Li Chenggang met on the sidelines of a gathering of APEC trade ministers in South Korea last week, Reuters reported. On Friday, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Vice Minister Ma Zhaoxu spoke with US State Department Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma on China-US relations.

"The revival of US-China trade ties benefits both sides and the global economy," China's state broadcaster CCTV said amicably on May 14 when the reductions went into effect, taking a more modest tone than pundits like Hu Xijin, the former editor of a state-linked nationalist tabloid, who had called the outcome a "huge victory" for China. But, CCTV added, the US must "completely correct" its "wrongdoing of making excuses to recklessly impose tariffs. Dialogue can begin, but hegemony must end." When Trump announced so-called reciprocal duties on trade partners around the world last month, China took a different approach to most countries, swiftly retaliating with its own measures.

And it didn't back down even when the US president then paused most duties on other countries but raised them on China, with Beijing projecting itself as a global leader standing up to a bully as their tit-for-tat tariffs spiraled higher. Now, Chinese leaders likely feel "reassured that their US strategy is on the right track," according to geopolitical strategist Brian Wong, an assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong. But the question for Beijing is how to spin that into a lasting victory for its economy - and its narrative, despite a deep mutual mistrust and mounting US-China competition in tech, military prowess and global influence, not to mention a president known for

his brash policymaking. "There is absolutely no delusion on the part of (China's) senior decision makers concerning ... an easing of Sino-American tensions," said Wong.

The stakes are high for China to make sure tariffs are reduced for its single largest export market - and don't ratchet back up. If the current reduced duties remain in place, US-China trade could be cut by half, reducing China's growth by 1.6% and leading to four to six million job losses, according to chief Asia-Pacific economist Alicia Garcia Herrero at Natixis, an investment bank. The Trump administration has yet to lay out a clear set of demands for negotiations with China, but the president has long railed against the US's roughly \$300 billion trade deficit with China and blamed the country for the offshoring of American jobs and decline of US manufacturing. Despite its tough talk, observers say Beijing is likely prepared to make some concessions. That could include returning to or expanding on a trade agreement to buy more US goods reached during Trump's first trade war, which was never fully implemented.

Law enforcement collaboration or tighter controls on the production of precursor chemicals used to make fantanyl could be another. "The Chinese are willing to make deals, in order to weather the storm called Trump," said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington. "If there is a way they can minimize the cost and stabilize bilateral relations ... that is preferred. But they want US to be practical and reasonable." There are clear friction points. Beijing would likely want to work toward closing the trade gap by buying high end American technology, much of which is now banned for sale there. Chinese officials may also be wary of negotiating too broadly with Trump's team and giving concessions connected to opening its economic system, which reached with Australia, India and the US cannot begin to redress the harm of hard Brexit.

This week's political reaction to Starmer's deal was absurd. The UK's negotiating strength with the EU was crippled by Brexit. Of course Britain must sign up to EU food standards if it really wants to trade. The EU is the bigger market, as is the US. Of course extended fishing rights for European fleets is a concession, though it reflects a concession already made by Johnson. So too is freer movement for Europe's young people. Does Nigel Farage really regard this as "object surrender"? Does he really want to keep open the Sevington border checkpoint and ban e-gate use at airports? Unwilling to put his

to continue to keep tight control over its rare earth exports that are critical to automobile, aerospace and military industries. And observers see China as more able to withstand economic pain than the US. That's partly because Chinese leader Xi Jinping, a strongman atop a tightly controlled Communist Party system, isn't vulnerable in the same way as Trump to public backlash over economic pain and tanking stock prices. "Although the effects of the tariffs on China's economy will become sharper, Beijing believes that it can endure the trade war longer than the United States can," former Chinese diplomat Zhou Xiaomeng wrote in an online analysis earlier this month ahead of the Geneva talks.

Where negotiations land by August 12, when the 90-day window closes, will have a major impact on the broader trajectory of relations between the rival global powers. But in the meantime, Beijing is continuing to prepare for a long-term rupture with the US. Trade tensions have added urgency to China's twin drives to boost domestic consumption and expand other export markets as the government looks for ways to offset the potential loss of American customers. Xi and his officials have launched a flurry of diplomacy targeting partners from Latin America to Europe and Southeast Asia projecting China as a responsible partner - and offering to bolster cooperation or expand free trade.

Beijing has done "brilliantly" in this regard, according to Suisheng Zhao, director of the Center for China-US Cooperation at Josef Korbel School of International Studies in Denver. "If Trump continues this (global) tariff war, that will give a lot of strategic advantage to China." And that's important for Beijing, he added, because regardless of what happens in the next 90 days, the broader US-China rivalry means both hope to become less reliant on the other. "It doesn't matter what they talk about (in negotiations) ... they'd (each) rather reduce their trade with the other - that's the trend," he said.

CNN

Words won't save Gaza

Humza Yousaf

THE recent statements from the UK government regarding Israel's horrific crimes in Gaza are a welcome realisation that Israel, their trusted ally, is engaged in heinous brutality against the people of Gaza.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy stood in the House of Commons yesterday (May 20th) and denounced Israel's blockade of Gaza as "morally wrong" and "an affront to the values of the British people", and in doing so, also paused the free-trade agreement negotiations with Israel and imposed a handful of select, and relatively minor sanctions in protest. A day earlier, Prime Minister Keir Starmer, President Emmanuel Macron, and Prime Minister Mark Carney jointly warned of "concrete actions" if Israel did not halt its renewed military offensive and allow aid to flow into Gaza.

These statements mark the most explicit criticism of Israel by Western allies in recent memory, yet they came only after more than a year and a half of relentless civilian casualties - more than 50,000 Gazans killed since 2023, including tens of thousands of women and children. How many innocent lives, including those of children, could have been spared if such criticism of atrocities committed by Israel was made more than a year ago, by Western allies.

The question now is whether this belated moral clarity will be backed by the meaningful measures required to effect change, with meaningful being the operative word. Why have staunch allies of Israel, so long willing to overlook Israel's egregious conduct, suddenly decided to speak up and speak out? I suspect the shift has less to do with a newfound sensitivity to human suffering and more to do with geopolitics, and the dawning realisation that accountability can bring.

It has been reported over the last few weeks that President Trump has grown weary and tired of Netanyahu, viewing the Israeli leader's strategy as a liability to his own deal-making legacy. Indeed, Trump notably omitted Israel from his recent Gulf tour despite intense lobbying from Netanyahu's government, signalling a widening rift between Washington and Tel Aviv. That schism has given the United Kingdom, Canada, and France the diplomatic cover they needed to voice their deep-rooted anxiety about Israel's conduct, without fear of outright US opposition, or even worse, a White House rebuke. Add to this, extremely powerful interventions from seasoned diplomats, respected experts and humanitarian workers. At the UN Security Council briefing on May 13, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher warned the body to "stop the 21st-century atrocity" unfolding in Gaza, emphasising that no aid had entered the Strip for more than 10 weeks and that 2.1 million people faced imminent famine. He rightly challenged Israel's supporters, and the international community at large, with a simple question "Will you act - decisively - to prevent genocide and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law? Or will you say instead, 'we did all we could'?"

Following this, Fletcher delivered a harrowing plea: unless vital aid reached families in Gaza within 48 hours, some 14,000 babies could die. Fourteen thousand babies. If that does not prick your moral conscience, then surely nothing will. Such stark testimony from a diplomat and humanitarian with decades of experience in conflict zones simply underscores what many others have told us, Gaza is hell on earth, and the conditions on the ground are beyond inhumane. As images and livestreams of civilians suffering multiply, countries that have supported, armed, and funded Israel are also having to confront their own complicity. Moral outrage alone is insufficient. If Western governments truly believe Israel's actions are "monstrous", "intolerable" and "unacceptable", as the UK government has said in the last 48 hours, then they must take concrete steps rather than issue a handful of token sanctions or pause talks on negotiations that haven't taken place in months.

Here are three concrete actions the UK and Western allies should take, and take now: Firstly, the UK and its allies must immediately suspend all arms exports and related components to Israel. Current UK measures - suspending just 10 percent of arms licences - are grotesquely inadequate. Secondly, the UK must impose meaningful sanctions. Beyond trivial asset freezes on a handful of Israeli figures, sanctions must target senior Israeli officials. Sanctions should be imposed on the likes of Israeli Minister Bezalel Smotrich, whose recent pronouncements about cleansing and destroying Gaza were rightly labelled as extremism by the foreign secretary. Sanctions should also be forthcoming for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity. There should also be a serious discussion of trade embargoes and cultural boycotts, comparable to those once imposed on apartheid South Africa, to isolate a government that the ICJ has found to be in violation of the prohibition of apartheid and racial segregation. Finally, the UK and Western allies must immediately recognise the State of Palestine, following the lead of European allies Ireland, Norway, and Spain. If the UK truly believes a two-state solution is the path to peace, it cannot pay mere lip service by calling for negotiations while only recognising one state. We know there is no military solution to the Palestine/Israel question. It will only be resolved through diplomacy and negotiations. There can be no serious progress towards the path to peace if the rights of one people are completely denied.

Statements over the last couple of days from London, Paris, and Ottawa are long overdue - and welcome - however, they must be the prelude to significant action and sanctions in order to stop the genocide of the people of Gaza. It is far too late for tens of thousands of dead Gazans, the countless injured, and those driven from their homes. Nonetheless, the emerging tide of Western criticism suggests a dawning realisation that uncritical support for Israel has placed these governments on the wrong side of history - an error they may yet be held accountable for in years to come. The real measure of their resolve will be in the meaningful actions they take now, not the force of their rhetoric. For the sake of 14,000 babies, on the verge of death, I hope that action comes sooner rather than later. — Aljazeera

surely nothing will. Such stark testimony from a diplomat and humanitarian with decades of experience in conflict zones simply underscores what many others have told us, Gaza is hell on earth, and the conditions on the ground are beyond inhumane. As images and livestreams of civilians suffering multiply, countries that have supported, armed, and funded Israel are also having to confront their own complicity. Moral outrage alone is insufficient. If Western governments truly believe Israel's actions are "monstrous", "intolerable" and "unacceptable", as the UK government has said in the last 48 hours, then they must take concrete steps rather than issue a handful of token sanctions or pause talks on negotiations that haven't taken place in months.

Here are three concrete actions the UK and Western allies should take, and take now: Firstly, the UK and its allies must immediately suspend all arms exports and related components to Israel. Current UK measures - suspending just 10 percent of arms licences - are grotesquely inadequate. Secondly, the UK must impose meaningful sanctions. Beyond trivial asset freezes on a handful of Israeli figures, sanctions must target senior Israeli officials. Sanctions should be imposed on the likes of Israeli Minister Bezalel Smotrich, whose recent pronouncements about cleansing and destroying Gaza were rightly labelled as extremism by the foreign secretary. Sanctions should also be forthcoming for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity. There should also be a serious discussion of trade embargoes and cultural boycotts, comparable to those once imposed on apartheid South Africa, to isolate a government that the ICJ has found to be in violation of the prohibition of apartheid and racial segregation. Finally, the UK and Western allies must immediately recognise the State of Palestine, following the lead of European allies Ireland, Norway, and Spain. If the UK truly believes a two-state solution is the path to peace, it cannot pay mere lip service by calling for negotiations while only recognising one state. We know there is no military solution to the Palestine/Israel question. It will only be resolved through diplomacy and negotiations. There can be no serious progress towards the path to peace if the rights of one people are completely denied.

Statements over the last couple of days from London, Paris, and Ottawa are long overdue - and welcome - however, they must be the prelude to significant action and sanctions in order to stop the genocide of the people of Gaza. It is far too late for tens of thousands of dead Gazans, the countless injured, and those driven from their homes. Nonetheless, the emerging tide of Western criticism suggests a dawning realisation that uncritical support for Israel has placed these governments on the wrong side of history - an error they may yet be held accountable for in years to come. The real measure of their resolve will be in the meaningful actions they take now, not the force of their rhetoric. For the sake of 14,000 babies, on the verge of death, I hope that action comes sooner rather than later. — Aljazeera

From the day Britain left the EU

Simon Jenkins

FOR the Tories to attack Keir Starmer's first step towards a Brexit reset is monumental hypocrisy. Their Brexit led to £4.7bn being spent on implementing post-EU border arrangements, according to the National Audit Office, including a vastly expensive "take back control" border post at Sevington in Kent. No other country in the world can have erected such ludicrous barriers against its biggest trading partners. All are now wasted. At least the nonsense can stop. Memorial plaques to Boris Johnson should be pinned to their gates and passersby invited to sign a 50-page customs form in his memory.

Meanwhile, Starmer should hang his own head in shame. He was Jeremy Corbyn's Brexit henchman back in 2019, when Labour voted down Theresa May's bid to negotiate a soft Brexit deal that would certainly have gone beyond what was signed this week. It was Starmer who helped to scotch

at least a possible Commons coalition against hard Brexit and in favour of sanity. It was Corbyn and Starmer who could have stifled five years of the greatest act of self-harm by a British government since the Great Depression.

After the British public voted to leave the EU in 2016, the main reason they gave pollsters was immigration. There was little evidence of opposition to EU trade or membership of Europe's wider economic community. So-called hard Brexit was adopted entirely by Johnson and those round him as a tool to oust May from Downing Street. Mendacious garbage was issued by his campaigners to claim it would benefit Britain. Public interest was hijacked by power.

The outcome was and is glaring. All serious estimates, official and unofficial, accept that Brexit has made Britain poorer to the tune of tens of billions of pounds. The result

can be seen in slowed growth and worse public services. There is not a remote chance of recouping the losses in the foreseeable future. Deals reached with Australia, India and the US cannot begin to redress the harm of hard Brexit.

This week's political reaction to Starmer's deal was absurd. The UK's negotiating strength with the EU was crippled by Brexit. Of course Britain must sign up to EU food standards if it really wants to trade. The EU is the bigger market, as is the US. Of course extended fishing rights for European fleets is a concession, though it reflects a concession already made by Johnson. So too is freer movement for Europe's young people. Does Nigel Farage really regard this as "object surrender"? Does he really want to keep open the Sevington border checkpoint and ban e-gate use at airports? Unwilling to put his

case to Starmer in the Commons this week, he scurried through an e-gate for a holiday, apparently in France. To him, Brexit has always been a game.

Once opposed EU membership as I thought on balance that a looser free trade area, like the European Free Trade Association, was more in line with Britain's place in the world. In retrospect, I was wrong. The stability of western Europe over the past half a century has vindicated British membership. Margaret Thatcher was right to negotiate the 1986 single market agreement, but John Major was right at Maastricht to avoid greater union, as was Tony Blair to avoid the euro. Throughout history, Britain's relations with Europe have always been best when semi-detached.

Since Brexit, two changes should now influence the debate. First, the issue of immigration is consuming all

of Europe, desperately requiring international cooperation. The EU's internal borders have begun to harden and the open door of Schengen has begun to close. Within Britain, the overwhelming majority of annual immigrants are legal, authorised with government visas for work or study. Recruiting immigrants to the labour force was Tory policy. How Brexit was ever expected to reduce this is a mystery.

Meanwhile, and despite public feeling on immigration, polls show a strong majority now regrets Brexit, with 55% of Britons saying it was wrong compared with the 52% of those who voted supporting it nine years ago. Just three in 10 people now approve of Britain having left the EU. People realise they were lied to. British companies can only "take control" of trading by not trading.

That realisation has now been curbing not just farming and food, but manufacturing, services, academic and cul-

tural exchange, and tourism. Even orchestras have had to stop touring. Other European states outside the EU have not so isolated themselves. Hard Brexit was xenophobic, economically illiterate and narrow-minded. I am sure most public figures who supported it, for whatever reason, know this is true but lack the guts to admit it. From the day Brexit arrived, the laborious reset process that began this week was inevitable. When public opinion is allied to economics and common sense, something has to give. But it will be slow. The EU owes Britain nothing for its behaviour over the past decade. An apology from the Brexit lobby is too much to hope for. Silence might be a relief. Meanwhile, Starmer should mean what he says: that this is only a first step. We don't have to "undo Brexit" - at least in this generation - but we must re-establish civil and commercial relations with the continent of which we are a part. An appalling mistake was made. It awaits correction.

The Guardian

On South African road incorrectly identified as a ‘burial site’ by Trump

THE P39-1 is an anonymous stretch of thinly tarred highway connecting the small towns of Newcastle and Normandain in South Africa, a four-hour drive from Johannesburg. This week the single carriageway road, which runs mainly along the edge of farms nestled in the remote hills of the country's KwaZulu-Natal province, has found itself unexpectedly the subject of global attention.

On Wednesday many South Africans were among those watching live around the world as US President Donald Trump ambushed his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa with a video making the case that white people were being persecuted. He had previously said that a "genocide" was taking place. The most striking scene in the video was an aerial shot of thousands of white crosses by the side of the road - a "burial site" President Trump repeatedly said, of more than a thousand Afrikaners murdered in recent years.

The president did not mention where the road was although the film was quickly linked to Normandain. But the people who live nearby know better than anyone that his claim is not true. The BBC visited the area on Thursday, the day after the Oval Office showdown, to find that the P39-1's crosses have long since disappeared.

There is no burial site, and the road looks like any other. A new grain mill has been built along one stretch where the crosses once briefly stood. What we found was a community shocked to find itself under the spotlight, and a truth about the crosses that reveals much about the delicate balance of race relations in South Africa. Roland Collyer is a man who understands both.

A farmer from South Africa's Afrikaner community, it was the murder of his aunt and uncle Glen and Vida Rafferty, bludgeoned to death in their home five years ago, which led to the erection of the

crosses. Their deaths at their farm, by attackers who stole valuables from their home, led to a public outcry by the farming community, and the temporary planting of the crosses by fellow Afrikaners keen to highlight their murders among those of other farmers who have been killed across South Africa. "So the video that you guys have been seeing," he tells me as we stand together by the roadside, "happened along this section of the road." Pointing down the hill, towards a village where many black families live in mud huts, he explains: "There were crosses planted on both sides of the road, representing lives that have been taken on farms, farm murders. All the way from the bridge down below, up to where we're standing at the moment.

"The crosses were symbolic, to what was happening in the country." One of the Raffertys' neighbours, businessman Rob Hoatson, told the BBC how he organised the crosses to capture public attention, such was the shock over the couple's deaths. "It's not a burial site," he explained, saying Trump was prone to "exaggeration", adding though that he did not mind the image of the crosses being used. "It was a memorial. It was not a permanent memorial that was erected. It was a temporary memorial."

Mr Collyer continues to farm in the area but says the Raffertys' two sons left after their parents' murders. The younger, he explains, has moved to Australia while the elder has sold up and left farming to relocate to the city. Many people remain scared for their future in South Africa, which has one of the highest murder rates in the world. In 2022, two local men Doctor Fikane Ngwenya and Sibongiseni Madondo were convicted for the murders of the Raffertys, as well as robbery, and sentenced to life and 21 years imprisonment respectively.

For many in the local community it was a rare act of justice, with

Pumza Fihlani

thousands of murders remaining unsolved across a country which President Ramaphosa told President Trump has yet to get a grip of its soaring crime rate. The Raffertys' murders sparked a period of heightened racial tension in the area. South Africa's police minister was forced to visit to try to bring calm, with protests from Afrikaners mirrored by claims from some members of the local black community of mistreatment by white farmers.

Amid it all, Mr Collyer tells me that despite the misleading use of the video of his family's memorial, he is pleased that President Trump is highlighting attacks on white farmers. "The whole procession was to raise international media coverage of the whole thing," he reflects. "And for them to understand what we're actually going through and the lives that we have to live here at the moment in South Africa. "A person has to go into a house before dark, you're living behind electric fences. That's the life we're living at the moment and you don't want to live a life like that."

His fears would chime with many, of all races, in a country which suffered more than 26,000 murders last year. The vast majority of victims are black, according to security experts. President Trump has made an offer of asylum for all Afrikaners, with a first group of 49 arriving in Washington earlier this month. But Mr Collyer tells me he will stay in Normandain and has no intention of leaving South Africa. "It's not easy just for me to leave what my father, what my grandfather, what my great-grandfather worked for, and how hard they worked, to be able to gather what I can contribute to towards today," he says. "That's the difficult thing, just packing up after many generations and trying to leave the country. "Unfortunately white Afrikaners bear the brunt of being a 'boer' (farmer) in South Africa... but at this stage I definitely would not

think of going, I still love this country too much." And as we part ways, Mr Collyer offers a note of optimism about the future. "I think if we can just join hands, and I think there's more than enough people in this country - black and white - who are willing to join hands and to try to make this country a success."

There are many others in the local community for whom farming goes back generations. Along the road, towards Normandain town, we meet Bethuel Mabaso. The 63-year-old grew up in the area and tells us he was surprised to learn that his community had made international news - even more so that it was being cited by the US president as "evidence" of the targeting of white farmers. "Nothing like that is happening here," he says in his native Zulu language. "We were shocked as a community when the murders happened and sad for that family. 'I've lived here since I was a little boy and this is a peaceful area. Nothing like that has happened here since.'"

In the years since the Raffertys died there have been reports of allegations from some black farm dwellers that local police had failed to attend to cases involving black people with the same urgency as they did the deaths of the couple. I ask another local farm worker, 40-year-old Mbongiseni Shibe, what relations were like now between farmers and their mostly black staff. "We manage whatever issues come up through discussions, if that doesn't work we ask the police to step in," he says. "It's usually incidents like our livestock going into their fields and the police help us retrieve it and vice versa." South Africa's violent past of racial segregation is not lost on Mr Shibe and how delicate racial matters can be here. "We come from a difficult past in this country with white people, I remember those times of abuse even as a young boy especially on the farms here," he tells me. "But we've let it go, we don't use that to punish anyone."

BBC

How a tribunal for Putin could save Russia

Elena Davlikanova

AS early as Monday, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a direct phone call to discuss prospects for ending Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine. Trump said that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to begin negotiations toward a ceasefire and that there is "tremendous opportunity" for the country to trade with the US. However, not everyone is so eager to welcome Russia back into the international community.

On the same day that Russia marked Victory Day with military parades on May 9, European foreign ministers convened in Lviv to approve the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. Five days later, the decision-making body of the Council of Europe took formal steps to advance the tribunal's creation. Following a formal request from President Volodymyr Zelensky, the council's Secretary General Alain Berset was tasked with leading the process. This marks a significant development in international efforts to hold Russia accountable for its actions in Ukraine.

The tribunal will not replace the International Criminal Court, which already issued an arrest warrant for Putin for the deportation of Ukrainian children. Instead, it aims to fill a gap that the ICC cannot fill because its current legal infrastructure is insufficient for prosecuting sitting heads of state for violating the UN Charter with the crime of aggression. While much of the discussion around the tribunal has focused on accountability, deterrence and an attempt to restore respect for international law, its implications for Russia may prove to be just as important. Prosecuting the Russian leadership is not simply about punishment. It may offer the country a chance to break from a cycle of impunity that has shaped its modern history. Without addressing the political culture that enables wars of conquest, repression and myth-making, Russia is likely to reproduce the same patterns, with new victims at home and abroad.

The human rights organization Memorial - now banned in Russia but still

civil society is fractured. But memory, as Russian history shows, has a long half-life. A tribunal may not produce change overnight. But it could plant the seeds for longer-term re-evaluation. For Russia's future, examining its past matters. A society that never discusses how wars begin or are allowed to continue is a society doomed to repeat a cycle of violence. Bringing senior officials to justice for launching the war in Ukraine may serve not just as a warning to future

That omission, Memorial argued, helped allow for the return of authoritarianism and state violence in the post-Soviet era. The current regime builds its legitimacy on narratives of historical grandeur and grievance, particularly around the Soviet victory in World War II. By rehabilitating Stalinism and framing modern conflicts in terms of "anti-Nazism," the Kremlin weaponized history and the memory of Nazi aggression to cloak its actions with the justification of defending Russian civilisation. A tribunal would not only document crimes but also shape public discourse inside Russia and beyond. The Nuremberg Trials did not eliminate fascism in Germany.

Soviet victory in World War II. By rehabilitating Stalinism and framing modern conflicts in terms of "anti-Nazism," the Kremlin weaponized history and the memory of Nazi aggression to cloak its actions with the justification of defending Russian civilisation. A tribunal would not only document crimes but also shape public discourse inside Russia and beyond. The Nuremberg Trials did not eliminate fascism in Germany. But they helped discredit it. A tribunal for the crime of aggression could initiate similar debates in Russia around the costs of empire, the role of political leaders and the meaning of national responsibility.

This is particularly vital when there are few avenues left for open discussion within Russia. Independent media is suppressed, dissent is criminalized and

aggressors, but as a protective mechanism for Russia itself. It would help dismantle the idea that greatness is measured in destruction, oppression, and reassert the principle that power must answer to law. Leaving Russia's leadership unpunished would confirm the precedent that aggressive wars can be waged without consequence, while a strong leader is above the law. It would embolden not only Moscow but also other revisionist states that notice the international community's impotence to punish blatant violations of sovereignty and human rights.

If the Trump-Putin phone call leads to a future personal meeting, it may mark a shift in the diplomatic landscape. But without a parallel path to justice, peace, if it comes, will rest on fragile ground. The tribunal may not only contribute to saving Ukraine. It may help save Russia, too.

Labour's trilemma: It only has bad choices left

David Frost

RACHEL Reeves really has no shame. Having cut winter fuel payments and gained at least some grudging acceptance that Labour might take some tough decisions, she let her boss Keir Starmer casually reverse course this week in the hope of outvoting Reform in the Hamilton Scottish Parliament by-election.

It was said of the Humber Bridge that it was built from nowhere to nowhere to win a by-election. Starmer is taking the country on the road to nowhere in the hope of coming second in one. The basic problem Reeves faces, like every recent chancellor, is the UK's poor growth performance. As Britain has absorbed European economic pathologies, growth and productivity have steadily fallen. In the 1980s economic cycle, growth per head was over 3 per cent. In the cycle running to 2008, it was a bit over 2 per cent. Between the crash and Covid, it was 1.3 per cent. And since Covid, per head, the economy has hardly grown at all.

That's why we are now so close to a genuine financial crisis. Starmer and Reeves seem blithely unaware in public, but let us hope they are getting better advice from the inside, even though it is Treasury officials who are giving it. Yes, it's a deeply-rooted problem, but they are holding the parcel, and the music could stop at any moment. Thursday's dreadful public finances statistics underline just how bad things are getting. In the thirty days of April alone, the Government borrowed over £20 billion - almost the same size as Reeves's phantasmal £22 billion black hole, in just one month. Last year we borrowed £148 billion, £11 billion higher than predicted by the OBR incredibly only a month earlier, and - let's not forget - getting on for double the

£87 billion in Tory plans. Government debt is 95 per cent of GDP, plus some massive off-balance sheet liabilities, notably public pensions.

In short, Reeves's spending boom, only partly covered by taxation increases, is turning the public finances significantly worse. So bond market yields remain stubbornly high even as Bank of England interest rates fall, and the burden of servicing existing debt continues to mount. The country is perilously close to a loss of confidence. I know eyes can glaze over when faced with all these numbers. But the underlying issue is simple. If we have got used to public services growing, but the economy isn't, the only way to finance them is to raise taxes or borrow. Raising taxes slows the economy further and makes getting out of our difficulties even harder. Borrowing the money can help delay the crunch as long as interest rates are close to zero: not so now. Repeat all this for a decade or more, and you have what we've got: a taxed-out slow-growth economy, and everyone refusing to face up to the hard decisions needed to fix it.

Rachel Reeves's problem now is that her own credibility, such as it was, has been shot to bits. She's got three unenviable choices this autumn. The first is to cut spending. We thought she'd started down that road with the winter fuel allowance and the welfare reforms. But the first is being reversed and the second may not get past Labour MPs. Everyone now knows that with enough political pressure on Starmer, who clearly has only the most basic grasp of economics, tough decisions may get reversed or avoided. A new, stronger, more credi-

ble chancellor, more able to stand up to the party, might be able to reset expectations. Reeves can't.

The second is to do what chancellors always like to do: put off the difficult spending decisions, tell the markets that, honestly, truly, they'll be taken, but in a couple of years time, and carry on as now. The third is to raise taxes. She may not want to do this herself, but plenty around her do, from the ambitious young thrusters from the tax-loving Resolution Foundation, to the old Labour primitivists like Angela Rayner, whose proposals to squeeze the rich till the pips squeaked were so ably covered in this newspaper.

Reeves may have wanted to do the first. If that's closed off, she'll try the second. The problem is that the markets increasingly mistrust British public finances whoever is in charge, and will particularly distrust Reeves now they can see she is open to political pressure. So I suspect, against her own judgement, she'll go for the third. But the reality, the top 1 per cent who fund 30 per cent of income tax receipts, can leave, adjust their arrangements, or just stop working. Indeed this is already happening. So the pain will come further down the scale, on people caught by the higher rate tax band. Watch out, police sergeants, senior nurses, teacher heads of department: Rachel Reeves is coming for you.

My honest advice to Reeves would be to resign while you still can. Claim, perhaps implausibly just now, but people do forget, that you wanted to cut spending but were blocked. Preserve some shreds of your reputation. Let someone else hold the parcel when the music stops. Or even better, get in someone who actually tries to fix the problems. But under Labour I guess that is too much to hope for.

‘Refuge to all African Americans’ - What Ramaphosa should have told Trump

Tafi Mkaka

ON May 21, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa stunned the world by announcing that his government had officially granted refugee status to 48 million African Americans. The decision, made through an executive order titled "Addressing the Egregious Actions and Extensive Failures of the US Government", was unveiled at a news conference held in the tranquil gardens of the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

Poised and deliberate, Ramaphosa framed the announcement as a necessary and humane response to what he called "the absolute mayhem" engulfing the United States. Flanked by Maya Johnson, president of the African American Civil Liberties Association, and her deputy Patrick Miller, Ramaphosa declared that South Africa could no longer ignore the plight of a people "systematically impoverished, criminalised, and decimated by successive US governments".

Citing a dramatic deterioration in civil liberties under President Donald Trump's second term, Ramaphosa specifically pointed to the administration's barrage of executive orders dismantling affirmative action, gutting DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) initiatives, and permitting federal contractors to discriminate freely. These measures, he said, are calculated to "strip African Americans of dignity, rights, and livelihood - and to make America white again". "This

is not policy," Ramaphosa said, "this is persecution."

President Trump's 2024 campaign was unabashed in its calls to "defend the homeland" from what it framed as internal threats - a barely veiled dog whistle for the reassertion of white political dominance. True to his word, Trump has unleashed what critics are calling a rollback not just of civil rights, but of civilisation itself. Ramaphosa noted that under the guise of restoring law and order, the federal government has instituted what amounts to an authoritarian crackdown on Black political dissent. Since Trump's inauguration in January, he said, hundreds of African American activists have been detained by security forces - often on dubious charges - and interrogated under inhumane conditions.

While Ramaphosa focused on systemic oppression, Johnson sounded the alarm on what she bluntly described as "genocide". "Black Americans are being hunted," she told reporters. "Night after night, day after day, African Americans across the country are being attacked by white Americans. These criminals claim they are 'reclaiming' America. Police departments, far from intervening, are actively supporting these mobs - providing logistical aid, shielding them from prosecution, and joining in the carnage."

The African American Civil

Liberties Association estimates that in the past six weeks alone, thousands of African Americans have been threatened, assaulted, disappeared, or killed, she said. The crisis has not gone unnoticed by the remainder of the continent. Last week, the African Union convened an emergency summit to address the deteriorating situation in the US. In a rare unified statement, AU leaders condemned the US government's actions and tasked President Ramaphosa with raising the issue before the United Nations.

Their mandate? Repatriate African Americans and offer refuge, Ramaphosa confirmed that the first charter flights carrying refugees will arrive on African soil on May 25 - Africa Day. "As the sun sets on this dark chapter of American history," Ramaphosa said, "a new dawn is rising over Africa. We will not remain passive while a genocide unfolds in the United States."

Of course, none of this has happened. There was no statement on "Egregious Actions and Extensive Failures of the US Government" from South Africa. There was no news conference where an African leader highlighted the plight of his African brothers and sisters in the United States and offered them options. There will be no refugee flights from Detroit to Pretoria. Instead, after the US cut off aid to South Africa, repeated false accu-

sations that a "white genocide" is taking place there and began welcoming Afrikaners as refugees, a pragmatic Ramaphosa paid a respectful visit to the White House on May 21.

During his visit, watched closely by the world media, he did not even mention the millions of African Americans facing discrimination, police violence and abuse under a president who is clearly determined to "Make America White Again" - let alone offer them refuge in Africa. Even when Trump insisted, without any basis in reality, that a genocide is being perpetrated against white people in his country, Ramaphosa did not bring up Washington's long list of - very real, systemic, and seemingly accelerating - crimes against Black Americans. He tried to remain polite and diplomatic, focusing not on the racist hostility of the American administration but on the important ties between the two nations. Perhaps, in the real world, it is too much to ask an African leader to risk diplomatic fallout by defending Black lives abroad.

Perhaps it is easier to shake hands with a man who calls imaginary white suffering a "genocide" rather than to call out a real one unfolding on his watch. In another world, Ramaphosa stood tall in Pretoria and told Trump: "We will not accept your lies about our country - and we will not stay silent as you brutalise our kin in yours." In this one, he stood quietly in Washington - and did.

Will Putin tap Tatarstan's global appeal for Russia-US rapprochement?

Leyla Latypova

MONDAY'S highly anticipated two-hour phone call between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump confirmed most observers' suspicions that the current US administration is unlikely to bring a just peace to Ukraine by toughening its stance towards the Kremlin. Instead, the exchange that sounded more like a warm chat between two old friends is more likely to pave the way for more bilateral contacts between Washington and Moscow in the near future.

This includes the series of ice hockey games between US and Russian players that Putin floated in a call with Trump in March and which the latter reportedly "supported." The first game between national teams comprised of players from the NHL and Russia's Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) could take place in Russia as soon as June 24, according to Business Online, the republic of Tatarstan's flagship business daily.

Business Online also cited insider reports suggesting that Tatarstan's capital Kazan is being considered alongside St. Petersburg and Moscow as a potential host of the historic match. From an outsider's perspective, Kazan, a city of 1.2 million people, may seem like a puzzling choice for a match meant to break

the ice - literally - between two global superpowers. Tatarstan's flagship Tatneft Arena has a seating capacity of just over 8,000 people, compared to 20,000 seats in St. Petersburg's SKA Arena, which Russian officials previously singled out as a likely venue. "But one thing that Kazan [does have an advantage in] is its skill and experience in hosting major international events. And the KHL-NHL meeting promises to be one," wrote Business Online.

This assessment might seem bizarre and far-fetched to some, but not to those who have been keeping up with Tatar politics. Over the past three years, the Muslim-majority republic located on the banks of the Volga River has emerged as the principal driver of Russia's pivot to the Global South - a crucial foreign policy priority for Putin amid the Kremlin's isolation from the West. The accounts of Tatarstan's head Rustam Minnikhanov and his press secretary boast pictures and videos of meetings with high-ranking officials and heads of state from Central and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Most of this content gives off an impression of a friendly, easy-going, even brotherly relationship between Minnikhanov and state

leaders - like this photo capturing a warm embrace with the Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim or a video of Minnikhanov showing

Turkmenistan's de facto leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov around the newly opened Kamal Theater. Though this rubber-stamped content only shows what Minnikhanov's team wants us to see, Minnikhanov, a Turkic Muslim who still seemingly speaks his native Tatar better than Russian, has far more grounds for establishing personal connections with leaders of Muslim-majority countries than Putin. Let's take the relationship with Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev: while Putin (infamously) struggles to pronounce his name in a blatant show of disregard for his fellow leader, Minnikhanov's native Tatar is mutually intelligible with Kazakh. Kazan's role in steering Russia's diplomatic work in the Global South is not limited to bilateral contacts. Tatarstan's capital has become a go-to host of international forums spearheaded by Russia, from last year's inaugural Games of the Future to the Kazan Economic Forum that concluded last week and drew participants from over 100 countries, according to organizers. And in

2018, Kazan was one of the host cities for the FIFA World Cup, which many saw as a soft-power coup for Putin. Though the Kremlin's strategy of exploiting the Muslim republic to achieve its geopolitical aims might seem utterly brilliant, we should not give Putin or anyone else in his administration credit for thinking it up. After all, it was the Russian Empire that first (successfully) employed Tatars to aid its quest to colonize Central Asia. Like centuries ago, ordinary Tatars are unlikely to reap benefits from these dealings with the Kremlin, but, on the contrary, could become its victims. Tatarstan has long maintained one of the leading positions by the number of Ukraine war casualties among Russia's regions, but now Russia's Defense Ministry is also intensifying a campaign to use the republic as the main recruitment ground for the Africa Corps, a rebranded African arm of the Wagner mercenary group. It is Minnikhanov and the elites in his inner circle who stand to benefit most from this relationship, gaining global prestige and monetary rewards from business contracts flowing into the republic. As Russia eyes Tatarstan as its next venue for wooing Trump, perhaps we will one day see the next Trump Tower rising over Kazan?



SCCI demands release of payments to textbook printers and publishers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The President, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan expressed grave concern over withholding payment on head of security of the registered textbook printers and publishers by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board and Federal Board of Revenue for the last one and half decade.

The SCCI chief demanded to release the hefty amount to the registered printers and publishers immediately and warned of protest if further delaying tactics were used in this regard.

Fazal Moqem Khan made this demand while chairing a meeting of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Standing Committee on Textbook

Board the registered Printers and Publishers held here at the chamber house on Saturday.

Members of the committee include president of the Textbook (Regd) Printers Iqtedar Ali Akundzada, M-hammad Amin, Haji Akhtar and Aqeel Kayani, SCCI Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan and others were present in the meeting.

The registered textbook printers and publishers had submitted Rs30million on head of security to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board and Federal Board over a decade ago, but delaying tactics were being used to release the withheld amount by the authorities concerned, the meeting was told.

The meeting informed superior courts of the country made decision in favour

of publishers in the case and directed FBR and KP Textbook to release the withheld amount to the affected traders immediately, despite the verdict of the superior judiciary, the justice was yet not delivered to the printers and publishers, as amount is still unreleased by the relevant departments.

The meeting furthermore enlightened the aggrieved textbook printers and publishers lodged a complaint in the Federal Tax Ombudsman in the light of the superior courts verdict.

After hearing from both parties, the Federal Tax Ombudsman had also given verdict in favour to the registered textbook printers and publishers and directed the FBR and KP Textbook to release the withheld amount to publishers immediately, the meeting said.

The meeting said the directives of superior courts and FTO had been severely violated by the authorities concerned and are still using delaying tactics in release of the aforesaid amount.

On the occasion, Fazal Moqem asked the FBR and KP Textbook Board to release the hefty amount in light of judgements of the superior courts and FTO and provide justice to the aggrieved publishers forthwith.

SCCI chief warned if the authorities concerned would continue to use delaying tactics in release of the amount to the registered printers and publishers so the chambers along with aggrieved publishers to lodge strong protest against the non-seriousness toward fulfilling the legitimate demand.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan presiding over a meeting of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Standing Committee on Textbook Board.

CCP: Restrictive trade practices may attract Rs75m fine

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has issued a cautionary notice to undertakings that enter into prohibited agreements without seeking prior exemption, warning of financial penalties up to Rs. 75 million or 10% of annual turnover.

The CCP has observed that certain agreements between undertakings and their wholesalers, dealers, agents, and retailers may constitute a refusal to deal with non-dealers and often include restrictive provisions that could violate Section 4(2) of the Competition Act, 2010, said a release issued here on Saturday.

These potentially anti-

competitive clauses may include resale price maintenance, market division, non-compete obligations, or other conditions that restrict competition. Such vertical agreements — those between parties operating at different levels of the supply chain — are void ab initio as they prevent, restrict, or distort competition, unless specifically exempted by the CCP under Section 5 read with Section 9 of the Act.

Exemption applications submitted to the CCP are evaluated using the criteria in Section 9 of the Act.

Agreements that promote production or distribution encourage technical or economic progress, or

result in efficiency gains that outweigh any adverse impact on competition, may be granted an exemption.

The CCP has strongly advised all undertakings to apply for an exemption under Section 5 before entering into any such agreements to avoid potential sanctions.

Under the Competition Act, 2010, the CCP is empowered to ensure free competition across all sectors of the economy, aiming to enhance economic efficiency and protect consumers from anti-competitive practices such as abuse of dominance, cartelization, deceptive marketing, and mergers that may reduce market competition.

Public-private collaboration to make Gwadar trade hub

ISLAMABAD (INP): Experts have emphasized that transforming Gwadar into a globally competitive trade and industrial hub hinges on effective public-private collaboration, relocation of foreign industries, particularly from China, and development of a reliable energy infrastructure.

Waqar Ahmed, a trade policy expert at Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), said Gwadar's transformation into a globally competitive trade center could not be realized through government-led efforts alone.

He explained that while infrastructural development like roads, power plants, and port facilities had received considerable state attention under CPEC, absence of a robust business ecosystem driven by private investment continued to limit the port's potential.

"What we have is infrastructure without integra-

tion," he said, highlighting the underutilization of port facilities and industrial zones due to limited commercial activity.

One of the key challenges identified by him is trust deficit between the government and private investors. Bureaucratic hurdles, lack of transparency in project planning, and inconsistent policy implementation have discouraged many domestic and international investors from committing long-term ventures in Gwadar.

"Industrial expansion cannot happen in isolation. It must be backed by modern infrastructure, efficient logistics, and a skilled workforce," he noted.

He said that unless the state created a reliable regulatory and security framework, the private sector would remain reluctant to participate meaningfully. Public-private collaboration cannot thrive in an

environment of policy uncertainty, he warned.

Majid Shabbir, former advisor of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and CEO of Ifsha Consultants, said a promising opportunity lay in the relocation of Chinese industries to Gwadar, which could enable Pakistan to adopt advanced manufacturing technologies, boost industrial output, and significantly enhance its technological capabilities.

"Gwadar can serve as a launchpad for high-value industrialization, provided we create the right environment for foreign and domestic investors," Majid said.

One of the most pressing requirements for this transformation is the availability of consistent and reliable energy. Unstable power supply is a critical bottleneck in Gwadar industrial operations.

Stock markets dropped

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Stock markets dropped Friday after US President Donald Trump ended a lull in his trade war with threats of massive tariffs on Apple products and imports from the European Union.

Wall Street's main indexes spent the entire session in the red. The biggest loser of the three was the Nasdaq, weighed down by a three percent fall in Apple. Paris and Frankfurt ended with losses of around

1.5 percent, with shares in luxury and car companies taking a hit after Trump threatened 50 percent tariffs on EU goods.

London's FTSE 100, which initially rose, also ended in the red.

Germany's DAX had also been higher earlier in the day as German economic growth data was revised up.

"What is somewhat of a surprise is the fact that the EU will now face a considerably higher tariff rate than China, an almost unthinkable scenario just a matter of weeks ago," said Lindsay James, investment strategist at Quilter.

"It is highlighting that much of this policy is designed to be punitive, rather than having any economic credibility to it."

Oil prices rebounded, meanwhile, having earlier dropped by around one percent, while the dollar remained under pressure.

Trump's new threats revived investor concerns about his trade policies after a recent deal with Britain and a tariffs truce with China.

"All the optimism over trade deals wiped out in minutes -- seconds, even," said Fawad Razaqada, market analyst at StoneX.

Trump said on his Truth Social platform that he was "recommending a straight 50% Tariff on the European Union" from June 1 as "discussions with them are going nowhere!"

ADDEMDUM/CORRIGENDUM

Reference to the advertisement regarding Construction of Grey Structure of Hostel Flats for Khpal Kor Nursing & Health Sciences College published in The Frontier Post Newspaper on 15th May 2025 this office of the Khpal Kor Foundation is hereby corrected **Point No. 8** "The Khpal Kor Foundation /Project Committee of Khpal Kor Foundation may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal as per KPRA rules The Khpal Kor Foundation /Project Committee of Khpal Kor Foundation shall upon request communicate to any contactor or consultant who submitted a bid or proposal, the grounds for rejection of all bids or proposals"

Instead of Point No.8

Rest of the conditions are the same:

Director | Khpal Kor Foundation

PAJCCI welcomes amendment in SROs to facilitate transit trade

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has welcomed recent amendments to several Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), aimed at easing transit trade and promoting commercial ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, Senior Vice President (SVP) PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi lauded the FBR's decision, expressing hope that the revised regulations will not only enhance bilateral trade but also reduce barriers for the trading community.

Sarhadi explained that one major amendment reinstates the option of using Insurance Guarantee alongside the Bank Guarantee for goods transported under the

Afghan Transit Trade agreement.

The earlier decision of October 2023 restricted traders solely to Bank Guarantees and placed a significant financial burden on them. The restoration of choice is a welcome relief for the business community, he said.

Regarding other amendment, Zia said it was about implementation of 10 percent processing fees on few items being imported under Afghan Transit Trade.

The decision has been revised and several items have been exempted from 10 percent processing duty that will also have a positive impact on regional trade, Zia elaborates.

The third SRO pertained to 'Negative List' comprising of around 200 items out of which several have been excluded from the list, Zia

added. "These are positive decisions which will prove beneficial for Pak-Afghan trade in the longer run", Zia commented.

He said the earlier decisions had diverted a lot of Pak-Afghan trade to Iranian ports including Cha Bahar and Bandar Abbas.

However now, he continued, hopefully the trading community of Afghanistan will come back to sea ports of Pakistan.

SVP PAJCCI also urged for further relaxations in Pak-Afghan trade conditions for promotion of bilateral and regional trade. He said ban on imports of several items in Afghan transit trade is implemented over a plea that these items come back into our markets and affects local production.

Zia insisted over making border security and vigilance more stricter to plug

smuggling instead of imposing ban on import of several items.

Furthermore, he added, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees have repatriated to their motherland in wake of new policy of Pakistan, ensuing in increase in import of goods for Afghanistan under transit trade facility.

PAJCCI office bearer also criticised imposition of 0.2 percent Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC) by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on export of items to Afghanistan.

He said the IDC has been slashed to 0.1 percent by KP government, but the decision has badly affected Pak-Afghan trade by shifting the business to Baluchistan province, rendering thousands of KP dwellers associated with Pak-Afghan trade as jobless.

MD opens PPL-funded Center of Excellence at UET Lahore

F.P. Report

LAHORE: MD & CEO, Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) Imran Abbasy as Chief Guest, formally inaugurated the Center of Excellence for Research, Development and Training (CERDT) at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET), Lahore, a landmark initiative funded by PPL under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

MD PPL unveiled the commemorative plaque in the presence of Professor Dr. Shahid Munir, Vice Chancellor, UET Lahore, alongside senior officials and industry representatives.

Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council, VC Qarshi University, Chairman Pakistan Chemicals Manufacturing Association and Chairman Pakistan Chemistry Council, besides a large number of university faculty and students were also present. The audience applauded PPL's initiative in research and training and development of the young students.

With a PKR 51.1 million grant by PPL over three years (2022-25), the CERDT is a flagship academia-industry collaboration aimed at strengthening Pakistan's indigenous technical expertise and research ecosystem in the oil and gas sector. The funding covered the construction, furnishing, and procurement of cutting-edge simulation and laboratory equipment for the Centre.

Imran Abbasy, while addressing the audience, reaffirmed PPL's commitment to social investment. "As one of the largest corporate donors in Pakistan, contributing over PKR 3.5 billion annually, PPL is deeply committed to human resource development and fostering innovation

through strategic academia-industry synergies," he said. "This initiative empowers youth by creating research, training, and innovation opportunities right here in Pakistan," he added;

The CERDT is the first of its kind in Pakistan's petroleum sector, envisioned to-

Provide free technical training to PPL staff and other industry professionals

Undertake applied research projects in exploration and production (E&P)

Host national and international petroleum conferences and seminars

Support in-house R&D projects, including production optimization and shale gas studies

Vice Chancellor UET, Dr. Shahid Munir, emphasized the university's continued commitment to aligning academic excellence with industry needs. "The establishment of CERDT is a bold step in producing future-ready professionals equipped with real-world expertise," he added.

The inauguration marks a milestone in building a self-reliant, skilled workforce, and boosting Pakistan's capacity in energy innovation and sustainable development."



LAHORE: MD & CEO PPL Imran Abbasy presenting ceremonial cheque for Center of Excellence to VC UET Lahore Professor Dr. Shahid Munir.

Economy must be expanded to \$ 1 trillion for public welfare, says Mian Zahid Hussain

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that the current economic growth rate is inadequate to meet the country's defence and public welfare needs.

He stressed that an increase in Pakistan's defence budget has become inevitable in the face of a cunning adversary like India, which spends ten times more on defence.

Mian Zahid Hussain highlighted the need to expand Pakistan's economy to USD 1 trillion annually, as declared by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. This is in contrast to the current economic size of only \$411 billion in the ongoing fiscal year.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that industrial development is essential to provide public relief and create jobs. However, the economic growth rate is expected to fall short of the target, likely ending at just 2.6%, which is alarming for a country where 70% of the population comprises youth.

He noted that such

low growth makes it impossible to generate sufficient employment opportunities, which will only worsen unemployment, poverty, and inflation.

Mian Zahid Hussain urged the government to take immediate and comprehensive measures to stabilize the economy and ensure a consistent increase in the growth rate. He identified poor performance in the agriculture and industrial sectors as major contributors to

economic stagnation. Furthermore, he warned that Pakistan's high interest rates are obstructing industrial productivity. Lowering energy costs and reducing interest rates are critical to decreasing production expenses and restoring investor confidence.

He stressed the importance of adopting fresh, practical economic policies instead of repeating outdated and failed strategies. These new

policies should focus on increasing both the overall size of the economy and the growth rate. He warned that if the economic trajectory is not corrected, the country's sovereignty could be at risk.

He also reiterated that sustainable development requires strengthening both defence and the economy, as a weak economy is the biggest obstacle to national sovereignty, stability, and public welfare.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Mashal Latif C.J-IV Kohat. Suit no. 292/1 Date of hearing. 11-06-2025, Titled:- Sayyal Noor (etc) Vs Govt Provincial (etc) Notice against:-(16)Khan Munawar Son of Dilawar Khan R/o District Kohat presently R/o(now in Abroad Saudi Arabia) (17)Gulzar Son of Dilawar Khan R/o District Kohat presently R/o(now in Abroad Qatar) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 11-06-2025 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 11-06-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law.order Issued on.19-05-2025 (Court of CJ-IV Kohat)

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Faryal Khan Khalil Civil Judge III Kohat Suit no. 225/1 Date of hearing. 26-05-2025 Titled:- Zulfiqar Ahmad Vs Arshad Humayun (etc) Notice against:- (12)Mst Noor Jahan Daughter of Shaikh Abdul Shakoor (Late) (13)Mst Rukhsana(14)Mst Ruhi Daughters of Abdul Shakoor (Late) R/o Capital Cinema District Kohat Presently R/o(now in Abroad America USA) (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit against you Defendants in which date of hearing 26-05-2025 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you Defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 26-05-2025 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law.order Issued on.07-05-2025 (Court of CJ-III Kohat)

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Ms Maliha Allaudin Senior Civil Judge Family Court Kohat. Suit no. 73/FC Date of hearing 04-06-2024 Titled:- Mst Tajmeena Bibi Vs Shamsheer Khan (etc) Notice against:-(1)Shamsher Khan Son of Nazeer Gul R/o Dhoda District Kohat presently R/o (now.in.Abroad Dubai UAE) (2)Mst Meera Jan Widow of Nazeer Gul R/o Dhoda District Kohat (Defendants) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a family suit of Dissolution of Marriage against you defendants in which date of hearing 04-06-2024 is fixed for your appearance Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendants is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 04-06-2024 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 22-05-2025 (Court of S C.J.F.C Kohat)

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of Jawad Bin Dawood Civil Judge II. Alaga Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No 331/1. Institution 6/11/ 2023. Date of hearing. 30/5/2025 . Case Title: Mst. Bakhtaja VS Muhammad Ayaz. Notice to no. 9.Msts Khameron. 10.Bibi Khalida. 11. Anwar Bibi. 12.Rozena. 13. Hajra. 14. Sakena daughters of Abdulmajed resident of Bajkatta tehseel Gagra district Buner.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 30/5/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

COURT NOTICE

In the Court of District Judge Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Civil review No. 6/CR. Institution 9/4/ 2025. Date of hearing. 3/6/2025. Case Title: Shaheen Wahab etc. VS Bakht Zaman etc.Notice to no. 11. Dawar Khan.15.Samer Khan sons of Dilawar Khan resident of Bajkatta tehseel Gagra district Buner at present out of country.Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 3/6/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Pakistan to participate in ATF competition

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani teams have departed for Colombo, Sri Lanka, to participate in the ATF 12 & Under Team Competition - South Asia, scheduled to be held from May 26 to 30. The event was initially set to be held in Islamabad but was relocated to Colombo due to the Pakistan-India conflict, said a press release issued here Saturday. Boys Team include Muhammad Shayan Afridi, Rashid Ali Bachani, M. Ibraheem Hussain Gill, Muhammad Nameer Shamsi (Captain). Girls Team comprises Khadija Khalil, Shahnoor Umer, Anaya Khan, Noor Malik (Captain). PTF President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi extended his best wishes saying, this is a great opportunity for our young players to gain international exposure and demonstrate their skills. I wish them the very best, play hard, and make Pakistan proud. Secretary-General PTF Col. (R) Zia-ud-din Tufail (R) also conveyed his best wishes, expressing confidence in the teams' talent and spirit.

Saeed, Ammad, Anas, Abdullah move in semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Saeed Abdul, Muhammad Ammad, Anas Ali Shah Bukhari and Abdullah Nawaz moved in the semifinals of 1st Jansher Khan PSA Satellite Squash Tournament here at the Mushaf Squash Complex on Saturday. The tournament has a draw of 32 players. In the quarterfinals, Saeed Abdul beat Huraira Khan 11-2, 11-8, 11-2 in 20 Minutes, Muhammad Ammad beat Abdul Basit Khan 11-5, 11-1, 11-7 in 16 Minutes, Anas Ali Shah Bukhari beat Sadam UI Haq 7-11, 11-9, 11-6, 7-11, 15-13 in 51 Minutes and Abdullah Nawaz beat Khaqan Malik 11-4, 11-7, 11-6 in 16 Minutes. The semifinals will be played on Sunday. In the 1st semifinal, Saeed Abdul will play Muhammad Ammad while Anas Ali Bukhari will face Abdullah Nawaz in the 2nd semifinal.

PCB announces affordable prices for tickets

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday announced ticket prices ranging between 200 and 2000 rupees for the three-match T20I series between Pakistan and Bangladesh to be played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore from 28 May to 1 June. Three T20Is will be played on 28, 30 May and 1 June, with the first ball set to be bowled at 8pm PST. Tickets will be available to fans from 25 May onwards at TCS Express Centres only. In the first phase, tickets will be available tomorrow at TCS Express centres located at Davis Road and Gulberg, Lahore. To encourage fans to come to the ground, affordable prices have been set for the matches. The general enclosures (Hanif Mohammad, Imtiaz Ahmed, Inzamam-ul-Haq and Saeed Ahmed) at the Gaddafi Stadium will be available to fans at PKR 200. The first-class enclosures (Abdul Hafeez Kardar, Abdul Qadir, Javed Miandad and Sarfaraz Nawaz) will be available at PKR 300, while the premium enclosures (Rajas and Saeed Anwar) will be available to fans at PKR 400. The VIP enclosures (Fazal Mahmood and Imran Khan) will be available to fans at PKR 500.



TRENT BRIDGE: England pose with the series trophy after their innings win over Zimbabwe.

Stars lift National Women's T20 Trophy with dominant final win

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Stars, led by captain Sidra Ameen, emerged victorious in the National Women's T20 Cricket Tournament, defeating Fatima Sana's Conquerors by 42 runs in a high-stakes final played at National Bank Stadium Karachi on Saturday. Opting to bat first after winning the toss, Stars posted a competitive total of 135 runs for the loss of 5 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. Opening batter Sana anchored the innings with a stylish 44 off 37 deliveries, hitting seven boundaries. Huraina Sajjad added a quickfire 23 off 12 balls, while Kaynat Hafeez chipped in with 21 off 35. Skipper Sidra Amin contributed 18, and Sidra Nawaz added 15 runs to set up a solid total. For Conquerors, Mahnoor Aftab and Nashra Sandhu picked up two wickets each, while Humna Bilal took one. While chasing the target of 136 runs, Conquerors' batting line-up delivered a very poor performance, failing to reach even the 100-run mark. The entire team was bowled out for 93 runs in 19.4 overs. Dua Majid showed some resistance with 29 runs off 30 balls, hitting five boundaries. Najiha Alvi scored 21 off 20 balls, and Syeda Aroob Shah could only manage 14 runs. Captain Fatima Sana was dismissed for just eight runs off five balls, including two boundaries. Apart from them, the rest of the Conquerors' batting failed to deliver, with eight batters unable to reach double figures. From Stars, Anosha bowled brilliantly, taking 3/14 runs in her four overs, playing a vital role in the win.

HBL PSL X to conclude with Qalandars locking horns with Gladiators in final

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Two-time HBL PSL champions Lahore Qalandars will lock horns with 2019 winners Quetta Gladiators in the HBL PSL X final at the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore on Sunday with the first ball scheduled to be bowled at 7.30pm PKT. Monday, 26 May has been added as the reserve day for the final. The 34-match tournament and a landmark edition of the HBL PSL will see either Qalandars becoming only the second team to win three titles or the Gladiators winning their second title after six years. The winner will be awarded USD 500,000, while runners-up will bag USD 200,000. For Qalandars the road to final has been challenging as they became the fourth team to qualify for the playoffs accumulating five wins and four losses in the league stage. In the Eliminators, the Shaheen Shah Afridi-led outfit knocked Karachi Kings and Islamabad United to storm to their third HBL PSL final in last four editions. Saud Shakeel's Quetta Gladiators on the other hand had a season to savour after crashing out of Eliminator 1 in 2024 and finishing bottom of the table in 2023. In 2025 they topped the points table winning seven and losing only two games with one being no-result. Quetta outfoxed Islamabad United in the Qualifier by 30 runs. In the ongoing season, Quetta have reaped five of their wins at the Gaddafi Stadium with one game being no-result due to rain against Lahore Qalandars. They will look to keep

their winning record intact when they take the field in the final.

For Qalandars, Fakhar Zaman (428 runs), Abdullah Shafique (349 runs), Mohammad Naeem (270 runs), Shaheen (16 wickets), Haris Rauf (15

for bowling prowess and keeping the opposition batters in check.

With the bat, 23-year-old Hasan Nawaz and experienced Rilee Rossouw have been the destructive duo having accumulated 323 and 250

teams have faced each other 20 times across 10 seasons with Qalandars winning 11 and Gladiators emerging out triumphant eight times.

Saud Shakeel, captain Quetta Gladiators:

"I'm thrilled and honored to be leading Quetta Gladiators to an HBL PSL final and we will do our best to lift the trophy. Gaddafi Stadium really has been a lucky venue for us where we have won five out of our six games and will look to continue the winning momentum.

"Our team has been in great form throughout the tournament and various players have stepped up at challenging times to take the team through.

"Lahore Qalandars are an exciting opposition for a high-stakes game and I'm sure the fans will witness a highly-competitive final."

Shaheen Shah Afridi, captain Lahore Qalandars: "We are buzzing to feature in our third HBL PSL final in last four editions and our aim is to complete the treble at our home ground.

"The turnaround in our campaign has been impressive this season with all the players responding well to pressure at different phases of the game. Our team combination backs us to be aggressive throughout with both bat and ball, which is a welcome development for any team looking to win championships.

"Lahore Qalandars will take confidence from our performances against Quetta in the 79-run win and the abandoned game in Lahore and we'll look to repeat those feats tomorrow evening."



wickets) and Rishad Hossain (12 wickets) have been potent on both ends of the wicket this season.

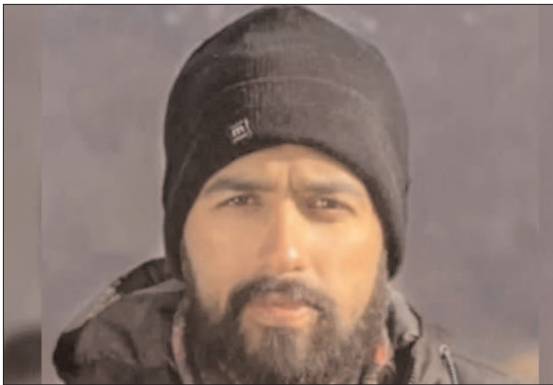
Quetta have relied on Abrar Ahmed (16 wickets), Faheem Ashraf (16 wickets), Khurram Shahzad (12 wickets), Mohammad Amir (12 wickets) and Mohammad Wasim Jnr (10 wickets)

runs, respectively at strike rates above 150.

In the two league games this season, Lahore had the upper hand against Quetta as they won the first fixture by 79 runs and the second one was washed out after Naeem and Abdullah struck beligerent half-centuries.

Previously, the two

Pakistani climber Saad Munawar summits Mount Everest



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Adding another feather in his cap, renowned Pakistani climber Saad Munawar scaled the 8,848-metre Mount Everest on Saturday. Munawar hoisted Pakistan's flag at the top of the world's tallest mountain earlier this morning. He achieved the remarkable feat under the supervision of Dawa Gyalje Sherpa. Earlier, he had summited Mount Aconcagua. Last week, mountaineer Sirbaz Khan made history by becoming the first and only Pakistani to summit all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks with-

out the use of supplemental oxygen, completing the monumental achievement on Sunday with his successful ascent of Kangchenjunga.

Sirbaz, a resident of Hunza valley, summited the 8,586m peak at 11:50am local time, marking the culmination of a years-long quest. While he had previously climbed all 14 of the "eight-thousanders," he had used bottled oxygen on two of those earlier ascents near the summit.

To achieve the no-oxygen distinction, he returned this season to climb Annapurna in April and Kangchenjunga in

May, both without artificial oxygen support.

"Even though I had summited all 14x8000m peaks in the world, there was still something missing," Sirbaz had said when he arrived at Annapura earlier. "When I first announced my project after summiting Nanga Parbat in 2017, my aim was simple: 14x8000m summits without using O2, and that's why I returned."

He is among an elite group of around 70 climbers worldwide who have summited all 14 peaks above 8,000m. Less than 25 have done so entirely without supplemental oxygen, a feat that demands extreme endurance in the oxygen-deprived "death zone" above 8,000m.

His achievement comes in less than a year after he initially completed all 14 peaks, a milestone that had already cemented his place as one of Pakistan's greatest high-altitude climbers. However, he sought to push further by re-climbing the two peaks where he had previously relied on oxygen.

Djokovic makes more history with 100th singles title

GENEVA (Agencies): A battling Novak Djokovic made another bit of tennis history as he clinched his 100th ATP singles title with a comeback victory over Hubert Hurkacz in Geneva.

Serbia's Djokovic, who has won almost all there is in tennis, is just the third man in the Open era to achieve the feat after Jimmy Connors and Roger Federer.

The 38-year-old had won all seven of his previous matches against Poland's Hurkacz but had to grind out victory this time around, coming from a break down in the third set to win 5-7 7-6 (7-2) 7-6 (7-2).

Djokovic's children ran onto court afterwards to congratulate their father, with wife Jelena watching in the stands.

Victory also gave Djokovic some welcome time on the clay, with the French Open beginning on Sunday.

He arrived in Geneva without a win on the surface, having lost his first match in four of his past five tournaments.

Djokovic now travels to Paris - where he will face American Mackenzie McDonald in the first round - with his bid for a standalone record 25th Grand Slam title firmly on track.

However, it remains to be seen how quickly he will recover from a final lasting three hours and eight minutes.

Victory gives Djokovic his first title since Olympic gold in Paris last year - and marks a high point in



a difficult year for the tennis great.

His run to the Australian Open semi-finals was ended by injury before his first attempt to claim his 100th title was ended by Czech teenager Jakub Mensik in the Miami Open showpiece.

The clay season has been particularly tricky as Djokovic lost his opening matches in Monte Carlo and Madrid in straight sets before opting out of the Italian Open.

A split with coach Andy Murray followed, but deciding to take a wildcard to Geneva has paid off as Djokovic has improved in each match, with his serving and returning in particular going up a notch.

Much of the packed crowd in Geneva were on his side and it was the Serb who had the first break opportunities at 2-2.

But Hurkacz, a big server making

Bashir takes six to seal England win over Zimbabwe

TRENT BRIDGE (Agencies): Shoaib Bashir's six-wicket haul broke Zimbabwe's feisty resistance and led England to victory by an innings and 45 runs inside three days of the one-off Test. Off-spinner Bashir claimed 6-81 at Trent Bridge, his best figures in Test cricket, to dismiss the tourists for 255 in their second innings.

As a tune-up for the challenge of India to come later this summer, the home side were not wholly impressive, particularly their seam bowling on the third morning. On a lifeless surface, England collectively lacked penetration and were often loose, allowing Sean Williams to tuck in for 88 from 82 balls. He added 122 for the third wicket with fellow left-hander Ben Curran, who survived two catch attempts and overturned being given lbw in his 37.

Bashir removed both either side of lunch. Although Sikandar Raza made 60, England chipped away at the other end. The undoubted highlight was Harry Brook's spectacular catch at second slip to remove Wesley Madhevere, Ben Stokes' third wicket of the match on his return from hamstring surgery. Bashir mopped up the tail. Already in this match, the 21-year-old had become the youngest England bowler to 50 Test wickets and this performance made him only the fourth to have three five-wicket hauls before the age of 22.

Bigger challenges ahead for England

This was England's first Test in five months, a curtain-raiser for the marquee series against India and Australia. Even though there were moments when this meandered like a pre-season friendly, there were still positives for England to take. England's 565-5 declared in the first innings included much-needed centuries for Zak Crawley and Ollie Pope. Bashir took a career-best nine wickets in the match and, crucially, Stokes looked fit enough to play a full role as an all-rounder.

There were times when the pace bowlers struggled, albeit in benign conditions. Sam Cook, on debut, did little to suggest England were wrong to overlook his strong domestic form for so long and Gus Atkinson was largely unthreatening. Josh Tongue, in his first Test for almost two years, was occasionally lively. England can ponder their pace options for India, especially with Chris Woakes and Brydon Carse returning. A bigger decision will be whether to recall Jacob Bethell, and for whom. A white-ball series against West Indies, under new captain Brook, begins on Thursday. Then come the 10 Tests that will define the tenure of Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum.

Pacers miss chance but Bashir impresses

In a year when pace bowling will be so crucial to England's hopes, and with a number of seamers absent, those on show did little to press their claims. The biggest opportunity was to Cook, who has been prolific for Essex. It would be harsh to write off anyone after one Test, and it could be that he picked a bad time to have a poor game. His average speed of 77.9mph was the slowest recorded by an England seamer since 2006 and was not compensated by accuracy. Atkinson has credit in the bank after 52 wickets in 2024 and will surely improve, while Tongue showed glimpses of why England rate him so highly. In his three-Test career, he has been England's second-fastest bowler behind Mark Wood.

At least Stokes was able to get through three sprightly spells across the match, including bowling the first over on Saturday. When he returned in the afternoon, he found extra bounce to Madhevere and Brook clung to his flying one-hander. Bashir was undercooked before this Test, being sent on loan from Somerset to Glamorgan. He improved the more he bowled, a fuller length and straighter line to better the five-wicket haul he took in this ground against West Indies last year.

The lbw to get Williams was fortunate and Curran surrendered, but the flight to Tafadwa Tsiga, who charged and was bowled, was delightful. Blessing Muzarabani holed out and Raza sliced to slip. When Tanaka Chivanga was lbw, Bashir had the first six-wicket haul by an England spinner in a home Test since Moeen Ali in 2017.

Zimbabwe return with pride intact

Zimbabwe are attempting to rebuild their stature in Test cricket, with 11 matches this year. For all of their progress, victory here would have been perhaps the biggest upset in history. In their first Test against England for 22 years, they were utterly outclassed on the opening day, but battled hard with the bat thereafter. Their supporters, dancing and singing throughout, brought joy to the occasion.

On Friday, Brian Bennett's 97-ball hundred broke Williams' record for the fastest in Test cricket by a Zimbabwean. On Saturday, Williams looked intent on claiming it back. The left-hander slapped through the off side and pulled to leg, tucking into a flat England pace attack. He swept and reversed Bashir. At the other end, the steady Curran was put down by Stokes in his follow-through, survived a flying one-hander by the captain, then overturned being lbw to Bashir.

Williams was not so lucky with a review. Attempting to paddle Bashir, he was given out to a ball that would have shaved the bails. Just after lunch, Curran poked to cover. Raza brought more defiance with a 57-ball half-century. Even as the wickets fell and an inevitable defeat was confirmed, it was the Zimbabwe fans that continued to fill Trent Bridge with song.

his way back to form after a serious knee injury at Wimbledon last year, produced aces and service winners at the crucial times to keep him at bay.

In truth, it was Djokovic's errors, rather than excellent play from his opponent, that decided the first set. Serving to force a tie-break, an unfortunate net cord gave Hurkacz his first break point of the set - and a dreadful double fault from Djokovic handed it over.

Every Hurkacz service game of the second set seemed to go to deuce, with Djokovic constantly pushing for an opening, but his uncharacteristic errors allowed his 28-year-old opponent to wriggle free - much to Djokovic's wry amusement.

The Serb upped his level in the tie-break, smashing a winner to force a deciding set, but it was Hurkacz who broke at the start of the third.

Service games rattled by from both players before the Pole played a dreadful game at 4-3 up. With Hurkacz's body tight and arm full of tension, an error handed Djokovic the break back, with the world number six shaking his racquet in celebration.

A tie-break felt almost inevitable and once again, Djokovic ran away with it, before sealing the success with an ace.

The two shared a warm hug at the net before a visibly upset Hurkacz covered his head with his towel as the victor thanked the crowd.



In brief

Pole collapse disrupts power supply

RAWALPINDI (APP): Power supply to the Sangjani Water Treatment Plant was disrupted on Saturday due to the collapse of a pole of the main transmission line of electricity because of rain and windstorm affecting water supply to the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi from the Khanpur Dam. The Islamabad Electric Supply Corporation (IESCO) staff had started work on an emergency basis to restore power, a WASA Rawalpindi spokesman said. The spokesman urged the citizens to use water carefully as it might take four to six hours to restore power supply. The Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), he said, was continuously monitoring the situation. With the restoration of power to the Sangjani Plant, water supply would return to normal. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz took notice of low-lying areas being flooded after heavy rain in Rawalpindi and other cities. She directed WASA officers in Rawalpindi to reach the field themselves and take emergency measures for drainage of rainwater from low-lying areas. All resources should be used to ensure drainage of water, she added. The chief minister directed necessary measures should be taken in all cities to cope with any emergency situation in view of expected rains.

Int'l Day of Markhor

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Day of the Markhor was observed across the country and globally on Saturday, emphasizing the need to protect one of Central and South Asia's most iconic and ecologically vital species. The Markhor is an iconic and ecologically significant species found across the mountainous regions of Central and South Asia. The greatest threats to the survival of the Markhor are habitat loss, illegal hunting, including poaching and climate change. Preserving the Markhor and its natural habitat is an ecological imperative and a significant opportunity to bolster the regional economy, foster conservation efforts and promote sustainable tourism and economic growth. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) formally designated May 24 as the International Day of the Markhor. The day was first marked in 2024 and calls on UN Member States, civil society, and global stakeholders to promote conservation and regional cooperation.

RWMC cleanliness activities underway

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) had deputed additional sanitary workers to clean and dredge major drains to avoid urban flooding, as part of comprehensive measures to make the cleaning operation more effective and organised. The RWMC spokesman told on Saturday that the company was making all-out efforts to clear the city of any problems and carrying out the cleanliness of nullahs and choked drains during continued intermittent rainfall. He said that additional staff had been assigned duties in shifts to ensure cleanliness round the clock so that some sanitation-related problems could not become hurdles in the smooth flow of water. He said that complaints received on social media platforms were also being addressed promptly. In case of any complaint, citizens were asked to register their complaints on helpline number 1139, which would be resolved immediately, he added.

FIRs to be registered against deportees, passports to be cancelled: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Pakistan has decided to take stringent action against citizens deported from foreign countries.

In a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi here Saturday, it was resolved that First Information Reports (FIRs) will be registered against all deportees.

In addition, their passports will be cancelled, and their names will be placed on the Passport Control List (PCL) for a period of five years.

The Interior Minister emphasized that the deported individuals were bringing disrepute to Pakistan at the international level, and the government would adopt zero-tolerance policy in this regard.

"There will be no leniency for those who tarnish the country's image abroad," Naqvi said.

To ensure effective implementation, a committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Interior Secretary Khurram Agha that will review and strengthen the

existing passport laws and regulations.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Interior Talla Chaudhry, Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Riffat Mukhtar Raja, and Director General of Passports Mustafa Jamal Qazi.

This move marks a significant policy shift, signaling the government's resolve to address the growing concern over the international implications of illegal migration and deportation cases.

Citizens in Islamabad enjoying Saturday's hailstorm, thunderstorm

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad and Rawalpindi turned into a photographer's paradise on Saturday afternoon after a hailstorm and thunderstorm brought a sudden burst of winter wonderland charm, with citizens snapping photos and sharing them on social media.

Hail and thunder rolled into Islamabad and Rawalpindi on Saturday, blanketing the cities in a layer of white and sparking a frenzy of photo-taking and video-sharing on social media, said media reports.

The sudden arrival of a hailstorm and thunderstorm in Islamabad, which created a picturesque landscape that citizens could not resist capturing on camera, with photos and videos quickly making

their way to social media, said a journalist while attending office hours.

Citizens were seen enjoying the cooler weather, with many taking to the streets to capture photos and videos. "The weather is perfect for a walk," said a resident of Islamabad.

The Met Office reported that the hailstorm was part of a larger weather system that would bring rain and thunderstorms to other parts of the country. "We are expecting more rain in the next 24 hours," said a spokesperson.

The Met department's spokesperson advised citizens to be vigilant as the weather system was expected to bring more rain and thunderstorms to the region. This warning came as a precautionary

measure to ensure public safety during the unpredictable weather conditions.

"The kids are loving playing in the hail, making the most of this winter wonderland," said a parent. Others admired the scenic beauty of the city, with one citizen posting a video and wrote, "Finally, some relief from the heat! Islamabad, you look beautiful in white."

"I quickly covered my car to save it from the thunderstorm." Others shared similar experiences, with one resident saying, "I am glad I parked my bike under a shelter, it saved it from getting damaged." Despite the surprise, many citizens appreciated the cooler weather that followed the storm.

NAB recovers over Rs. 88 bln in first quarter of 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) successfully recovered and disbursed over Rs. 88 billion in the first quarter of 2025 (January–March), comprising direct recoveries of Rs. 2.085 billion and indirect recoveries totaling Rs. 86 billion.

According to NAB, recoveries in the first quarter of 2025 have raised NAB's total recoveries since inception to Rs 6.236 trillion, with 62.92% (Rs 3.92 trillion) recovered in the past 18 months.

The NAB successfully recovered public and private lands that were illegally transferred or occupied, returning the assets to the rightful owners.

These amounts were recovered from individuals and entities through plea bargains, voluntary returns, and settlements.

It said the bureau remains committed to its accountability drive, focusing on financial integrity and the retrieval of misappropriated funds.

The NAB spokesman provided details on indirect recoveries, stating that NAB Balochistan retrieved state land measuring 340 acres of Chiltan Park and 250 acres belonging to the Forest

Department, valued at Rs. 6.45 billion. Additionally, NAB Khyber Pakhtunkhwa secured Rs. 0.56 billion in a case involving officers and officials of the University of Swabi.

Similarly, the Revenue and Forest departments reported that NAB Lahore recovered Rs. 70.87 billion in three major cases, including the Employees Cooperative Housing Society, State Life Insurance Employees Cooperative Housing Society, and Sarwar Omega Villas.

NAB Multan recovered Rs. 0.013 billion in the GFS 7 Wonders Housing Scheme, while NAB Sukkur recovered 610 acres of NHA land valued at Rs. 8.53 billion.

Regarding the disbursement of direct recoveries, NAB transferred Rs. 9.72 million to the Federal Government, Rs. 10.80 million to Provincial Governments, and Rs. 73.51 million to various departments and financial institutions.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) directly disbursed Rs. 1.99 billion to 19,105 victims of various scams.

This includes Rs. 72.04 million to 4,778 affectees of the National House Building and Road

Development Corporation by NAB Rawalpindi.

Rs. 1.17 billion to 11,855 affectees of the Eden Housing case by NAB Lahore, Rs. 405.08 million to 989 affectees of the SHG & Others case by NAB Lahore, and Rs. 111.08 million to 496 affectees of the Arain City case (by NAB Rawalpindi).

Additionally, Rs. 109.15 million was distributed to 452 affectees of the Toyota Motors Gujranwala case (by NAB Lahore), Rs. 23.56 million to 246 affectees of the Gulshan-e-Rehman case (by NAB Rawalpindi), Rs. 12.07 million to 99 affectees of the THG case (by NAB Lahore), Rs. 47.31 million to 60 affectees of the Gilani Housing Corporation case (by NAB Rawalpindi), Rs. 3.63 million to 78 affectees of the Ahmed City Housing Scheme case (by NAB Lahore, and Rs. 38.59 million to 52 affectees of various other scams.

This substantial disbursement highlights NAB's commitment not only to holding offenders accountable but also to ensuring swift restitution for the victims of financial fraud. NAB remains resolute in its mission to recover looted public funds and advance its vision of a corruption-free Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: A view of fallen fresh tree leaves on the ground after a strong hit of dust storm and heavy rain that experienced in the twin cities. —APP Photo

ANF arrests three smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting three operations across the country, recovered as many as 41.200 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 3.78 million and arrested three suspects, including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Saturday.

He informed that 6 kg of opium and 14.4 kg of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Alfalah Honey Tower, GT Road, Peshawar and one suspect was arrested. As much as 4 kg of hashish was recovered from two women near Marir Hassan, Rashid Minhas Road, Rawalpindi.

In another operation, 16 kg of hashish was recovered near Arain Railway Crossing, District Sukkur. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Storm, rain disrupt power supply

ISLAMABAD (APP): A powerful thunderstorm, accompanied by gusty winds and rain on Saturday, disrupted power supply across several areas in the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) region due to faults and tripping on 11 kV feeders. According to an IESCO spokesperson, the severe weather condition caused faults and tripping at several 11 kv feeders, leading to widespread power outages. Strong winds led to the uprooting of trees and electricity poles in several locations.

In response, the IESCO's Operations and Construction teams have launched an intensive power restoration drive. Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Naeem Jan is personally overseeing the restoration efforts from the central control room to ensure a swift return to normalcy. Residents are strongly advised to maintain a safe distance from downed electrical wires, poles, transformers, meters and other electrical infrastructure.

The IESCO Complaint Office and Helpline (Dial 118) have been fully mobilized and are operational round-the-clock to register and address consumer complaints.

Pakistan's narrative gains global credibility: Daniyal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry on Saturday expressed confidence in Pakistan's diplomatic delegates to effectively articulate the country's concerns, particularly regarding Kashmir and terrorism.

In an exclusive conversation with a local channel outside the Parliament House, Daniyal Chaudhry stated, "Pakistan's narrative has finally gained the global credibility it deserves, while India's deception has been unmasked." He emphasized that the international community was increasingly recognizing the truth about Pakistan's stance, while India's attempts to distort reality are being exposed.

Daniyal Chaudhry emphasized that Pakistan's

delegates would proactively engage with every legal and international forum to present irrefutable evidence exposing India's support for terrorism. He specifically mentioned the fabricated Phalgama incident, where India falsely blamed Pakistan, as an example of India's deceitful tactics.

Chaudhry asserted that Pakistan will continue to highlight India's duplicity and aggression through robust diplomatic efforts, leveraging international platforms to reveal the truth and hold India accountable for its actions.

Chaudhry strongly condemned India's backing of terrorism, citing incidents such as the Khuzdar and Jafar Express attacks, where innocent civilians and children were brutally targeted. He emphasized that India's support for such heinous

acts is a blatant violation of human rights and international law. Chaudhry called for global condemnation of India's actions, stressing the need for accountability and justice for the victims and their families.

He highlighted that Pakistan has been the biggest victim of terrorism, bearing immense human and economic costs.

He emphasized that Pakistan has made significant sacrifices in the fight against terrorism, with countless lives lost and infrastructure damaged.

Chaudhry underscored that Pakistan's efforts and sacrifices in combating terrorism have been substantial, and it is imperative for the international community to recognize and support Pakistan's continued efforts to maintain peace and stability in the region.

Minister stresses peace, cautions against rising instability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Dr. Musadik Malik on Saturday reaffirmed Pakistan's dedication to peaceful conflict resolution during a panel discussion at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS).

Speaking at the session titled "Dialogue, Not Discord: Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy, and the Rule of Law in U.S.-Pakistan Relations," Malik stressed that sustainable peace required mutual respect and principled diplomacy.

"Empathy and understanding are essential in dialogue," he said. "Peace is only possible when

states engage to resolve, not dominate."

Addressing the recent hostilities, Malik highlighted India's one-sided aggression, citing attacks on civilian areas and water infrastructure. "Pakistan had every right to retaliate but showed restraint, targeting only military installations," he stated.

He compared India's actions to the "Israeli doctrine of offensive defense," warning that such hegemonic policies threaten global stability.

When questioned about Pakistan's nuclear stance, Malik dismissed concerns as unnecessary. "Pakistan has proven it can counter threats conventionally

without escalation," he asserted.

Malik also linked global instability to environmental neglect, urging international cooperation. "Climate change knows no borders—melting glaciers and rising temperatures will affect everyone," he said.

The minister warned that ignoring international law risks "lawlessness and instability." He called for a renewed commitment to shared norms, saying, "Planetary survival depends on collective action."

The session highlighted Pakistan's role in advocating diplomacy, justice and climate resilience for long-term stability.

PIMA biennial convention being held on Sunday

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA) North Punjab is holding its Biennial Convention on Sunday (25th May 2025) at the Allama Iqbal Auditorium, Faisal Mosque (Old Campus IIUI), Islamabad. The event brings together healthcare professionals from Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Gujrat, Sargodha, Attock, Mianwali, and Jhelum for a full-day program focused on medical, ethical, and public health challenges. According to a PIMA spokesperson, the convention features sessions on public health, challenges in the medical profession, the role of doctors in community service, medical ethics, global humanitarian efforts, and the latest advancements in medical research. The event is being addressed by prominent medical experts and scholars from across the country. The spokesperson added that elections for the new President and Executive Council of PIMA North Punjab for the 2025–2027 term will also take place during the convention. The day-long program includes five sessions, with a special segment dedicated to women's health led by senior female medical professionals. Keynote speakers include President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan Prof. Shoaib Shafi, Vice Chancellor of Rawalpindi Medical University Prof. Muhammad Umar, Central President of PIMA Prof. Atif Hafeez Siddiqui, President of Alkhidmat Foundation Prof. Hafeez-ur-Rehman, along with Dr. Ifukhar Burney, Prof. Hafiz Ijaz Ahmad, Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan, Prof. Habib-ur-Rehman Asim, and Khalid Mehmood Abbasi, among others.

CPO hold meeting to prevent crimes

RAWALPINDI (APP): A crime review meeting was held at the Police Lines Headquarters in chair of the City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here on Saturday.

According to police spokesman, Senior police officials including SSP Operations, SSP Investigation, SPs, SDPOs, SHOs, and heads of the NIU and HIU units were present. During the meeting, the CPO reviewed the performance of the officers and gave clear instructions to intensify action against criminals.

He emphasized the need to arrest habitual offenders and those with previous criminal records. CPO Hamdani directed divisional SPs to prepare joint plans for patrolling, set up pickets, and general hold-up operations to curb crime across the city. He said strict action must be taken not only against street criminals but also on organized gangs involved in robberies and theft.

He stressed action against drug dealers and criminal elements during search operations. Organized gangs of begging should be dealt strictly, he added. "Ensure the conviction of accused in drug cases," he instructed investigation officers, urging them to strengthen their cases with solid evidence. The CPO also warned officers to stay alert against any connections or support to drug dealers within the department, making it clear that strict action would be taken against any officer found involved in illegal activity.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik, participated in a panel session titled "Dialogue, Not Discord: Conflict Resolution, Diplomacy, and the Rule of Law in U.S.-Pakistan Relations". —APP Photo

3 killed, 13 hurt in accidents

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Three individuals have been killed and 13 others injured in four separate traffic accidents in central Logar province, an official said on Saturday. Police spokesman Maulvi Ahmadullah Anas told Pajhwok Afghan News the accidents took place in Hazar, Al-Temor, Juma Kala and Mohammad Agha districts. He said three individuals lost their lives and 13 others sustained injuries in these accidents.

287 Afghans return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation says 287 more Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan. These individuals returned to the country on May 23 and 24, the ministry announced in a brief post on its X handle on Saturday. Citing Spin Boldak-based border officials in Kandahar, the ministry wrote the returnees had spent one to 10 days in jails and had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan.

Afghanistan to fund infrastructure projects

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum announced that in order to implement several infrastructure projects in the country, it has granted contracts for nearly 20 mines to various companies. According to the ministry's spokesperson, Homayoun Afghan, the mines include gold, coal, lead and zinc, chromite, and nephrite, and have been contracted to help fund projects such as the Qosh Tepa Canal. Some road construction and dam-building projects are also being financed through revenues generated

from these mines. The ministry spokesperson said: "Around 20 mines containing various minerals, especially lead and zinc, gold, and chromite have been granted in exchange for infrastructure and public-interest projects, with their revenues allocated to several initiatives."

Given the reduction in international aid to Afghanistan and the uncertain status of some projects, experts consider allocating mining revenues for infrastructure development as a vital step toward economic growth. Economic analyst Abdul

Nasir Rashtia told TOLONews: "Every active project creates jobs, and if the country's mines are contracted and used to fund developmental and infrastructure initiatives, this plan will undoubtedly build the nation's foundations and generate sustainable and legitimate income for the people." Meanwhile, the revenue of the extraction of coal from the Balkhab region in Sar-e Pol province has also been allocated to the state-owned National Development Company to fund the construction of the Qosh Tepa Canal.

1st pedestrian flyover constructed

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Construction work was completed on a first pedestrian flyover bridge at a cost of nine million afghanis in Herat city, the capital of western Herat province, on Saturday, an official announced.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Herat Governor Maulvi Noor Ahmad Islamjar highlighted the progress of Herat's residents in religious, economic, scientific, and technological fields.

He added that improved security had now enabled traders and industrialists to travel freely across the country.

The governor also emphasized the readiness of the local administration to support businesspeople and take timely action to resolve their challenges. Abdul Karim Shirzad, head of Owaisen Pharma Company — the financier of the project — said the bridge had been constructed on modern standards using high-quality materials.

He added that a space had also been allocated for installing a lift on the bridge.

Herat's traffic department considers the construction of such flyovers an important step towards reducing traffic congestion in the city.

Ghulam Nabi Farokhi, deputy director of the department, expressed hope that more such bridges would be constructed through cooperation between local traders and the municipality. The bridge located in the Chowk-i-Farhang area is the first of its kind in Herat city.

30 hectares of forest gutted in fire

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Local officials in eastern Kunar say a fire has broken out in a pine forest in the Sawkai district, burning approximately 30 hectares of forest.

Ehsanullah Ehsan, head of damage assessment at the Kunar Provincial Directorate for Disaster Management, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The fire erupted the day before yesterday in a pine forest in the Lamkanda area of Diwagul valley, located in Sawki district, and so far it has burned about 30 hectares of forest."

He said the cause of the fire was still unknown, but such incidents often resulted from negligence of shepherds in the area.

According to him, local residents and government officials arrived at the scene and managed to bring the fire under control on the third day.

He added: "The area is very remote, there is no telecommunications network. Based on our preliminary information, the fire has now been contained by local residents and government officials."

It is worth mentioning that similar wildfires have occurred in other parts of Kunar before, burning dozens of hectares of pine nut forests.

Salang Pass closed

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban-run Ministry of Public Works announced Saturday that the main route through the Salang Pass, a vital highway connecting northern and southern Afghanistan, has been temporarily closed to allow for reconstruction work.

The ministry advised travelers to use an alternate route while the main road is under repair. The ministry said that freight trucks will be allowed to pass through the Salang tunnel on a rotating schedule — northbound traffic on one night, southbound the next.

While Taliban describe the closure as a necessary step in repairing remaining sections of the strategic corridor, the decision has triggered skepticism among Afghan citizens. Many say that, despite repeated closures of the pass over the past two years, little visible progress has been made on repairs.

IE: Afghans to address internal issues themselves

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate on Saturday assured Turkic states that Afghanistan's land would not be used against anyone and that Afghans themselves would address their internal issues.

In a joint statement, the heads of state of the Turkic States Organization asked the interim Afghan government to form an inclusive government and urged the international community's continued engagement for a peaceful Afghanistan.

The statement said the organization supported international humanitarian assistance to Afghans for the stability of Afghanistan and would continue to cooperate with the Islamic Emirate in the areas of stability, development, and national reconciliation.

The organization also emphasized cooperation with the United States in eliminating terrorism in Afghanistan and called the TAPI, Afghan Trans-rail-



way, CASA-1000, and Silk Road projects important for Afghanistan's economic stability.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the chief spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, said that Afghanistan also desired cordial relations with these countries and needed their

cooperation in various fields. He assured that Afghanistan's soil would not be used against anyone and that Afghans themselves would address their domestic issues; taking into consideration the demands of the Afghans. "Other countries should

pay attention to their obligations towards Afghanistan, they should support Afghanistan in various fields."

The Islamic Emirate had previously said that the current government is inclusive and will work even harder in this regard.

Civil servants threaten to resign over salary delays

KABUL (Amu TV): Widespread frustration is mounting among civil servants as delays in salary payments under the Taliban administration stretch into a second month, with some employees warning they may walk off the job if the situation continues.

Multiple sources in public institutions told Amu TV that salaries have not been disbursed for nearly two months. In at least two Taliban-run institutions, officials say they are prepared to resign if further delays occur.

"Our ministry still hasn't paid salaries," said one government employee,

speaking on condition of anonymity. "People are deeply unhappy. Many of us are in financial distress, and if this continues, we may stop coming to work altogether."

A senior official at the Taliban-run Ministry of Finance told Amu TV that budget transfer delays had disrupted payroll disbursement. The source said payments resumed this week, but numerous employees said they had yet to receive any funds.

The repeated delays have fueled speculation among civil servants that the Taliban leadership is also considering permanent

salary reductions — a claim some officials have raised previously, alongside reported cuts to staffing across government departments.

Ahmad Siyar Quraishi, an economic analyst, said the Taliban face long-term challenges in sustaining public sector operations without access to Afghanistan's frozen foreign reserves or renewed international aid.

"Without access to global reserves or resumption of aid — and absent structural reforms — the Taliban will be unable to fund a sustainable public sector," he said. "This will damage the long-term functionality of the

government."

Since taking power in August 2021, Taliban have faced increasing difficulty financing day-to-day governance. With US aid suspended and international contributions dwindling, sources say fiscal pressures have grown, leading to irregular salary payments and administrative uncertainty.

According to several employees, such delays have been recurring since January. While some continue to report to work in the hope that payments will resume, others warn that morale is eroding and essential public services are being disrupted.

10 million afs projects executed in Balkh capital

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Two development projects have been executed at a cost of 10 million afghanis in the capital of northern Balkh province, an official said on Saturday.

Mazar-i-Sharif Mayor Ahmad Javed Mayar said the projects involved the construction of culverts and kerbs across several police districts of the city.

He noted culvert — worth more than 8 million afghanis — had been constructed in 12 police districts to ease public access and improve drainage systems.

Previously built concrete culverts were replaced with metal-grated alternatives to prevent waste blockages and allow for easier maintenance and cleaning.

In addition, kerbstones were laid out along roads in the 2nd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 9th police districts of the



city, he added.

According to the mayor, the municipality launched a total of 43 projects during the solar year, 1403, of

which 25 have been completed so far.

The remaining schemes are expected to be completed in the near future.

DABS announces restart of CASA-1000, boosting power trade

KABUL (TOLONews): Da Afghanistan Breshna Sheklat (DABS) stated the CASA-1000 project, which had been halted in Afghanistan for unspecified reasons, has resumed. According to DABS, work on the first phase of this project has been initiated by the contracting company, and activities for the second and third phases will soon begin.

The head of DABS, Abdul Bari Omar, emphasized that the company is committed to implementing the CASA-1000 project within Afghanistan and that it will be completed within the next one and a half to two years.

He stated: "This is a foreign company and has committed to starting the second and third phases of the project within the country in another month. Another piece of news is that significant efforts have been made since the rise of the Islamic Emirate to start this project, and thankfully, work on it has been progressing rapidly over the past six months."

Omar added that during his trip to Tajikistan, he met with officials from Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The main focus of these discussions was to resolve existing challenges facing the project, accelerate its implementation, and review its completion costs.

The head of Breshna Company added: "The remaining work of the CASA-1000 project will start soon, and the ongoing work will gain momentum. It is expected that the project will be completed and commissioned within one and a half to two years."

As South Asian countries are facing severe energy shortages, Central Asian nations aim to transfer energy infrastructure projects, including energy through Afghanistan, in this direction. The CASA-1000 project is one of the most important energy transmission projects, transferring electricity from Kyrgyzstan through Tajikistan and Afghanistan to Pakistan. Ahmad Firdaws

Behgozin, an economic analyst, considers the completion of this project beneficial in reducing Afghanistan's electricity shortages and creating employment opportunities.

He said: "To the extent that this project takes place within Afghanistan, we can benefit from its transit and employment advantages, as it requires a labor force. If

we can complete these projects properly, Afghanistan can reap more benefits."

Through the CASA-1000 project, Kyrgyzstan will transfer 1,000 megawatts of electricity to Pakistan via Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and Afghanistan's share from this project, in addition to receiving electricity, is also a \$45 to \$50 million transit fee.

Fire breakouts in 2 factories cause 700,000afs losses

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Fire breakouts in two factories the city and a district of northern Balkh province caused financial losses wrote 700,000 afghanis and damages nearly three million afghanis.

In a statement, the Balkh police headquarters said the blaze in a cotton processing factory in the Qala-i-Hajari area of Nahr-e-Shahi district has been contained.

It said the fire broke out due to overheating of machinery, causing financial losses of about 600,000 afghanis, and goods worth about one million afghanis were saved from being gutted.

Separately, firefighters brought under control another blaze in Linum usitatissimum oil factory near Mazar-i-Sharif airport intersection.

According to police, goods worth 100,000 afghanis were burnt and items worth two million afghanis were saved. The cause of the blaze is unclear.

Nuristan families reconcile, end 30-year-old feud



JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Two rival families have reconciled in eastern Nuristan province, ending their 30-year-old enmity after mediation by tribal elders and police officials.

Nuristan police spokesman Ghulam Rahman Haidari told Pajhwok Afghan News the feud sur-

facted between Qari Dawood and Ezatullah families 30 years ago over land in Bajgul area of Doab district.

The feud left four casualties on both sides, but the hostility came to an end based on justice and human values with the help of tribal elders, he added.

According to Haidari, security forces and tribal elders are trying to prevent similar conflicts in Nuristan and promote a tradition of peaceful living.

Since the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's takeover, hundreds of enmities have been resolved in the country.

Gold prices up, afghani strengthens against dollar

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of gold surged, but the afghani gained some ground against the US dollar this week, when rates for other essential commodities remained stable in Kabul, market sources said on Saturday.

Food items: Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 49-kilogram sack of Kazakh cost 1,300afs, the same rate as last week's.

Similarly, the price of a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice remained unchanged at 2,600afs. A 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar remained stable at 2,500afs and a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking at 1,650afs.

He added one kilogram

of African black tea accounted for 400afs and the same amount of Indonesian green tea for 350afs.

Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of Kazakh flour at 1,350afs, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice at 2,650afs and a 49-kg sack of Indian sugar at 2,550afs.

A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil cost 1,700afs, he said, adding one kilogram of black tea accounted for 400afs and the same quantity of green tea for 450afs.

Fuel: A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok Afghan News the rate of one litre of petrol remained stable at 59afs and diesel at 55afs.

He added the price of one kilogram of liquefied gas cost at 48afs.

Gold up: Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Russian gold went up from 4,650afs to 4,850 and the same amount of Arabian gold increased from 5,900afs to 6,000afs.

Afghani vs dollar: Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said one US dollar was traded at 68.80afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 240afs against their previous week's rates of 70.15afs and 245afs.

The spike in the afghani value is essentially linked to periodic dollar auctions by the central bank.

Paktia beekeepers demand access to global markets



GARDEZ (Pajhwok): Beekeepers in southeastern Paktia province have voiced concern over the lack of market for their honey products, calling on relevant government institutions to support local marketing and facilitate honey exports.

To raise awareness about the vital role bees' play in ecosystems, the United Nations has designated 20th May as World Bee Day.

Speaking at an event held to mark the occasion, Asadullah Waziri, a beekeeper in Paktia, said the province produced higher-quality honey than other regions. However, the lack of a proper market means their products often go

unsold. He urged the caretaker government to create opportunities for exporting honey to international markets. Another beekeeper, Abdul Hai Dildar, said that imported honey had disrupted the market for local produce.

"Imported honey has driven down the prices of our own products," he said. "The government should raise customs tariffs on imported honey to help promote domestic sales."

Dildar also appealed to authorities for support in standardised packaging, processing, and export efforts.

Haseebullah Gardizi, head of Paktia's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said efforts are ongoing to

enable local honey producers to participate in international exhibitions and introduce their products to global markets.

Najibullah Mehrabi, head of the beneficial insects department at the Paktia Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, said there are currently 276 active beekeeping farms in the province. These farms produced around 350 tonnes of honey last year.

He added that a proposal has been submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock to issue commercial licences for beekeepers, allowing them to export their products abroad.



KYIV: Ukrainian servicemen welcomed back after being exchanged for Russian soldiers.

Bangladesh interim govt calls for unity

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh's interim government, which took over after a mass uprising last year, warned on Saturday that unity was needed to "prevent the return of authoritarianism".

"Broader unity is essential to maintain national stability, organise free and fair elections, justice, and reform, and permanently prevent the return of authoritarianism in the country," it said in a statement after a week of escalation during which rival parties protested on the streets of the capital Dhaka.

The South Asian nation of around 170 million people has been in political turmoil since ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted by student-led protests in August 2024, ending her iron-fisted 15-year rule. The caretaker government is led by chief adviser Muhammad Yunus, the 84-year-old Nobel Peace Prize

winner.

Yunus, who returned from exile at the behest of protesters, says he has a duty to implement democratic reforms before elections, which are due by June 2026 at the latest. "If the government's autonomy, reform efforts, justice process, fair election plan, and normal operations are obstructed to the point of making its duties unmanageable, it will, with the people, take the necessary steps," the caretaker government said, without giving further details.

Yunus is due to hold talks on Saturday with key political parties that have protested against the government this month. The statement said the government had faced "unreasonable demands, deliberately provocative and jurisdictionally overreaching statements", which it said had been "continuously obstructing" its work.

Yunus's team has confirmed he will meet leaders of the powerful Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), as well as leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami. Both parties have protested against the government. No agenda has been released but the BNP, seen as the front-runners in elections, are pushing hard for polls to be held by December.

According to Bangladeshi media and military sources, army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman also said this week that elections should be held by December, aligning with BNP demands. They would be the first elections since Hasina fled to India, where she remains in self-imposed exile in defiance of an arrest warrant to face trial for crimes against humanity related to last year's police crackdown on protesters during which at least 1,400 people were killed.

ATC orders Add IG CTD to appear before court

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar Judge Muhammad Iqbal Khan has summoned Additional Inspector General and Senior Superintendent of Police Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) to appear along with record on 26th May, on Friday.

ATC issued orders due to CTD failure in submission of records in terrorism cases and has summoned AIG along with SSP along with the records. ATC Judge Muhammad Iqbal Khan, noted in its order that bail applications of three accused in terrorism cases are pending and despite repeated orders, the records have not been presented.

During the last hearing, the investigating officer informed the court that the records are under scrutiny and the higher authorities have directed that the records cannot be presented in court until the scrutiny is complete.

The court has issued notices to the AIG and SSP CTD, directing them to appear in court on May 26 along with the records. The court has noted that the failure to comply with court orders is causing an increase in the backlog of cases. ATC issued notices under Section 174 PPC, and if the officials fail to comply, legal action will be taken against them. The court has adjourned the hearing until May 26.

US strike on Yemen kills Al-Qaeda members

DUBAI (AFP): Five Al-Qaeda members have been killed in a strike blamed on the United States in southern Yemen, two Yemeni security sources told AFP on Saturday.

"Residents of the area informed us of the US strike... five Al-Qaeda members were eliminated," said a security source in Abyan province, which borders the seat of Yemen's internationally-recognized government in Aden. "The US strike on Friday evening north of Khabar Al-Maraqsha killed five," said a second source, referring to a mountainous area known to be used by Al-Qaeda.

The second security source added that, though the names of those killed in the strike were not known, it was believed one of Al-Qaeda's local leaders was among the dead. Washington once regarded the group, known as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), as the militant network's most dangerous branch.

Born in 2009 from the merger of Al-Qaeda's Yemeni and Saudi factions, AQAP grew and developed in the chaos of Yemen's war, which since 2015 has pitted the Iran-backed Houthi militants against a Saudi-led coalition backing the government. Earlier this month, the United States agreed a ceasefire with the Houthis, who have controlled large swathes of Yemen for more than a decade, ending weeks of intense American strikes on militant-held areas of the country. The Houthis began firing at shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden in November 2023, weeks after the start of the Israel-Hamas war, prompting military strikes by the US and Britain beginning in January 2024.

His announcements online dealt another blow to stock markets both in the US and in the EU, with the S&P 500 down about 0.8 percent and the pan-European STOXX 600 index falling about 1.2 percent. — Aljazeera

Russia and Ukraine swap hundreds more prisoners

KYIV (AP): Russia and Ukraine exchanged hundreds more prisoners on Saturday as part of a major swap that amounted to a rare moment of cooperation in otherwise failed efforts to reach a ceasefire. The exchange came hours after Kyiv came under a large-scale Russian drone and missile attack that left at least 15 people injured.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's defense ministry said each side brought home 307 more soldiers on Saturday, a day after each released a total of 390 combatants and civilians. Further releases expected over the weekend are set to make the swap the largest in more than three years of war.

"We expect more to come tomorrow," Zelensky said on his official Telegram channel. Russia's defense ministry also said it expected the exchange to be continued, though it did not give details. Hours earlier, explosions and anti-aircraft fire were heard throughout Kyiv as many sought shelter in subway stations as Russian drones and missiles targeted the Ukrainian capital overnight. In talks held in Istanbul earlier this month — the first time the two sides met face to face for peace talks since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion — Kyiv and Moscow agreed to swap 1,000 prisoners of war and civilian detainees each.

Officials said Russia attacked Ukraine with 14 ballistic missiles and 250 Shahed drones overnight while Ukrainian forces shot down six missiles and neutralized 245 drones — 128 drones were shot down and 117 were thwarted using electronic warfare. The Kyiv City Military Administration said it was one of the biggest combined missile and drone attacks on the capital.

"A difficult night for all of us," the administration said in a statement. Posting on X, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called it "clear evidence that increased sanctions pressure on Moscow is necessary to accelerate the peace process." Katarina Mathernova, the European Union's ambassador to Kyiv, described it as "horrific." "If anyone still doubts Russia wants war to continue — read the news," Katarina Mathernová wrote on the social net-

work.

The debris of intercepted missiles and drones fell in at least six Kyiv city districts. According to the acting head of the city's military administration, Tymur Tkachenko, six people required medical care after the attack and two fires were sparked in Kyiv's Solomianskyi district. The Obolon district, where a residential building was heavily damaged in the attack, was the hardest hit with at least five wounded in the area, the administration said.

Yuri Bondarchuk, a local resident, said the air raid siren "started as usual, then the drones started to fly around as they constantly do." Moments later, he heard a boom and saw shattered glass fly through the air. "The balcony is totally wiped out, as well as the windows and the doors," he said as he stood in the dark, smoking a cigarette to calm his nerves while firefighters worked to extinguish the flames.

The air raid alert in Kyiv lasted more than seven hours, warning of incoming missiles and drones. Kyiv's mayor, Vitalii Klitschko, warned residents ahead of the attack that more than 20 Russian strike drones were heading toward the city. As the attack continued, he said drone debris fell on a shopping mall and a residential building in Obolon. Emergency services were headed to the site, Klitschko said.

Separately, 13 civilians were killed on Friday and overnight into Saturday in Russian attacks in Ukraine's south, east and north, regional authorities said. Three people died after a Russian ballistic missile targeted port infrastructure in Odesa on the Black Sea, local Gov. Oleh Kiper reported. Russia later said the strike Friday targeted a cargo ship carrying military equipment. Russia's defense ministry on Saturday claimed its forces overnight struck various military targets across Ukraine, including missile and drone-producing plants, a reconnaissance center and a launching site for anti-aircraft missiles.

The prisoner swap on Friday was the first phase of a complicated deal involving the exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side it took place at the border with Belarus, in northern Ukraine, according to a Ukrainian

official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

The released Russians were taken to Belarus for medical treatment, the Russian Defense Ministry said. However, the exchange — the latest of dozens of swaps since the war began and the biggest involving Ukrainian civilians so far — did not herald a halt in the fighting. Battles continued along the roughly 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, where tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed, and neither country has relented in its deep strikes.

After the May 16 Istanbul meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the prisoner swap a "confidence-building measure" and said the parties had agreed in principle to meet again. But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that there has been no agreement yet on the venue for the next round of talks as diplomatic maneuvering continued.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow would give Ukraine a draft document outlining its conditions for a "sustainable, long-term, comprehensive" peace agreement, once the ongoing prisoner exchange had finished.

European leaders have accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in peace efforts while he tries to press his larger army's battlefield initiative and capture more Ukrainian land. The Istanbul meeting revealed that both sides remained far apart on key conditions for ending the fighting. One such condition for Ukraine, backed by its Western allies, is a temporary ceasefire as a first step toward a peaceful settlement.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that overnight and early on Saturday its forces shot down over 100 Ukrainian drones over six provinces in western and southern Russia. The drone strikes injured three people in the Tula region south of Moscow, local Gov. Dmitry Milyaev said, and sparked a fire at an industrial site there. Andriy Kovalenko, of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, said Saturday that the drones hit a plant in Tula that makes chemicals used in explosives and rocket fuel.

Germany mass stabbing suspect has 'psychological illness'

BERLIN (AFP): A German woman accused of a mass stabbing attack that wounded 18 people at a train station in Hamburg suffers from mental illness, police said Saturday.

The suspect, a 39-year-old woman, is accused of going on a stabbing spree on Friday at the main station in Hamburg, stunning the northern city in the middle of the evening rush hour. The woman has "very clear indications of a psychological illness," police said in a statement, without giving further details on her condition.

They added there were no signs she was under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the attack, which left four victims seriously wounded. The woman was subdued by two passersby and law enforcement officers, then taken into custody at the scene without resisting arrest, police said. She was due to appear before a judge later Saturday.

Police say they have ruled out a "political motive" for the attack and believe the suspect acted alone. The victims range in age from 19 to 85. The four in serious condition were a 24-year-old man and three women,

aged 24, 52 and 85, police said. Emergency officials initially said their wounds were life-threatening, but police say all the victims now appear to be out of immediate danger.

The attack took place just after 6:00 p.m. (1600 GMT) Friday on one of the platforms in front of a standing train, German media reported. The suspect was thought to have turned "against passengers" at the station, a spokeswoman for the Hanover federal police directorate, which also covers Hamburg, told AFP. Some of the victims were treated onboard waiting trains in the station, German daily Bild reported.

Images of the scene showed access to the platforms at one end of the station blocked off by police and people being loaded into waiting ambulances. Forensic police could also be seen walking up and down the platforms where the attack took place. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz expressed his shock in a call with the mayor of Hamburg.

"My thoughts are with the victims and their families," Merz said, according to a readout from a spokesman. Germany has been

rocked in recent months by a series of violent attacks with often jihadist or far-right extremist motivations that have put security at the top of the agenda. The most recent, on Sunday, saw four people injured in a stabbing at a bar in the city of Bielefeld.

The investigation into that attack has been handed over to federal prosecutors after the Syrian suspect told the police officers who arrested him that he had jihadist beliefs. The question of security — and the immigrant origin of some of the attackers — was a major topic during Germany's recent election campaign.

Merz's conservative CDU/CSU topped the February vote, which also saw a record score of more than 20 percent for the far-right, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD). Last year, Germany toughened its legislation on carrying knives, now banned at public gatherings and on long-distance trains. They are also banned in specific zones in some cities, including at Hamburg's train station. But experts and police unions have previously questioned whether such bans are effective.

Trump admn warns people not to aid migrants

TEXAS (AP): The Trump administration has continued releasing people charged with being in the country illegally to nongovernmental shelters along the US-Mexico border after telling those organizations that providing migrants with temporary housing and other aid may violate a law used to prosecute smugglers.

Border shelters, which have long provided lodging, meals and transportation to the nearest bus station or airport, were rattled by a letter from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that raised "significant concerns" about potentially illegal activity and demanded detailed information in a wide-ranging investigation. FEMA suggested shelters may have committed felony offenses against bringing people across the border illegally or transporting them within the United States.

"It was pretty scary. I'm not going to lie," said Rebecca Solloa, executive director of Catholic Charities Diocese of Laredo. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement continued to ask shelters in Texas and Arizona to house people even after the March 11 letter, putting them in the awkward position of doing something that FEMA appeared to say might be illegal. Both agencies are part of the Department of Homeland Security.

After receiving the letter, Catholic Charities received eight to 10 people a day from ICE until financial losses forced it to close its shelter in the Texas border city on April 25, Solloa said. The Holding Institute Community, also in Laredo, has been taking about 20 families a week from ICE's family detention centers in Dilley and Karnes City, Texas, Executive Director Michael Smith said. They come from Russia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Papua New Guinea and China.

Annunciation House in El Paso,

Texas, has been receiving five to 10 people day from ICE, including from Honduras and Venezuela, said Ruben Garcia, its executive director. International Rescue Committee didn't get a letter but continues receiving people from ICE in Phoenix, according to a person briefed on the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information that has not been made public. The releases include people who had been held at ICE's Krome Detention Center in Miami, the site of severe overcrowding.

ICE's requests struck Solloa as a "little bit of a contradiction," but Catholic Charities agreed. She said some guests had been in ICE detention centers two to four weeks after getting arrested in the nation's interior and ordered released by an immigration judge while their challenges to deportations wound through the courts. Others had been flown from San Diego after crossing the border illegally.

Those released were from India, China, Pakistan, Turkey, and Central and South America, Solloa said. Smith, a Methodist pastor, said that the FEMA letter was alarming and that agreeing to continue caring for people released by ICE was "probably not a good idea." Still, it was an easy choice. "There's some things that are just right to do," he said.

Tricia McLaughlin, spokeswoman for the Homeland Security Department, drew a distinction with large-scale releases under Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden. The Biden administration worked closely with shelters but, during its busiest times, released migrants at bus stops or other public locations. "Under the Biden administration, when ICE has aliens in its custody who are ordered released, ICE does not simply release them onto the streets of a community — ICE works to verify a spon-

sor for the illegal alien, typically family members or friends but occasionally a non-governmental organization," McLaughlin said.

The government has struggled to quickly deport people from some countries because of diplomatic, financial and logistic challenges. Those hurdles have prompted ICE to deport people to countries other than their own, including El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama and — this week — South Sudan. If those options aren't available, ICE may be forced to release people in the United States.

People can challenge deportations in immigration court, though their options are much more limited when stopped at the border. If a judge orders their release, ICE is generally left with no choice but to release them. Families pose another challenge. ICE is generally prohibited from holding families with children under 18 for more than 20 days under a long-standing court agreement that the Trump administration said Thursday it would try to end.

The Trump administration has boasted that it virtually ended the practice of releasing people who cross the border illegally with notices to appear in immigration court. The Border Patrol released only seven people from February through April, down from 130,368 the same period a year earlier under President Joe Biden. But those figures do not include ICE, whose data is not publicly available. FEMA awarded \$641 million to dozens of state and local governments and organizations across the country in the 2024 fiscal year to help them deal with large numbers of migrants who crossed the border from Mexico. FEMA has suspended payments during its review, which required shelters to provide "a detailed and descriptive list of specific services provided."

EU vows to defend interests

BRUSSELS: The European Union has said it will defend its interests after United States President Donald Trump threatened to impose a 50-percent tariff on all goods from the 27-member bloc. The EU's top trade official, Maros Sefcovic, said in a post on X that he spoke on Friday with US Trade Representative Jamieon Greer and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on the issue.

"The EU is fully engaged, committed to securing a deal that works for both," he said, adding that the EU Commission remains ready to work in good faith towards an agreement. "EU-US trade is unmatched and must be guided by mutual respect, not threats. We stand ready to defend our interests."

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that he is "recommending" a huge 50 percent duty on the EU starting on June 1

since talks with them "are going nowhere". Speaking later in the Oval Office, the Republican president emphasised that he was not seeking a deal with the EU but might delay the tariffs if more European companies made major investments in the US. "I'm not looking for a deal," Trump told the reporters. "We've set the deal. It's at 50 percent."

European leaders warned the tariffs will hurt both sides. German economy minister Katherina Reiche said everything must be done "to ensure that the European Commission reaches a negotiated solution with the United States" while French foreign minister Laurent Saint-Martin said the bloc prefers de-escalation but is "ready to respond".

If implemented, the tariffs would mean that the EU will have higher import taxes on its hundreds of billions worth of

exported goods compared with China, which had its tariffs cut earlier this month to allow more negotiations between Washington, DC, and Beijing. In early April, Trump announced a 20 percent tariff on most EU goods but brought it down to 10 percent until July 8 to allow time for more negotiations.

Trump has complained that existing frameworks are "unfair" to US companies as the European bloc sells more goods to its ally than it buys from it. Trump on Friday also warned that the US tech giant Apple could also be hit with a 25 percent import tax on all iPhones not manufactured but sold in the US.

His announcements online dealt another blow to stock markets both in the US and in the EU, with the S&P 500 down about 0.8 percent and the pan-European STOXX 600 index falling about 1.2 percent. — Aljazeera