

Anti-polio drive today
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The countrywide anti-polio campaign of varied duration will commence from Monday (today). During the campaign, over 45 million children under the age of five would be administered anti-polio drops. Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication Ayesha Raza Farooq inaugurated the campaign in Islamabad.



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ISTANBUL: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif being received by Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul.

Shehbaz, Erdogan reaffirm strategic ties

Pledge Deeper Pakistan-Türkiye Cooperation

F.P. Report

ISTANBUL: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan Sunday expressed a renewed commitment to further deepen the multifaceted cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who arrived on an official two-day visit to Türkiye, held a warm and most cordial meeting with President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The two leaders pledged to continue working closely for regional peace, sustainable development, and the shared prosperity of their peoples.

The engagement reaffirmed the deep-rooted, historic, and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Türkiye, anchored in shared values, mutual respect, and a common vision for progress and prosperity.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who was accompanied by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the government and people of Türkiye for their unwavering support to Pakistan during the recent developments in South Asia, underscoring the

strength of the fraternal bonds between the two nations. He lauded Türkiye's principled stance and the outpouring of support of goodwill of the Turkish people for Pakistan and termed it as a source of great comfort and strength for Pakistan.

The Prime Minister highlighted the commitment and courage and the spirit of sacrifice of the Armed Forces of Pakistan and the resolute patriotism of the people of Pakistan that was demonstrated in an unprecedented manner which contributed greatly to Pakistan's overwhelming victory in Marak-e-Haq and Operation Bunyanum Marsoos in the defence of our homeland.

Emphasizing the need to further strengthen economic cooperation, particularly through joint ventures and enhanced bilateral investment, the Prime Minister highlighted key sectors including renewable energy, information technology, defence production, infrastructure development, and agriculture as areas of mutual interest and potential.

The two leaders conducted a comprehensive review of the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and reiterated their resolve to elevate the

strategic partnership to greater heights. They also followed up on the implementation of key decisions taken during the 7th session of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC), held in Islamabad on 13 February 2025. Both sides agreed to take steps for achieving 5 billion USD annual bilateral trade target as agreed earlier by the two leaders.

In addition to bilateral issues, Prime Minister Sharif and President Erdogan discussed pressing regional and international developments. Both leaders reaffirmed their principled support for each other's core concerns, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

They also expressed deep concern over the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, urgently calling for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access to the affected Palestinian population. Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq dar, Information & Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi and Pakistan's ambassador to Türkiye Dr. Yusuf Junaid were also part of Pakistan delegation.

Turkish President Erdogan also hosted dinner

in honour of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the accompanying delegation.

Earlier, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday arrived in Istanbul on a two day visit to Türkiye.

On arrival at the airport, he was received by Defence Minister for Türkiye Yashar Guler, Deputy Governor Istanbul Erdogan Turan Ermis, Pakistan's ambassador in Türkiye Yousaf Junaid, Counsel General Istanbul Nouman Aslam, high level officials of government of Türkiye and Pakistani diplomats based in Türkiye.

The aim of the prime minister's visit is to thank people of Türkiye especially President Erdogan for fully supporting and cooperating with Pakistan during the recent tension between Pakistan and India.

Like always, Türkiye this time also fully supported Pakistan's principled position after India imposed war on the country.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar and Special Assistant Tariq Fatimi are accompanying the prime minister.

Israeli strikes kill 23 in Gaza, including a journalist

CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli military strikes killed at least 23 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including a local journalist and a senior rescue service official, local health authorities said.

The latest deaths in the Israeli campaign resulted from separate Israeli strikes in Khan Younis in the south, Jabalia in the north and Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, medics said.

In Jabalia, they said local journalist Hassan Majdi Abu Warda and several family members

were killed by an airstrike that hit his house earlier on Sunday.

Another airstrike in Nuseirat killed Ashraf Abu Nar, a senior official in the territory's civil emergency service, and his wife in their house, medics added.

There was no immediate comment by the Israeli military.

The Hamas-run Gaza government media office said that Abu Warda's death raised the number of Palestinian journalists killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023, to 220.

In a separate statement,

the media office said Israeli forces were in control of 77% of the Gaza Strip, either through ground forces or evacuation orders and bombardment that keeps residents away from their homes.

The armed wing of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said in separate statements on Sunday that fighters carried out several ambushes and attacks using bombs and anti-tank rockets against Israeli forces operating in several areas across Gaza.

On Friday the Israeli military said it had conducted more strikes in

Gaza overnight, hitting 75 targets including weapons storage facilities and rocket launchers.

Israel launched an air and ground war in Gaza after Hamas militants' cross-border attack on October 7, 2023, which killed 1,200 people by Israeli tallies with 251 hostages abducted into Gaza.

The conflict has killed more than 53,900 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities, and devastated the coastal strip. Aid groups say signs of severe malnutrition are widespread.

the appointment.

The appointment underscores the Kingdom's global religious leadership, reflects its continued support for religious institutions, and exemplifies the leadership's care for the two holy mosques, the presidency said.

The Frontier Post

Man killed in France

LYON (Reuters): A 29-year-old man was fatally shot overnight in the eastern French city of Dijon, the local prosecutor said on Sunday, adding that a gangland killing was suspected. The southern Chenove district where the killing occurred was known for drug trafficking, the prosecutor, Olivier Caracotch, said in a statement. "A dozen shell casings used by an automatic weapon" were found in the street where the killing took place, he said.

Security Force killed nine Indian Sponsored Khwarij

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces killed nine Indian Sponsored Khwarij in three separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province on May 25 and 25.

An intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in Dera Ismail Khan District, on reported presence of Indian sponsored khwarij said a ISPR news release.

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location, and after an intense fire exchange, four Indian sponsored khwarij were sent to hell.

Another intelligence based operation was conducted in Tank District and in ensuing fire exchange, two more Indian sponsored Khwarij

were sent to hell by the security forces.

In third encounter that took place in general area Bagh, Khyber District, own troops successfully neutralized three more Indian sponsored khwarij.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed Indian sponsored khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in these areas.

Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of Indian Sponsored Terrorism from the country.

PM pays tribute to security forces for eliminating nine Khawarij Prime Minister

Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday paid tribute to the security forces for killing nine Khawarij in districts of Dera Ismail Khan, Tank and Khyber.

He said due to professional expertise of Pakistan's armed forces, eradication of terrorists and terrorism was underway at great pace.

He vowed to foil designs of the enemies of humanity.

He said justice will be meted out to the terrorists patronized by India for causing damage to the life and property of the citizens.

He said the government and security forces were determined to completely wipe out terrorism from the country.

President appreciates security forces for killing Khawarij

President Asif Ali Zardari Sunday appreciated the security forces for killing nine Indian supported Khawarij during three different operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He praised the security forces for killing the nine terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij during the intelligence based operations.

He said operations against security forces will continue till complete elimination of terrorism.

He said the successful operations of the security forces against the Indian supported terrorists was commendable.

He said, "Our determination to root out terrorist elements and defend the country is unwavering."

He expressed the national resolve to completely eradicate Fitna al-Khawarij.

Khuzdar bus attack: Toll hits 8 as two more students die

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The death toll in terror attack on a school bus in Khuzdar, Balochistan has jumped to eight after two more injured students succumbed to injuries during treatment, hospital sources confirmed on Sunday.

The attack, which took place a few days ago, has left over 30 people injured, mostly schoolchildren.

According to security officials, the latest victims, were identified as student Sheema Ibrahim and student Muskan in Quetta.

Security sources said a total of eight schoolchildren have now been martyred in the blast, with over 30 others injured, several of them critically.

Among the martyrs are seven girls and one boy, all of whom were students of various grades.

The initial blast, attributed to Indian-sponsored terrorists operating through proxies in Balochistan, targeted a school bus carrying children in the Khuzdar area.

Hafiz Kareem elected Ameer of Jamiat Ahle Hadees unopposed

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Hafiz Abdul Kareem has been elected as Ameer of Jamiat Ahle Hadees unopposed on Sunday.

Hafiz Abdul Kareem was elected new Ameer unanimously by members of party's Majlis-e-Shura after the death of Prof Sajid Mir.

Voting for the election of the new ameer was held at the Ahle Hadees Markaz in Lahore. More than 600 members of the Central Shura Council from all four provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan, attended the meeting.

The election process was completed under the supervision of the chairman of the election board, Dr Abdul Ghafoor.

After the election, Hafiz Abdul Kareem took oath of his office. Hafiz Abdul Kareem was elected Nazim Ala for five consecutive time.

Addressing press conference, new Ameer thanked Majlis Shura and Jamiat members to reposing trust on his leadership. Hafiz Abdul Kareem pledged that he would continue to work for the party leaders and members. He also thanked PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif for offering him Senate ticket.

India using Afghanistan against Pakistan: ISPR DG

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army spokesperson Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Sunday stated that India is using Afghanistan against Pakistan and urged Afghan brothers not to provide sanctuary to terrorists in their country and not to become tools of India.

Lt Gen Chaudhry, who is the director general of Inter-Service Public Relations, was interacting with more than 2,500 students from universities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during a special session.

The ISPR DG stated that the time has come for Kashmir to become part of Pakistan.

Addressing the students, Lt Gen Chaudhry said India thought it could attack and



Pakistan wouldn't respond.

"But you all saw how the nation stood united behind the country. By the will of Allah, a wall of iron was formed, which nullified all the flawed strategies of India and Modi," he added.

He said that falsehood and truth cannot coexist.

"Some people thought the army and the people were distant from each other — absolutely not. The nation and the army have always stood together and will continue to do so," he continued.

Lt Gen Chaudhry told the students that military leadership decided to respond to India and hit 26 locations.

They targeted Muzaffarabad, where seven-year-old Irtiza was martyred due to shelling on a brigade headquarters. "We destroyed their entire brigade headquarters in response."

He said: "Afghanistan is our brotherly neighboring Islamic country. Pashtun Afghans are our brothers — the problem lies with the elite. India pays and buys off Afghanistan's elite, using them against Pakistan. We say to our Afghan brothers: 'do not give sanctuary to terrorists, and don't become instruments of India. You seek help from a country that dishonors the daughters of Kashmir.'"

Trump defends block on foreign students at Harvard

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump defended on Sunday his administration's move to block foreign students at Harvard after a judge suspended the action, branded by the top university as unlawful.

"Why isn't Harvard saying that almost 31 percent of their students are from FOREIGN LANDS, and yet those countries, some not at all friendly to the United States, pay NOTHING toward their student's education, nor do they ever intend to," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

"We want to know who those foreign students are, a reasonable request since we give Harvard BILLIONS OF DOLLARS, but Harvard isn't exactly forthcoming."

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem on

Thursday revoked Harvard's ability to enroll foreign nationals, threatening the future of thousands of students and the lucrative income stream they provide into doubt.

She had threatened last month to block international students at the school unless it turned over records on visa holders' "illegal and violent activities." But a judge quickly suspended the move after the university sued to "stop the government's arbitrary, capricious, unlawful, and unconstitutional action."

The White House is cracking down on US universities on several fronts, justified as a reaction to what the administration says is uncontrolled anti-Semitism and a need to reverse diversity programs aimed at addressing historical oppression of minori-

ties. It has also moved to revoke visas and deport foreign students involved in protests against the war in Gaza, accusing them of supporting Palestinian militant group Hamas.

At Harvard, the government has threatened to put \$9 billion of funding under review, then went on to freeze a first tranche of \$2.2 billion of grants and \$60 million of official contracts. It has also targeted a Harvard Medical School researcher for deportation.

The loss of foreign nationals — more than a quarter of its student body — could prove costly to Harvard, which charges tens of thousands of dollars a year in tuition.

Harvard is the wealthiest US university with an endowment valued at \$53.2 billion in 2024.



KYIV, UKRAINE: A residential building stands damaged after a Russian air attack on Sunday Kyiv, Ukraine. Russia launched a mass combined drone-and-missile attack on Ukraine.



LAHORE: Newly elected Ameer of Markazi Jamiat Ahl Hadees Dr Hafiz Abdul Karim addressing the Majlis-e-Shura meeting. —INP Photo

PTI cheif a symbol of struggle: Cheema

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's senior leader, Musarrat Jamshed Cheema, stated in a statement that Imran Khan has become a symbol of struggle in the history of Pakistani politics. She mentioned that if Imran Khan were engaging in politics for personal interests, he would have been out of jail today.

However, he has chosen to endure imprisonment for the bright future of the nation. Musarrat Cheema further stated that the rulers, fearful of Imran Khan's popularity, are trying to keep him behind bars with false and baseless cases. According to her, the rulers aim to extend their tenure by creating an atmosphere of fear and panic in the country.

Repeating Imran Khan's message, she said that the Pakistani nation should not lose hope, and Imran Khan is optimistic that Pakistan's future is bright. Musarrat Cheema expressed her determination that, God willing, under Imran Khan's leadership, PTI will return to power and the country will achieve genuine economic progress.

Two hostages recovered

LAHORE (APP): Punjab police successfully carried out an intelligence-based operation in the Kacha Sonmiani area of Rajanpur, recovering two hostages from the custody of dacoits on Sunday.

According to a police spokesperson, the operation was led by District Police Officer (DPO) Rajanpur Farooq Amjad. A heavy exchange of fire took place between the police and the dacoits during the operation, after which the police managed to enter and destroy the criminals' hideouts.

The two individuals, who had been abducted three days ago for ransom, were safely recovered during the raid. The suspects fled the scene, leaving the hostages behind, while the police set fire to their hideouts as part of the crackdown.

The police spokesperson added that search operations are ongoing in various areas to apprehend the fleeing suspects. IGP Dr Usman Anwar commended DPO Rajanpur and his team for safely recovering the hostages and praised their effective action against criminal elements in the Kacha area.

Gang arrested

LAHORE (APP): A group of people, who were robbing spectators, who came to watch a match were arrested. According to Gulberg police, they arrested a 3-member gang of robbers and thieves during the operation. The accused were taken into custody from Center Point Park on a tip-off.

During the investigation, the accused confessed that they used to rob spectators. The accused had committed the crime on Friday while people were returning home after the match.

According to SP Model Town Akhlaquallah Tarar, cash, two motorcycles, mobile phones and two pistols have been recovered from the accused. A case has been registered against accused Amin, Ali Raza and Adnan and an investigation is underway.

Sharjeel congratulates KUJ new office holders

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has extended his heartfelt congratulations to all the newly elected office bearers of KUJ (Dastoor) on their victory in the annual elections. He offered special congratulations to Nasrullah Chaudhry on being elected unopposed as President and to Rehan Khan Chishti on being elected as Secretary.

Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that the journalists of Pakistan, especially those from Sindh, have given a strong and dignified response to the false propaganda of the

Indian media through responsible and effective journalism. He added that even during the recent war, Pakistani media houses set an example of professional integrity by prioritizing accurate and factual reporting.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon further stated that the Sindh government has taken several concrete and practical measures for the protection and welfare of journalists, which have now become a model to be followed at the national level.

He said that the Sindh Commission for the Protection of Journalists has been established to safeguard the lives and property of journalists and to ensure their professional freedom.

Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that, for the first time in the country's history, the Sindh government under the Pakistan Peoples Party has enacted comprehensive legislation for the protection, freedom, and welfare of journalists and media workers.

He added that the establishment of the Journalists Protection Commission and the legislation passed by the Sindh Assembly have provided both constitutional and practical safeguards for the protection of journalists.

He expressed hope that the new leadership of KUJ (Dastoor) will further advance responsible, courageous, and principled journalism.

Strengthening regulatory bodies urged

KARACHI (PPI): Strengthening our regulatory institutions is a must to end corruption and improve good governance in our society, emphasized Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday.

Highlighting the importance of robust regulatory bodies, Shakoor noted that enhanced resources and capabilities allow for more effective detection, prevention, and punishment of corrupt practices.

He pointed out that stronger institutions can conduct regular audits and inspections, reducing opportunities for corruption through real-time tracking.

Empowered regulators, he added, can impose

harsher penalties on corrupt individuals and organizations, thereby deterring wrongdoing.

Transparent procedures, PDP chief argued, help minimize exploitation for bribes or favoritism, while automation in processes such as e-governance decreases human interference. Shakoor stressed that strong regulators provide safe channels for whistleblowing, thereby increasing public trust and encouraging exposure of wrongdoing.

He advocated for mandatory disclosures like asset declarations to ensure traceability of transactions and called for depoliticizing probe bodies to enable impartial investigations. Citing suc-

cessful international examples, Shakoor referenced Singapore's Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and Estonia's Digital Governance as models to emulate.

The PDP chairman urged the elimination of political interference in regulatory bodies, emphasizing the necessity of adequate funding and training for effectiveness. He demanded legal and institutional reforms to enhance their independence and called for the adoption of modern technologies like AI and blockchain for audits.

Shakoor appealed to both ruling and opposition political parties to support these initiatives for better governance in society.

AIG leads CCD conference

LAHORE (APP): A high-level conference and training session for officers of the Crime Control Department (CCD) Punjab was held in Lahore under the chairmanship of Additional Inspector General (AIG) Sohail Zafar Chatha, here on Sunday.

The session was attended by senior officials from across Punjab, including DIGs, ROs, DOs and SHOs affiliated with CCD. The participants received briefings on modern investigation techniques and the use of information technology in policing.

During the session, officers were introduced to the latest methods of crime data analysis and advanced investigative procedures.

Addressing the gathering, Additional IG Sohail Zafar emphasized the importance of commitment and dedication in the line of duty. "Your role is crucial in establishing a crime-free Punjab," he said and urged officers to carry out their responsibilities as a national duty and act fearlessly against criminal elements.

"We must collectively

work to free our society from the grip of criminals," Chatha added, stressing the need for unwavering action in the fight against crime.

He also assured that officers demonstrating outstanding performance will be rewarded with cash prizes, while asserting that there was no place in the CCD for cowardly, incompetent, or corrupt individuals. "Our mission is clear – through effective policing and strong prosecution, we will bring criminals to justice," AIG concluded.

Historic Denso Hall, Library reopens

KARACHI (PPI): Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday announced the reopening of the historic Denso Hall and Library after extensive renovations.

This restoration is part of ongoing efforts to preserve the city's heritage, following the refurbishment of other iconic sites like Khaliq Dina Hall, Frere Hall, and Empress Market. At the inauguration on MA Jinnah Road, Mayor Wahab called on various institutions to collaborate in rejuvenating Karachi.

He was joined by Deputy Mayor Salman Abdullah Murad and other

officials. Mr Wahab highlighted the historical significance of Denso Hall, noting its importance as the first public library accessible to locals since 1886.

He lamented its conversion into a government office in the 1980s and its closure after being handed over to a private party in 2007. Now reopened, the hall offers a digital library, a coffee shop, and an event space for cultural and academic activities. He emphasized the need for public engagement to restore Karachi's vibrant past and ensure the city's history is celebrated.

Addressing future chal-

lenges, Karachi mayor mentioned plans for proper disposal of animal waste during Eid-ul-Adha and preparation for monsoon rains. He also announced the reconstruction of Mohammad Ali Hoti Market and upcoming restoration plans for Lea Market and Machhi Miani Market. The Sindh government has been requested to allocate funds for these projects.

He expressed gratitude to Habib Bank for its financial support and invited further collaboration from other organizations for Karachi's development.

CM abolishes birth & death registration fee in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced a major citizen-centric reform by abolishing the birth and death registration fee across the province. The initiative, aimed at facilitating the public and ensuring access to civil rights, was introduced under the Birth & Death Registration Rules 2025.

Chairing a meeting here on Sunday, the CM said, "Identity is a fundamental right of every citizen. We want to create maximum ease for the people." She emphasized that birth and death certificates are essential for accessing basic services, and timely registration ensures legal protection and civic inclusion.

Under the new rules, citizens across Punjab can now register births and deaths free of charge at Union Councils and Municipal Committees for up to seven years. Additionally, the previous requirement of a court decree for late registration has also been abolished.

"Computerized birth and death certificates will also be issued free of cost," the Chief Minister added, noting that the digital documentation will further streamline access to government services and support efficient data management.

CM Maryam Nawaz directed the departments concerned to ensure immediate and effective implementation of the new policy and to raise public awareness about the changes.

Crackdown against e-challan defaulters launched

LAHORE (APP): A crackdown on e-challan defaulters is underway in the provincial capital and a motorcycle with a fine of Rs.335,300 was also seized.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Lahore Dr. Athar Waheed has launched a full-scale operation against vehicles that have not paid fines for a long time under the e-challan scheme. The top 1,000 vehicles of e-challan defaulters have been targeted across the city, against which 12 special recovery teams of the traffic police have been mobilized.

According to the CTO Lahore, these teams have so far taken into custody top 300 defaulter vehicles and fines are being collected from their owners. He said that the teams are identifying specific defaulters and going to their homes and offices to ensure the collection of government revenue. Dr. Athar Waheed revealed that a motorcycle with the highest number of challans has also been seized, which surprisingly owed 313 e-challans and a total fine of Rs335,300.

He further said that government vehicles are also among the defaulters, a separate list of which has been prepared and the relevant government departments have been informed in writing. The CTO Lahore said that if any government vehicle violates, its driver will be held accountable according to the law. According to the Lahore Traffic Police, this operation will intensify in the coming days and the remaining 700 defaulters will also be brought to justice soon so that traffic discipline in the city can be further improved.

Pakistan chose restraint, dialogue despite nuclear capability: Gilani

LAHORE (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has said that during the recent Indian provocations, the entire Pakistani nation, along with all political parties, demonstrated exemplary unity, which played a pivotal role in delivering a strong and effective national response to the enemy.

Talking to the media after visiting the International Solar Energy Exhibition at the Expo Centre, here on Sunday, he said that the bravery and professionalism of Pakistan's armed forces are acknowledged globally. He stressed that despite being a nuclear power, Pakistan responded to Indian provocations with restraint and strategic maturity. "Pakistan's measured and well-thought-out response has earned global recognition for its wisdom and composure," he said.

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani extended heartfelt congratulations to the entire nation for demonstrating unity and playing a vital role in shaping a cohesive national response. "The credit for our firm and peaceful strategy goes to the leadership, armed forces, and the unity of all political stakeholders," he added.

He said Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to peace and dialogue, consistently pri-

oritizing negotiations over confrontation in resolving regional issues. "We have never taken any action that would threaten the stability of the region," he said.

To a question on Balochistan, he recalled that during his tenure as Prime Minister, he had clearly highlighted India's involvement in sponsoring terrorism and unrest in the province. "At that time, I presented evidence to international forums and even Bollywood produced a film, The Accidental Prime Minister, which indirectly hinted at Indian policy contradictions. This led India to show willingness to engage in dialogue on core issues like Siachen, Kashmir, and interference in Balochistan," he said.

To another query, he said Pakistan had called for a neutral and independent investigation into the Pahalgam attack, but India refused. He noted that India unilaterally suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and blocked river flows, actions that violate international law. "However, Pakistan's leadership and armed forces responded firmly, demonstrating our full capability to defend our sovereignty. The armed forces acted decisively and solely in self-defense," he added.

On domestic politics, the senate chairman stressed the need for national unity. He

declined to comment on PTI's narrative, stating that their cases are sub judice and will be decided by courts. "We must now focus on uniting the nation. Political divisions must not derail our shared goals," he said.

Responding to a question on the upcoming federal budget, he called for maximum relief for the common man. "I am a public representative, and so are my children. I urge the government to provide substantial relief to the people in the next budget," he said.

On energy policy, he underscored the importance of affordable energy solutions. "If subsidies are to be reduced in the next budget, there must be alternatives such as affordable solar panels to reduce the burden of electricity bills on the public," he suggested. He also advocated cutting unnecessary expenditures in other sectors to divert resources toward public relief.

When asked about PPP's role in current political developments, he responded that the party always put national interest first. "At this stage, it's not about any party or individual, it's about Pakistan. Any consultations, whether through Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz or coordination committees, are aimed at the country's betterment," he said.

Punjab Mother Tongue Bill tabled

LAHORE (APP): A legislation has been tabled in the Punjab Assembly for making mother tongue a compulsory subject in the province.

The proposed legislation seeks to make Punjabi, Saraiki and other local languages part of the education to ensure transmission of the cultural heritage to children. "Mother tongues should be taught to children as a compulsory subject in all schools and Madaris at primary level," the bill suggests.

Punjab Assembly Secretariat official sources

told APP that the Punjab Mother Tongue (Maan Boli) Bill was presented by member Amjad Ali Javed, in which it was proposed to make local languages part of the curriculum and cultural heritage.

According to the text, mother tongue will be taught as a compulsory subject in primary-level government and private schools and religious schools, and the language spoken in each district will be specified through an official gazette.

The text proposes that the government will pre-

pare textbooks in mother language for each district and distribute them free of charge, and special training will be provided to teachers.

According to the assembly members, this bill has been made to keep the new generation connected to their culture, local languages and culture will be able to survive.

The Punjab Mother Tongue Bill has been handed over to the relevant committee, which will submit a report in two months, after which the bill will be approved by the house.

Over 8,000 police personnel deployed

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Usman Anwar on Sunday said that over 8,000 police officers and personnel have been deployed for the final match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL X) between Lahore Qalandars and Quetta Gladiators as part of comprehensive security arrangements. According to the Punjab police spokesperson, the IGP has directed authorities to ensure comprehensive security measures for both local and international players, officials and cricket fans during the match.

Dr Usman emphasized that supervisory officers will personally review all arrangements related to security, traffic management and general safety during the match. He stressed that police personnel stationed at duty points should remain highly vigilant, with a sharp eye on any suspicious activities.

"We have adopted a more advanced security strategy for the PSL matches, ensuring a safer environment for everyone involved," said Dr. Usman, lauding the efforts of the Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan police for maintaining peace during previous matches.

The IGP also highlighted the successful coordination between district administrations, security agencies and relevant institutions, which has contributed to the seamless execution of the PSL events.

Squad, Police Response Units and Elite Force teams will conduct targeted patrols around key routes, the stadium and surrounding areas.

Additionally, continuous surveillance will be maintained through CCTV cameras installed at critical locations such as the teams' routes, the stadium and accommodation sites, added Usman. The Punjab Police has issued a traffic advisory, urging citizens to cooperate with law enforcement.

Snipers will be stationed on high-rise buildings surrounding the stadium to provide extra security, he maintained. "Fans should follow police instructions to fully enjoy the match in a safe and secure environment," IGP concluded.



KARACHI: People gathered near overturned truck due to over speed at super highway. —INP Photo



PESHAWAR: An open manhole in Dabgari area can be deadly for the padestrians and motorists especially during night time. This needs attention of the authorities concerned. — INP photo

Mohmand dam poised to energize KP’s power, agriculture sectors

PESHAWAR (APP): In a decisive push to tackle Pakistan’s deepening energy crisis, the federal government is intensifying efforts to harness the country’s vast hydropower potential, with the Mohmand Dam emerging as a flagship project in this national drive.

Despite possessing an estimated 60,000 MW of untapped hydropower capacity—half of which lies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa alone—Pakistan has significantly lagged behind regional peers in utilizing this renewable resource.

China has constructed nearly 98,000 dams, India over 5,300, while Pakistan has built only about 150 since its independence, experts said.

“The key to Pakistan’s economic, agriculture and social development lies in energy affordability and water security—both of which can be achieved through comprehensive dam infrastructure,” said Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naeemur Rehman Khattak of the University of Peshawar.

He noted that the northern regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab are especially conducive for both large- and small-scale hydropower initiatives.

The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) recently marked a major milestone with the commencement of main construction work on the Mohmand Dam being built on River Swat.

Situated on the Swat River in the tribal district of Mohmand, this strategically important project forms a cornerstone of Pakistan’s future

energy and water security.

Standing at a towering height of 213 meters, the Mohmand Dam will be the world’s fifth highest concrete-faced rockfill dam.

It will store 1.29 million acre-feet (MAF) of water, enabling irrigation for 18,233 acres of new land while enhancing water availability for another 160,000 acres of existing farmland.

Equally crucial is the dam’s energy output. With an expected generation capacity of 800 MW, it will supply 2.86 billion units of clean, renewable electricity annually to the national grid.

During a recent visit to the construction site, Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Mueen Wattoo and WAPDA Chairman Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) reaffirmed the government’s commitment to completing the project by 2027–28.

The minister inspected several key components, including the diversion system, spillway, power intake tunnel, and powerhouse—where work is progressing across 14 active construction sites.

“Mohmand Dam is more than just a power project—it’s a comprehensive response to Pakistan’s challenges of energy shortages, water scarcity, and flood risks,” Minister Wattoo said.

“The federal government is fully committed to supporting WAPDA’s mega projects, recognizing the urgency of water conservation and sustainable energy.”

Beyond power generation and irri-

gation, the dam is expected to play a critical role in flood mitigation for downstream areas including Peshawar, Charsadda, and Nowshera, which are increasingly vulnerable to climate-induced disasters.

Additionally, it will provide up to 300 million gallons of potable water daily to Peshawar, significantly easing the city’s drinking water crisis.

Experts and environmental advocates have widely welcomed the project, stressing that investment in hydropower is not only economically prudent but also environmentally essential.

As global fuel prices climb and climate change accelerates, renewable energy solutions like hydropower are imperative.

However, hydropower remains underutilized in Pakistan’s energy mix, constrained by policy inertia, bureaucratic red tape, and periodic public opposition to large-scale infrastructure.

The successful execution of the Mohmand Dam and similar projects could pave the way for a national transition toward cleaner and more resilient energy systems.

As Pakistan moves towards a greener future, the role of dams as multipurpose infrastructure—for power, water supply, and disaster management—has never been more critical.

With sustained political resolve, transparent oversight, and community engagement, the country can chart a path toward energy self-reliance and long-term economic and food stability.

Public participation in ‘Save the Province’ to prove PPP’s popularity: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Sunday said that public participation in the “Save the Province” protest scheduled for May 26 in Peshawar will serve as a testament to the Pakistan Peoples Party’s (PPP) popularity among the masses.

He made these remarks while speaking with a delegation comprising Muhammad Rehan Baloch, Divisional President of Peoples Youth Ziauddin Bhittani, Zahid Bhittani, and Sikandar Khan Miankhal at the Governor House in Islamabad.

The delegation informed the Governor that under the leadership of PPP Parliamentary Leader Ahmed Karim Kundi, a

large convoy from Dera Ismail Khan and other southern districts will arrive in Peshawar to join the protest. They also praised Governor Kundi for his efforts in launching various public welfare initiatives, including the Chashma Lift Canal project, the establishment of NADRA and passport offices in Paharpur tehsil of Dera Ismail Khan, and the expansion of the free ambulance service by the Red Crescent Society of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Meanwhile, Senior Pakistan Peoples Party leader and former federal minister Jangez Jamali met with Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House in Islamabad.

During the meeting, the

two leaders held detailed discussions on several key issues, including the success of the “Battle for Truth” and Operation Bunyan Marsoos. They also exchanged views on recent acts of terrorism in Khuzdar and other areas, which are believed to be a reaction to India’s recent defeat. In addition, organizational matters concerning the PPP were also discussed, with an emphasis on strengthening the party’s structure and strategy in light of ongoing national and regional developments.

Governor KP praises Pakistan Army for eliminating four terrorists in DI Khan operation

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday

lauded the Pakistan Armed Forces for successfully eliminating four terrorists affiliated with the Indian-backed group “Fitna al-Khawarij” in operation in Dera Ismail Khan’s Khoi Bahara area.

Commending the successful operation, Governor Kundi extended special appreciation to the operational commander and security personnel involved in the mission.

He said that the disgraceful end of those attempting to use the peaceful region of Khoi Bahara for nefarious purposes is a highly welcome development. The Governor also prayed for the swift recovery of the injured personnel, including a Major, who sustained injuries during the operation.

A digital turning point: 8,000 youth to join tech revolution

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a powerful stride toward digital empowerment, the Aziz Jan Trust, in partnership with Saylani Welfare International, hosted the Entry Test for Batch 4 and the Graduation Ceremony for Batches 2 & 3 of the Mohsin & Huma Mass IT Training Centre at Sheraz Gathering, Peshawar.

A record 8,000 young aspirants competed in four shifts for 2,000 fully funded seats in high-demand IT programs such as Python, Cloud Computing, Web and Mobile Development, Graphic Design, Video Animation, and Digital Marketing all provided free of cost, making world-class digital education accessible to all.

The event also celebrated the success of Batches 2 and 3, whose graduates are already earning locally and internationally. Several male and female

graduates shared powerful success stories, crediting the program for launching careers, building confidence, and enabling financial independence.

Delivering an inspiring address, Mr. Afan Aziz, Chairman-Aziz Jan Trust stated:

“Two years ago, a seed was planted—today, it stands as a thriving tree. Congratulations to all graduates on this achievement.”

“Though I come from manufacturing industry, not IT, I believe no other field offers the kind of rapid progress and global opportunity that information technology does. After meeting Maulana Bashir Farooqui and Mr. Afzal Chamdia of Saylani Welfare International in Karachi and witnessing their work, I had the desire to bring the same opportunity to the youth of Peshawar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.”

“We will provide the

opportunity but the effort and action must come from you.”

He also paid tribute to the Pakistan Army, saying: “Our armed forces have shattered the illusions of the enemy through skill and sacrifice. Pakistan and its army are one. They are fighting the battle for our collective survival and we are proud of them.”

“Our neighbour may lack our military strength but leads significantly in IT. That’s the domain where we must now win, and we will InshaAllah”

Mr. Aziz further honored Maulana Bashir Farooqui and Afzal Chamdia of Saylani Welfare International for their tireless service to youth development in Pakistan.

Notable guests including Javid Ali, Dr. Muneer Khattak, Shah Sawar, Abdullah Khattak, and other dignitaries attended the event, reaffirming support for this transformative mission.

Launched in September 2023, the Mohsin & Huma Mass IT Training Centre has already empowered over 4,000 graduates many now working in tech sectors or freelancing globally. The center stands as a beacon of digital literacy, skill-building, and economic upliftment.

As the philanthropic arm of the Aziz Group of Industries, the Aziz Jan Trust also operates the Aziz Jan Institute of Learning at SOS Village Peshawar, educates over 1,200 underprivileged children, provides daily meals at Lady Reading Hospital, and offers merit scholarships across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This initiative is more than just a training program it is a movement toward a digitally empowered, self-reliant Pakistan. It proves that with vision, opportunity, and effort, national transformation is within reach.

PCP joins hands with WHO in polio awareness

PESHAWAR (APP): An orientation session on Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP), a sudden and alarming condition that causes weakness or paralysis in children, was held at Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI-EPI).

Dr. Amna Ahmad Khan, Disease Surveillance Officer World Health Organisation (WHO) Peshawar Chapter, delivered a compelling presen-

tation explaining how AFP often signals deeper threats like polio. She stressed the need for timely referrals, community-level surveillance and stronger coordination among healthcare institutions.

“We can only win this fight if everyone, right from hospital staff to local volunteers, plays their part,” she emphasized.

Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Syed, CEO PCP, while addressing the participants, reflected on the long and painful history of polio in Pakistan. “For

decades, this disease has haunted our children, our families, our future. We’ve come a long way, but the danger still lingers,” he said. Dr. Ilyas stressed the urgent need to counter the myths and fears surrounding polio vaccination.

“At PCP, we see the human cost of paralysis every day. We owe it to every child to spread awareness and protect them before it’s too late,” he added.

He further announced that PCP staff would actively promote polio awareness among

patients, families and community-based focal persons. “This message must travel beyond our walls to the communities, the schools, and the homes,” he concluded.

Participants and organizers alike appreciated PCP’s continued role as a responsible healthcare institution not only in rehabilitation but also in raising awareness on critical public health issues. The event highlighted the power of partnership and education in ensuring a polio-free future for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Pakistan in general.

Wildlife Department hero laid to rest

PESHAWAR: The funeral prayer of the Head Warden of the Wildlife Department, who was martyred while trying to extinguish a wild-fire on a mountain in Mankial, was held on Sunday in Bahrain. The funeral was attended by Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Forests, Wildlife, Environment and Climate Change, Pir Musavir Khan, district administration officials, mayor Bahrain, officials of Forest and Wildlife Departments and local residents.

Fazal inspects work on water supply scheme

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives, Fazal Hakim Khan, visited Mingora city last night to inspect the ongoing work on the Gravity Water Supply Scheme.

On the occasion, he directed the concerned officials to ensure strict adherence to quality standards during the completion of the project and to accelerate the pace of work so that the public does not face difficulties in accessing hospitals and other essential facilities.



issues but also result in energy savings.

This will be made possible through the use of modern rapid gravity filter technology, solar energy, and a water metering system, which will allow water to reach upper floors without the need for additional power source.

Fazal Hakim Khan emphasized that work on the project is progressing rapidly and it will serve as a milestone for the people of Mingora.

He warned the relevant authorities that any negligence at any level would result in strict action.

Peshawari Chappal: A saga of decade-old-long craftsmanship

PESHAWAR (APP): In the blistering heat of Peshawar, amidst the aroma of Chappli Kababs and the distant hum of shoppers at the historic Qissa Khwani Bazaar, 45-year-old shoemaker Haji Khanzada toils meticulously over a pair of leather sandals—the iconic Peshawari Chappal.

Unfazed by the sweltering sun and load shedding, his hands were busy in clockwork with complete precision at historic Qissa Khwani bazaar, embodying a legacy of craftsmanship that spans over generations.

Assisted by his elder son Gul Zada and three apprentices in a modest two-room shop at Jhangirapura, Khanzada is busy in enlivening this age-old tradition of Peshawar, preparing to meet the surge in demand of this commodity ahead of Eid ul Azha.

Known affectionately as “Ustad G” among his peers, he represents the spirit of resilience and heritage that defines the Peshawari Chappal industry at Peshawar being a home to artisans.

“I was just a school boy when I started helping my father stitch these home-

made shoes. Since 1995, I never looked back to carry forward this art,” he recalled with quiet pride, surrounded by unfinished pairs awaiting final touches.

“Each chappal passes through six skilled stages before it is ready. From sole preparation to polishing — it is a craft that demands patience and concentration,” he said.

Peshawari Chappal is more than footwear — it is a cultural emblem that goes from one generation to another. Originating from the terrains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was once the practical choice of Pashtun tribesmen and international traders who used to buy it for loved ones while staying at Qissa Khwani before the Indo-Pak partition. Today, it stands as a fashionable, comfortable and durable accessory worn across Pakistan and beyond.

In a world overrun by factory-made imports, the Peshawari Chappal’s handmade charm continues to thrive at Peshawar where around 50,000 people are associated to this unique craftsmanship.

The shoe’s journey



begins with a thick rubber sole, layered and flattened. Carefully selected leather is sewn and shaped, before being affixed to the sole. A wooden insert is used to stretch and secure the structure, ensuring the shoe’s durability. The final stage involves intricate polishing, varnishing and chemical treatment to enhance its shine and appeal.

As Eidul Azha

approaches, shoe shops at Jhangirapura teem with shoppers from nearby districts like Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi and even tribal regions like Khyber and Bajaur. Peshawari chappal has outshone foreign-made footwear in popularity due to its affordability, shininess and cultural significance.

“Peshawari Chappal is our decades old tradition. Our functions and festivals

remain tasteless without this footwear,” said Waris Khattak, a government employee from Karak while selecting a chappal at Jhangirapura.

“It’s elegant, durable, and surprisingly affordable.”

He purchased six pairs this year at Rs 5,000 each — a slight increase from last year, but still within reach of average citizens.

For many, it’s also a gift

of choice. Khurshid Khan from the Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation bought pairs to send to friends at Khewra Mines, Punjab. “It pairs perfectly with Shalwar Qameez — and even jeans,” he smiled while selecting designs for friends.

Once confined to KP alone, the Peshawari Chappal is now a global trend. From the streets of Kabul to wedding cere-

monies in Dubai, it has found admirers among fashion enthusiasts worldwide. Artisans like Khanzada now receive bulk orders from GULF, Afghanistan, UAE, Saudia Arabia and even in London, Europe, Malaysia and beyond.

“Despite setbacks during COVID-19 and terrorism-related slowdowns, I did not give up,” Khanzada said, adding “My mother encouraged me to continue our family’s this decades-long legacy. Today, I am overwhelmed with orders — but limited by time and power outage.”

He urged the KP government to provide interest-free loans and financial incentives for its artisans and said, “without support, our decades old trade may suffer losses.”

The KP government is taking note of concerns of its craftsmen and its importance in revenue generation.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Industry, Abdul Karim Tordhair, emphasized the potential of the footwear industry in generating employment and boosting exports.

“We’re promoting tradi-

tional shoe-making through public-private partnerships,” he said. “Organizations like Italy-Pakistan Footwear Technological Center and PFMA can help modernize production and increase global outreach.”

He said the government’s focus is not just preservation, but innovation — updating tools, improving quality control and streamlining export processes.

Peshawari Chappal is no longer bound by borders or generations. It has evolved from a tribal necessity into a global fashion statement over decades. For people like Khanzada and the bustling artisans of Peshawar’s alleys, each chappal stitched is not just a product — it’s a piece of heritage, a testament to endurance and a walk into the future.

Styles may change and so the material — but it’s make and liking do not diminish even after decades down the road. Once again, as Eidul Azha approaches, one thing is clear that the soul of Peshawari Chappal — stitched in leather and memory — endures.



In brief

SNGPL cuts off three meters

MULTAN (APP): In a bid to curb gas theft and illegal activities, the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) UFG Control Task Force intensified its operation and disconnected three more gas meters in various areas of the city. According to the details, two meters, which were taken off, were recovered. One meter was disconnected for compressor use for getting gas illegally. One meter, installed upside down, was cut off. The door-to-door checking of 67 consumers was carried out. The measures were part of the company's commitment to combating gas theft and ensuring high-quality, uninterrupted service for all consumers.

Skin related ailments

MULTAN (APP): The ongoing heatwave across South Punjab has triggered a sharp rise in skin-related ailments with dermatologists warning of complications caused by excessive sweating and prolonged exposure to high temperatures. Dr Waqas Arqam Malik, a noted skin specialist said that heat and sweat were contributing to the spread of fungal infections, heat rashes, body odor issues, and acne flare-ups. He added that blocked sweat pores provide a breeding ground for bacteria and fungi, especially in individuals with oily or sensitive skin. He said that patients suffering from prickly heat, underarm infections, foot fungus and rashes in body folds were visiting clinics in increasing numbers. If left untreated, such conditions can lead to folliculitis, pigmentation and recurring skin inflammation, said Dr Waqas. Dr Waqas advised people to maintain personal hygiene by taking showers twice a day during intense sweating, using antifungal powders in skin folds and avoiding heavy creams and makeup which can block pores. He recommended wearing light-colored, loose-fitting cotton clothes, staying hydrated and changing sweat-soaked clothes regularly. He also advised avoiding direct sunlight between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and applying sunscreen with at least SPF 30 before stepping outdoors. Dr Waqas warned that neglecting proper skin care during heatwaves could lead to chronic issues and urged people to be proactive in managing sweat-related skin conditions.

Tank Police launch search operations

TANK (APP): In line with special directives from Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Syed Ashfaq Anwar, the District Police Officer (DPO) of Tank, Aslam Nawaz Khan, has initiated a comprehensive security plan ahead of the nationwide anti-polio campaign set to begin tomorrow. Under the DPO's direct supervision, joint search and strike operations have been launched across the district involving the District Police, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), and Elite Police. According to official details, these operations are aimed at ensuring law and order during the polio drive and preemptively countering any potential threats. SHOs from all police stations participated in the operations within their respective jurisdictions, focusing on high-risk areas, entry and exit routes, suspected hideouts, abandoned buildings, hotels, and informal settlements. During the search operations, police conducted checks on tenant registrations, carried out biometric verifications, and scrutinized identity documents.

Efforts to resolve public problems directed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda", visited the Kalaya, Orakzai district along with the Deputy Commissioner Orakzai Muhammad Irfanuddin Chitrali where he held a high-level meeting in which the Heads of all the departments participated.

The meeting, chaired by the Commissioner Kohat discussed in detail various developmental projects of the area, public issues, and

other important matters. During the meeting, each department gave a detailed briefing on the progress, problems, and future action plan related to its respective sector.

Commissioner Kohat strictly directed all the concerned departments and institutions to complete the ongoing developmental projects within stipulated time and ensure coordinated and effective measures to resolve the problems faced by the public.

Motasim Billah, on this occasion, while expressing his satisfaction over the pace of development works in the area, said that the

government is making serious efforts for the rapid development of the tribal districts and the welfare of the people, therefore, all the institutions should fulfill their responsibilities in this regard in a good manner.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Kohat also met the elders of the area there and consulted them on the developmental strategy as well as law and order in the district. He also organized an open court for the immediate resolution of the problems of the common people, which was widely appreciated by the public.

UNICEF organizes training workshop for journalists

Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: The Sindh government, in collaboration with UNICEF, organized a training workshop for health generalists in Larkana with the aim of educating journalists on key challenges related to vaccination, including multi-dose wise management, phased-in vaccination strategy, and new upcoming vaccines, especially the HPD vaccine for cancer prevention, and vaccine protocols.

EPI Project Director Rajkumar, UNICEF Immunization Officer Sabeel Raja, EPI Larkana Focal Person Dr. Irfan Sheikh, and senior journalists from Karachi and Larkana and others par-

ticipated in the workshop. It was informed in the workshop that the written vial of the vaccine must be used within 6 hours and that a fixed site and out-of-range vaccination strategy is in effect in Sindh under which vaccinators cannot go to homes but parents have to bring their children to vaccination centers themselves.

By understanding such things, journalists can do more comprehensive and effective reporting. It was informed in the workshop about measles that measles has become a big problem not only in Sindh but also in the whole of Pakistan and globally.

According to a report by the World Health

Organization, 10.3 million measles cases were registered in the year 2023. To address these challenges, a target has been set to vaccinate 1.77 million newborns and 1.97 million pregnant women in Sindh, for which 3252 government vaccinators and an extensive network of EPI are active, under which the best steps have been taken for immunization.

It was further informed in the workshop that the efforts of EPI Sunni and UNICEF aim to strengthen the capacities of journalists and the media can play a major role in this regard, while it is essential to have the position of relevant sector officials while reporting on health.

ANP-organized APC rejects proposed Mines and Minerals Bill

F.P. Report

BUNER: The Awami National Party (ANP) District Buner organized an All Parties Conference (APC) on Sunday at Bacha Khan Markaz Daggar to oppose the proposed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill. The conference witnessed the participation of district presidents, general secretaries of various political parties, lawyers, paramedics, business community leaders, and journalists from the Buner Press Club - with the notable absence of representatives from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The APC was chaired by ANP District President Muhammad Karim Babak. Prominent attendees included PPP's Yousaf Ali Khan, Yousafzai Narivala Jirga's Zahir Shah, Professor Hameed-ur-Rehman of Qaumi Watan Party, Mufti Fazal Ghafor of JUI-F, Engineer Nasir Ali Khan of Jamaat-e-Islami, Jahanzeb Khan of the Awami Workers Party, Maulana Salam of Ishaat, Mehboob Ayub of the Pakhtunkhwa Awami Party, Akbar Khan of Al Khidmat, Mukhtar

Khan of the Buner Press Club, Khurshed Khan of the Marble Association, Imdadullah of the Marble Mines, Fazal Rabi of the Traders' Community, former Provincial Assembly candidate Dr. Saveri Prakash, Salar Khan and Shah Bakht Rawan of the PML-N, Mian Syed Laiq Bacha of the Loya Jirga, and representatives from JUI-P and JUI-S. Senior ANP figures Haji Rauf Khan, Afsar Khan, and Mir Ali Khan were also present.

Participants of the conference unanimously rejected the proposed bill, declaring it an attempt by the federal government to usurp provincial rights, undermine the 18th Amendment, and make the Constitution controversial. They asserted that this was a conspiracy to seize control of the province's natural resources and vowed to resist it on all fronts, even if it required great sacrifices. They emphasized that no external force would be allowed to control their resources.

However, Buner Bar President Advocate Israr offered a nuanced view. He noted that while some clauses of the bill could be amended, there was nothing

inherently wrong with the bill from a legal standpoint. He added that lawyers, as representatives of the community, were primarily concerned with its legal implications.

In a joint declaration issued by Ali Mohammad Khan, the conference stated that the proposed bill would damage the trust between the federation and the provinces and threaten provincial autonomy. The declaration emphasized that control over labor and natural resources must remain with the people of the province and their elected representatives, not with any federal institution or bureaucracy.

The APC also declared the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) unconstitutional, claiming it aimed to establish federal control over key sectors such as minerals, tourism, agriculture, and IT. The declaration called for the immediate rejection of the proposed bill by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and urged a constitutional and legal struggle against it. If passed, the declaration warned of a widespread protest movement across the province.



KOHATA: Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Ikram chairing meeting of Development Committee.

WSSC's cleanliness drive in full swing ahead of Monsoon

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): In compliance with the directives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the Water and Sanitation Services Company D I Khan (WSSC) has launched a 10-day cleanliness campaign, which is currently in full swing.

The campaign began on May 19 and will continue until May 29, this year.

The primary objective of this special campaign is to ensure a clean and healthy environment for the city ahead of the pre-monsoon rains and the important occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

The campaign is being directly supervised by WSSC Chief Executive Officer Dr. Mohsin Habib, Chairman Board of Directors WSSC-DIKhan Naimat Ullah Khan and Operations Manager Abdul Rehman. Under their leadership, sanitation teams have actively begun cleaning operations across the city.

Efforts are focused on cleaning drains, streets, neighborhoods, and other public areas. Special attention is being given to densely populated regions and places at risk of water accumulation during rainfall. Major drainage channels are being cleared on time, and waste is being promptly collected and disposed of to prevent the spread of foul odors and diseases.

The initiative has been widely appreciated by local communities and social organizations. They commend WSSC's timely and effective actions, highlighting that such campaigns not only help maintain cleanliness but also promote public awareness about hygiene.

This drive is expected to enhance the city's appearance and address public health concerns, particularly during Eid-ul-Azha, when proper disposal of animal waste becomes crucial. Officials have appealed to the public to cooperate with WSSC staff and ensure that garbage is placed at designated locations, helping maintain a clean and healthy city environment.

Suspect of murdering minot in Lakki arrested

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Police on Sunday claimed to have arrested a suspect involved in murdering a minor boy in Khan Kallay area of Lakki Marwat district.

A police official said that on April 5, Hanifullah had shot at and killed an eleven year old Khalid over damaging crops by his goat.

The deceased's father Shahidullah had told police the suspect had killed his son before him and escaped the scene.

The official said that the killer was at large since over the last one month and police were combing the rural localities in search of him.

After the murder of the minor, DPO Muhammad

Jawad Ishaq had directed local police to ensure arresting the killer", he maintained, adding that on a tip off, a party of Tajori police station raided a suspected hideout in the rural area and captured Hanifullah without facing any resistance.

He said that the cops also seized an AK 47 assault rifle used in the murder, spare magazine and ammunition from the arrested killer and shifted him to the police station.

Separately, six suspects were arrested and arms and ammunition and narcotics were recovered from them in Bannu.

An official said that the arrests were made during a search and strike operation in parts of the district.

"Following the directives of RPO Sajjad Khan and DPO Saleem Abbas Kulachi, the law enforcers also eliminated the hideouts of criminals' gangs and anti-social elements", he claimed, adding that the arrested suspects included Shaukatullah, Muhammad Wali, Abdullah, Zohaib, Abdul Khalik and Rafiullah residents of Bannu district.

He said that the cops also seized 3160 gram hashish, 916 gram ice (crystal meth), 15 litre liquor/wine, two Kalashnikov rifles, 11 pistols, two shotguns, a Kalakov rifle, 151 bullets and a small quantity of heroin from arrested men and registered cases against them.

38th anniversary of Young Writers Equity celebrated

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The 38th Anniversary of Young Writers Equity Kohat, was celebrated in a grand ceremony, which held at Bacha Khan Library Kohat, the other day.

The ceremony was presided over by the President Tajir Itehad and renowned political and social figure Ameer Khan Afridi, while Baz Muhammad Khattak was the chief guest on the occasion.

The founder of the Equity and its incumbent president, Muhammad Jan Atif, performed the administrative duties.

The ceremony formally

started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Muhammad Ehsan.

On this occasion, books of the 4 renowned Urdu poets of Kohat, Arif Bukhari, Dr. Haroon Adeel, Jamil Siraj and Arshad Naem Qureshi were presented before the audience.

The Chief Guest Baz Muhammad Khattak, while paying tributes to the invaluable services of the Equity founder Muhammad Jan Atif for the organization said that although he has joined the ranks of the elders but his passion is still young and effectively serving the literature, which is worthy of imitation and praise.

President of the event Ameer Khan Afridi said that poets have a very important role in the reformation of the society, which they have been playing with great dedication and zeal from the beginning.

He on this occasion, also announced to organize a poetry gathering at his own expense in celebration of the Pakistan's glorious victory in the recent war against India.

The prestigious literary ceremony was also attended by the poets, writers and people from different walks of life. On this occasion, a cake was also cut on eve of the organization's 38th Anniversary.

Seven-day polio vaccination campaign to launch across Balochistan on Monday

QUETTA (APP): A province-wide anti-polio campaign will kick off across Balochistan on May 26 (Monday) aiming to immunize over 2.66 million children under the age of five, announced Inam-ul-Haq, Coordinator of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Balochistan.

In a statement issued to the media, Inam-ul-Haq said that the seven-day campaign is a vital step in the ongoing fight against poliovirus, which remains a threat in the region due to recent detections of cases and environmental samples testing positive for the virus. He urged parents to ensure their children are vaccinated, warning that failure to do so could result in lifelong disability. As part of the campaign, children will also receive Vitamin A supplements, which help strengthen immunity and reduce the risk of illness. Inam-ul-Haq emphasized that all preparations have been finalized, and teams are fully mobilized across urban and remote areas of the province.

A total of 11,659 teams will be deployed during the campaign, including 9,129 mobile teams, 958 fixed-site teams, and 586 teams at transit points such as bus stands and railway stations. The campaign's success, he stressed, depends heavily on community support. He called on civil society members, teachers, and religious leaders to play their part in raising awareness and encouraging families to participate. In addition to polio vaccination, Inam-ul-Haq reminded parents about the importance of routine immunization, which protects children from 12 vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, and diphtheria.

Dhobi Ghaat – An archetype of glittering political legacy

FAISALABAD (APP): A beacon of political activism, democracy and social justice – Dhobi Ghaat Ground in Faisalabad – boasts for hosting some of the country's most prominent movements and leaders over the decades.

By giving political boost to numerous political leaders, its legacy continues to shine no matter whatever challenges came its way in maintaining its relevance amid rapid urbanization and changing demographic conditions of the city.

The historical and political importance of this open ground – nestled in neighborhoods and markets – cannot be overlooked as it has served as a pedestal where the policies were challenged, movements born and pulse of people could be known in a glance at the gatherings.

For decades, Dhobi Ghaat also called Iqbal

Park has remained an iconic landmark for its historical and cultural significance and its deep-rooted connection to the political landscape. It is a symbol of resilience, also representing working class, labor unions and worker rights organizations that have often used it as a battleground to voice concerns over wages, working conditions and social justice.

"Dhobi Ghaat ground has a history. It has been a hub of political activities in Faisalabad for decades," remarked Muhammad Iqbal, a veteran journalist who has covered numerous events at this ground. "Its central location and spaciousness makes it an ideal venue for large gatherings."

Iqbal has been reporting on politics in Faisalabad for over 25 years and believes that the ground's significance extends beyond its physical attributes. "It is a symbol of

city's rich political heritage and a reminder of many struggles and sacrifices made by the people of Faisalabad in pursuit of democracy and supremacy of the parliament."

Initially, Dhobi Ghaat was purely functional, but as Faisalabad (then Lyallpur) grew, it became a space where workers and activists congregated. Even in pre-partition era, Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah was also invited to address a mammoth gathering as part of Pakistan movement for having a separate homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent.

After partition, first premier of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan and Mohatma Fatima Jinnah also addressed public gatherings at this ground. Later, known leaders like Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto and many others also addressed public gatherings at this ground.

During this ground movements and election campaigns.

"Dhobi Ghaat is not just a space for speeches rather a historical stage where leaders have set the course of political journey," noted Wazir Ahmad Khan, a political analyst. "People who gathered here for movements, elections and protests made it the most politically active destination."

From former prime ministers to opposition leaders, Dhobi Ghaat has hosted some of the most significant political figures in the history of Pakistan," he said. "This legacy continues today and this venue is still being used for political and social activism."

Qamar Ali, a social activist said that one of the defining aspects of Dhobi Ghaat ground is its role in promoting democracy. "It has served as a melting pot where people from all walks of life have gathered

to listen their leaders, express their concerns and demand change. It is here that slogans of democracy, justice and social reforms have echoed through massive crowds."

He said that public spaces like Dhobi Ghaat ground are the true barometers of democratic engagement. "The energy, the passion and the sheer diversity of people who come together here represent the power of political mobilization in Pakistan."

The significance of this space extends beyond political rallies as rallies starting here later turned into mass movement sometimes laying foundations for changes in overall political landscape.

Malik Mushtaq Ahmad, a labor rights activist, said that Faisalabad, known as textile hub of Pakistan, has a long history of labor movements, many of which found their voice at Dhobi Ghaat ground.

"Workers from the textile industry, demanding fair wages and better working conditions, have organized countless gatherings at this venue."

"Since many a time these congregations ended up with better facilities for workers," Mushtaq said. "The working class in Faisalabad sees Dhobi Ghaat ground as their forum for justice from where they had started movements against oppressive policies of employers."

Simply seeing in countryside political perspective and movements, Dhobi Ghat is none the less than historically known destinations like Minar-e-Pakistan, Lahore and Mazar-e-Quaid Karachi. The political parties have recognized its importance in influencing working-class vote and those knowing political dynamics of Faisalabad cannot ignore holding rallies or gatherings at Dhobi Ghaat.

"Dhobi Ghaat Ground has been utilized strategically by the political parties to strengthen their foothold in Faisalabad," said Political strategist Arif Khan. "During election seasons, it becomes the battleground for competing political forces, each attempting to sway the public with grand promises and fiery speeches."

He said that the political relevance of Dhobi Ghaat Ground is immense. "A successful rally here is often seen as an indicator of popularity in the region. It is a place where parties gauge their support base and mobilize voters ahead of elections."

As the time takes its course, many important places gradually lose their importance but the destinations like Dhobi Ghaat live longer and stand tall for their association to political activity in the country.



Five years after George Floyd's murder, racial justice push continues

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA (Reuters): Shareeduh McGee is fighting to keep the memory of her cousin George Floyd alive. Millions took to streets across the world to protest the police killing of Floyd, a Black Minneapolis man who gasped "I can't breathe," shortly before dying after an officer knelt on his neck for several minutes in May 2020. His plea became a rally cry for the protest movement, which demanded police accountability and racial justice. Companies pledged significant sums of money toward addressing systemic discrimination. And conversations about structural racism were thrust into the spotlight. Yet, exactly five years after Floyd's murder, the nation has seen a drastic reversal of support for racial equity efforts. Commitments made by cor-

porate America and the government have been dialed back or eliminated. Diversity, equity and inclusion policies and programs are in the crosshairs of President Donald Trump's administration. Some of these rollbacks predate his Oval Office return. Floyd's murder "was an ultimate sacrifice, and I think if you don't create opportunities for people to learn from it, if we don't have changes that happen because of that huge loss, then it was in vain. His death was in vain," McGee said at a Houston event Thursday commemorating Floyd's life, adding she's disappointed but not surprised by the rollbacks and the Department of Justice's decision to drop oversight spurred by Floyd and the police killings of other Black Americans. Advocates say the nationwide push for racial justice has continued

despite the lack of significant reform. But they acknowledge the road ahead is arduous, characterizing it as an intense backlash to diversity efforts and civil rights. "(George Floyd) was a realization by many across the country that this open murder was something that was not only appalling but it brought full circle the question of the treatment of Black people, particularly Black males, in this country," said NAACP President Derrick Johnson. "But the other side of that story is there is an unfortunate fatigue in this country." Experts say periods of backlash aren't new. Throughout American history, including after the civil rights movement, the nation has experienced periods of "racial fatigue" or resentment after progress was made toward securing rights for marginalized groups.

"To see the undoing of a beginning of a racial reckoning in less than five years, when it took 12 years and several national elections to get us to the Jim Crow period, the nadir of Black politics after Reconstruction, it moved really quickly this time," said Nadia Brown, a Georgetown professor of government and chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Program. "Five years later, I think that sense of optimism is gone." A May 7 Pew Research Center survey, opens new tab found that 72% of adults in 2025 said the focus on racial inequality did not lead to change that helped Black Americans. It also found that 67% of Black Americans felt doubtful the nation would ever achieve racial equality. "There's been growing skepticism in the last five years," said Juliana

Horowitz, co-author of the report and Pew Research's senior associate director of research. "It's a very sizable shift." Americans remain split about the importance of companies making statements about politics or social issues, according to Pew's report, after a number of companies have either scrapped their DEI plans altogether or continued to quietly support them. Rev. Al Sharpton, who delivered Floyd's funeral eulogy and will mark the anniversary with Floyd's family Sunday in Houston, is in the midst of planning a large August march on Wall Street. "We can hold the private sector accountable because they cannot afford the withdrawal of our dollars," said Sharpton, the founder of National Action Network, who has met with a number of company CEOs urging them to reverse their DEI

rollbacks or maintain their policies. Civil rights advocates have called for corporations to increase minority leadership representation and invest in under-served communities. Kevin McGary, a conservative and founder of Texas-based nonprofit Every Black Life Matters, said after Floyd's murder, some companies were under pressure to make pledges to advance equity in hiring practices. While civil rights advocates say DEI ensures qualified minority candidates have equal opportunities, McGary and other critics have characterized the efforts as not being merit-based, "everybody should be pushed to have an excellent standard," he said. Some have questioned the impact of the Black Lives Matter protests amid a lack of sweeping reforms. But experts told Reuters the

movement shifted the national conversation and the narrative. It shifted "Americans' vision of Black folks and to look at things through a systemic lens of understanding how race and racism operate in the United States," Brown said. National Urban League President Marc Morial noted that under former president Joe Biden's administration, a number of officers were convicted and 12 civil rights abuse investigations of police departments were launched. However, Biden's administration did not secure any binding settlements before leaving office. "This progress, which was material, but not the progress we would have wanted, is now threatened even further," Morial said. "We need mayors, city council members, state legislatures and local government officials to pick up

the mantle of police reform." BLM Grassroots founder Melina Abdullah said the movement is "at a crossroads" but said its strategy has moved towards state-level policy efforts - including pushing for funding mental health responders and Black trans rights - where the impact may be more acute. "We're saying it's time to redouble our efforts," Abdullah said. The Movement for Black Lives, a national network of more than 100 organizations, said their mission remains unchanged. "Black people, we have always sort of been the canary in the coal mine, and we have always been at the forefront of trying to call out these oppressive systems," said M4BL co-executive Amara Enyia. "That didn't just start in 2020 and it hasn't changed over the last five years."



MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA: Headstones bearing the names of people killed by law enforcement stand in the "Say Their Names" cemetery, a grassroots art installation created by two University of Pennsylvania students, near George Floyd Square in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Sunday.

Rival marches draw thousands in Warsaw ahead of presidential vote

WARSAW (Reuters): Tens of thousands of people took the streets of Warsaw on Sunday to show support for rival candidates in next week's tightly-contested Polish presidential election that the government views as crucial to its efforts for democratic reform. Prime Minister Donald Tusk hopes to galvanize support for his candidate, the liberal Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, to replace the outgoing Andrzej Duda, a nationalist who has vetoed many of his efforts to reform the judiciary. "All of Poland is looking at us. All of Europe is looking at us. The whole world is looking at us," Trzaskowski told supporters who waved Polish and European Union flags. Tusk swept to power in 2023 with a broad alliance of leftist and centrist par-

ties, on a promise to undo changes made by the nationalist Law and Justice government that the European Union said had undermined democracy and women's and minority rights. But Trzaskowski is struggling to secure a lead in opinion polls, after beating nationalist Karol Nawrocki by two percentage points in the first round of the election on May 18. Nawrocki's voters, some wearing hats bearing the words "Poland is the most important", gathered in a different part of the capital to show support for his drive to align Poland more closely with U.S. President Donald Trump's policies. "I am the voice of all those whose cries do not reach Donald Tusk today. The voice of all those who do not want Polish schools to be places of ideology,

our Polish agriculture to be destroyed, or our freedom taken away," Nawrocki told the crowd on Sunday. Some of his supporters carried banners with slogans such as "Stop Migration Pact", "This is Poland," or displayed images of Trump. Supporters chanted "God, Honour, Fatherland" and carried religious symbols, including statues of the Virgin Mary. "He is the best candidate, the most patriotic, one who can guarantee that Poland is independent and sovereign," said Jan Sulanowski, 42. At Trzaskowski's march, the newly-elected president of Romania Nicusor Dan pledged to work closely with Tusk and Trzaskowski "to ensure Poland and the European Union remain strong".

Dan's unexpected victory in a vote on May 18 over a hard-right Trump supporter was greeted with relief in Brussels and other parts of Europe, as many were concerned that his rival George Simion would have complicated EU efforts to tackle Russia's war in Ukraine. Jakub Kaszycki, 21, joined the pro-Trzaskowski march, saying it could determine Poland's future direction. "I very much favour... the west way to Europe, not to Russia," he said. At Trzaskowski's march, people held banners displaying the word "Demonkraci" alongside images that associated Duda and Nawrocki with a demonic version of democracy as opposed to the "okay" democracy "DemOKracja" represented by Trzaskowski and his wife.

Taiwan students heading to Harvard 'anxious' after US enrollment block

TAIPEI (Reuters): With an admission letter in hand, Taiwanese student Yu-suan Lin was ready to attend her dream school, Harvard University, this September. But the decision of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration to revoke Harvard University's ability to enrol foreign students made her feel anxious and helpless, Lin told Reuters at her Taipei apartment. "The path towards my dream is actually harder and tougher than I expected. There are so many uncertainties," she said.

"I thought that I could accept all the changes along the way as what we have gone through in the past half year. However, this one is specifically (targeted) at the international students. So I kind of feel like really hit by it. And that's why I feel kind of anxious." The decision marked a significant escalation of the Trump administration's campaign against the elite Ivy League university in C a m b r i d g e , Massachusetts. Harvard called it a "blatant violation" of the U.S.

Constitution and other federal laws. A U.S. judge temporarily blocked the administration's order, but it did not provide comfort to Lin who has yet to receive her visa. "I think I would either defer my studies at Harvard, as they said that's one of the possibilities, or I would probably apply for master programmes in Europe or the UK." Taiwan's education ministry said it expects 52 Taiwanese students to be affected by the U.S. government's move, the island's official Central

News Agency reported. Another Taiwanese student, who asked to be identified only by his first name Vince, planned to start his public health studies at Harvard this year. "We are certainly feeling pretty nervous, and it's been a dream for me to come from a small town in Taiwan all the way to Harvard," he said. "I think that this is the best that the United States can offer. So, I would like to plead to the president that, please, I hope that this continuous generosity can be continued."

Syria to help locate missing Americans: US envoy

DAMASCUS (AFP): Syria's new authorities have agreed to help the United States locate and return Americans who went missing in the war-ravaged country, a US envoy said on Sunday, in another sign of thawing bilateral ties. The announcement came a day after the United States formally lifted sanctions on Syria, ending more than a decade of diplomatic freeze. Relations have steadily improved since former president Bashar al-Assad was overthrown in an Islamist-led offensive in December. "The new Syrian government has agreed to assist the USA in locating and returning USA citizens or their remains," US special envoy for Syria Tom Barrack wrote on X, describing it as a "powerful step forward". "The families of Austin Tice, Majd Kamalmaz, and Kayla Mueller must have

closure," he added, referring to American citizens who had gone missing or been killed during Syria's devastating civil war that erupted in 2011. Tice was working as a freelance journalist for Agence France-Presse, The Washington Post, and other outlets when he was detained at a checkpoint in August 2012. Kamalmaz, a Syrian-American psychotherapist, was believed to have died after being detained under the Assad government in 2017. Mueller was an aid worker kidnapped by the Islamic State group, which announced her death in February 2015, saying she was killed in a Jordanian air strike, a claim disputed by US authorities. "President (Donald) Trump has made it clear that bringing home USA citizens or honoring, with dignity, their remains is a major priority everywhere," said Barrack, who

also serves as the US ambassador to Turkey. "The new Syrian Government will aid us in this commitment," he added. Americans killed by IS A Syrian source aware of the talks between the two countries told AFP there were 11 other names on Washington's list, all of them Syrian-Americans. The source added that a Qatari delegation began this month, at Washington's request, a search mission for the remains of American hostages killed by IS. Britain-based war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights meanwhile said that "the Qatari delegation is still searching in Aleppo province for the bodies of American citizens executed by IS". Two US journalists, James Foley and Stephen Sotloff, were videotaped in 2014 being beheaded by a militant who spoke on camera with a British

accent. El Shafie Elsheikh, a jihadist from London, was found guilty in 2022 of hostage-taking and conspiracy to murder US citizens — Foley and Sotloff, as well as aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller. The formal lifting of US sanctions also coincided with Syria's new authorities reshuffling their interior ministry to include fighting cross-border drug and people smuggling, as they seek to improve ties with the West. The lifting of sanctions paves the way for reconstruction efforts in the war-torn country, where authorities are relying on foreign assistance to help foot the massive cost of rebuilding. Syria's foreign ministry on Saturday welcomed the US lifting of sanctions, calling the move "a positive step in the right direction to reduce humanitarian and economic struggles in the country".

Scientists have lost their jobs or grants in US cuts

NEW YORK (AP): As the Trump administration cut billions of dollars in federal funding to scientific research, thousands of scientists in the U.S. lost their jobs or grants — and governments and universities around the world spotted an opportunity. The "Canada Leads" program, launched in April, hopes to foster the next generation of innovators by bringing early-career biomedical researchers north of the border. Aix-Marseille University in France started the "Safe Place for Science" program in March — pledging to "welcome" U.S.-based scientists who "may feel threatened or hindered in their research." Australia's "Global Talent Attraction Program," announced in April, promises competitive salaries and relocation packages. "In response to what is happening in the U.S.," said Anna-Maria Arabia, head of the Australian Academy of Sciences, "we see an unparalleled opportunity to attract some of the smartest minds here."

funding helped the U.S. to become the world's leading scientific power — and has led to the invention of cell phones and the internet as well as new ways to treat cancer, heart disease and strokes, noted Holden Thorp, editor-in-chief of the journal Science. But today that system is being shaken. Since President Donald Trump took office in January, his administration has pointed to what it calls waste and inefficiency in federal science spending and made major cuts to staff levels and grant funding at the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, NASA and other agencies, as well as slashing research dollars that flow to some private universities. The White House budget proposal for next year calls to cut the NIH budget by roughly 40% and the National Science Foundation's by 55%.

continue our innovative dominance," said White House spokesperson Kush Desai. Already, several universities have announced hiring freezes, laid off staff or stopped admitting new graduate students. On Thursday, the Trump administration revoked Harvard University's ability to enroll international students, though a judge put that on hold. Research institutions abroad are watching with concern for collaborations that depend on colleagues in the U.S. — but they also see opportunities to potentially poach talent. "There are threats to science ... south of the border," said Brad Wouters, of University Health Network, Canada's leading hospital and medical research center, which launched the "Canada Leads" recruitment drive. "There's a whole pool of talent, a whole cohort that is being affected by this moment."

Universities worldwide are always trying to recruit from one another, just as tech companies and businesses in other fields do. What's unusual about the current moment is that many global recruiters are targeting researchers by promising something that seems newly threat-

ened: academic freedom. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said this month that the European Union intends "to enshrine freedom of scientific research into law." She spoke at the launch of the bloc's "Choose Europe for Science" — which was in the works before the Trump administration cuts but has sought to capitalize on the moment. Eric Berton, president of Aix-Marseille University, expressed a similar sentiment after launching the institution's "Safe Place for Science" program. "Our American research colleagues are not particularly interested by money," he said of applicants. "What they want above all is to be able to continue their research and that their academic freedom be preserved."

It's too early to say how many scientists will choose to leave the U.S. It will take months for universities to review applications and dole out funding, and longer for researchers to uproot their lives. Plus, the American lead in funding research and development is enormous — and even significant cuts may leave crucial programs standing. The U.S. has been the world's leading funder of R&D — including government, university and private investment — for decades. In 2023, the country funded 29% of the world's R&D, according to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. But some institutions abroad are reporting significant early interest from researchers in the U.S. Nearly half of the applications to "Safe Place for Science" — 139 out of 300 total — came from U.S.-based scientists, including AI researchers and astrophysicists. U.S.-based applicants in this year's recruitment round for France's Institute of Genetics, Molecular and Cellular Biology roughly doubled over last year. At the Max Planck Society in Germany, the Lise Meitner Excellence Program — aimed at young female researchers — drew triple the number of applications from U.S.-based scientists this year as last year. Recruiters who work with companies and nonprofits say they see a similar trend. Natalie Derry, a U.K.-based managing partner of the Global Emerging Sciences Practice at recruiter WittKieffer, said her team has seen a 25% to 35% increase in applicants from the

U.S. cold-calling about open positions. When they reach out to scientists currently based in the U.S., "we are getting a much higher hit rate of people showing interest." Still, there are practical hurdles to overcome for would-be continent-hoppers, she said. That can include language hurdles, arranging childcare or eldercare, and significant differences in national pension or retirement programs. Brandon Coventry never thought he would consider a scientific career outside the United States. But federal funding cuts and questions over whether new grants will materialize have left him unsure. While reluctant to leave his family and friends, he's applied to faculty positions in Canada and France. "I've never wanted to necessarily leave the United States, but this is a serious contender for me," said Coventry, who is a postdoctoral fellow studying neural implants at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. But it's not easy to pick up and move a scientific career — let alone a life.

Marianna Zhang was studying how children develop race and gender stereotypes as a postdoc-

toral fellow at New York University when her National Science Foundation grant was canceled. She said it felt like "America as a country was no longer interested in studying questions like mine." Still, she wasn't sure of her next move. "It's no easy solution, just fleeing and escaping to another country," she said. The recruitment programs range in ambition, from those trying to attract a dozen researchers to a single university to the continent-wide "Choose Europe" initiative. But it's unclear if the total amount of funding and new positions offered could match what's being shed in the U.S. A global vacuum Even as universities and institutes think about recruiting talent from the U.S., there's more apprehension than glee at the funding cuts. "Science is a global endeavor," said Patrick Cramer, head of the Max Planck Society, noting that datasets and discoveries are often shared among international collaborators. One aim of recruitment drives is to "to help prevent the loss of talent to the global scientific community," he said.

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Trump, Harvard confrontation takes a sharp turn

THE Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has terminated Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Programme certification, pushing out 7,000 visa holders. Harvard remained defiant and immediately sued the Trump Administration in the Boston federal court. The university said in its petition, "With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the University and its mission." It asserted, "Without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard."

Noem, dismissing Harvard's lawsuit, said, "If only Harvard cared this much about ending the scourge of anti-American, anti-Semitic, pro-terrorist agitators on their campus they wouldn't be in this situation to begin with." She went on to accuse Harvard of "coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party."

Noem said that the certification could be restored if the university handed over information about the visa-holding students, including audio records and their participation in campus protests.

This is indeed the classic battle between a liberal university which believes in dissent and freedom of speech, and an authoritarian government which opposes liberalism, freedom of speech. The immediate political context is important. Most of the protests are against Israel's killing of civilians in Gaza in the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Israel has killed more than 50,000 civilians.

The protesters' attack on Israel has been shown to be as belligerence towards Jewish students in the university, and it is being interpreted as anti-Semitism. The fact is that many Jewish students had participated in the protests as well. But Israel has always held on to the position that an attack on Israel, through protests and speech, amounts to anti-Semitism. The right-wing Trump administration has unhesitatingly adopted the Israeli stance.

What has shocked and surprised people and authorities in the United States is the intensity of the campus protests against Israel's killing of civilians in Gaza. It is after a long time that students have turned to the protest mode.

In the 1980s, campus students protested asking American companies to disinvest in South Africa because of its apartheid regime, and asking American universities not to accept money from South Africa. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, campus protests erupted in America against the war in Vietnam.

The protests against the massacre of Gazans should not then come as a surprise. Americans have always asserted their right to express their views, and especially against their own government. And it has been a characteristic feature of contemporary American democracy.

Trump's intolerance towards dissent is not unusual either, and that he should use his executive powers to suppress dissent is in conformity with his personality and his politics. The last time the American government went all out against dissent, singling out the leftists and communists, was during the infamous McCarthy years in the 1950s.

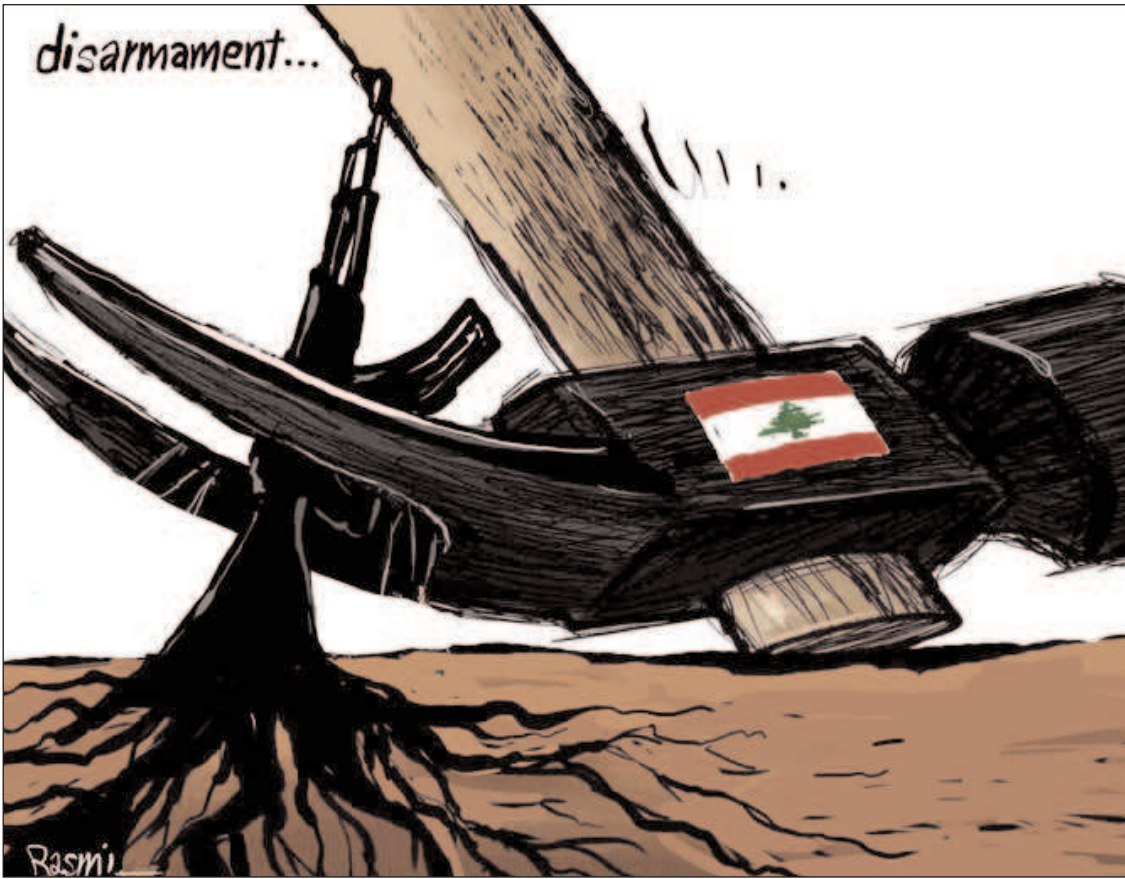
The House Un-American Activities Committee became notorious for naming and stigmatising people with leftist sympathies, including the man who headed the Manhattan Project for making the atom bomb, Robert Oppenheimer. Trump's attack on Harvard and other Ivy League universities is a clear echo of the McCarthy era.

Harvard University, under its president Alan Garber, has held out against the intimidatory tactics of the Trump administration. And it has given hope to many that there is still hope for free speech in America. The university in America has been a free space for debate, dialogue and dissent, and it has remained that through many terms of Republican presidents and Republican majorities in US Congress.

Trump has taken up cudgels against liberalism as no other president has done before. The battle is likely to last long, and it is hard to say who will win. If Trump wins, it will be big defeat for America.

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Cooking in Gaza is now a toxic affair

Hassan Abo Qamar

In Gaza, we have sounds of fear and anxiety. We know them all too well: the hum of spy drones overhead, ambulances screaming through narrow streets, the roar of military aircraft, the thunder of bombings, the cries of people trapped under rubble and now a new sound: the sharp clinking of empty gas cylinders.

We used to know well the tiny click of a gas stove burner starting – that small spark at the start of a day that meant a hot meal or a cup of tea was coming. Now, that sound is gone, replaced by the hollow clang of emptiness.

We used our last drop of cooking gas in the middle of Ramadan. Like all other families in Gaza, we turned to firewood. I remember my mother saying, "From today, we cannot even make a cup of tea for suhoor."

That is because starting a fire, having even a flicker of light at night could attract a drone or a quadcopter, resulting in an air strike or a barrage of bullets. We don't know why light at night is targeted, but we know we don't have the right to ask.

So we ate cold food for suhoor and saved the fire for iftar.

After bakeries shut down due to the gas shortage last month, reliance on fire increased – not just for our family but for everyone. Many people built makeshift clay ovens or fires in alleyways or between tents to bake loaves of bread.

Thick, black smoke hangs heavy in the air – not the smoke of death from missiles, but the smoke of life that kills us slowly.

Each morning, we wake up coughing – not a passing cough, but a deep, persistent, choking cough that rattles through our chests.

Then, my brother and I walk to the edge of our neighbourhood, where a man sells wood from the

back of a cart. He gathers it from bombed-out buildings, fallen trees, broken furniture, and the ruins of homes and schools.

We carry back whatever our weak bodies can and move on to the next suffering: burning the wood. This is not easy. It demands hours of chopping and breaking wood and breath-

Firewood has become incredibly expensive. Before the war, we would pay a dollar for eight kilos, but now you can buy only one kilo – or even less – for that price. Impoverishment has forced many people to chop down their own trees. The greenery in our neighbourhood has all but disappeared. Many of our neighbours have started cutting down the trees they grew in their yards. Even we have begun using branches from our olive tree – the same tree we never dared touch when we were young, afraid that disturbing it would cause the blossoms to fall and yield fewer olives. Families who have no trees to chop have turned to burning plastic, rubber and trash – anything that will catch fire. But burning these materials releases toxic fumes, poisoning the air they breathe and seeping into the food they cook. The taste of plastic clings to every bite, turning each meal into a health risk.

ing in dust. Our father, despite suffering from shortness of breath, insists on helping. This stubbornness of his has become the source of daily arguments, especially between him and my brother.

As we light the fire, our eyes turn red because of the smoke, our throats sting. The coughing intensifies.

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Constant exposure to this smoke can cause severe respiratory distress and chronic illnesses and even lead to life-threatening diseases such as cancer. Yet, what choice do people have? Without fire, there is no food.

There is something deeply cruel about the transformation of the kitchen – from a symbol of family and hospitality into a toxic zone. The fire that once meant warmth now burns our lungs and eyes. The meals cooked can hardly be called that: soup from lentils; bread from infested flour or flour mixed with sand. The joy of preparing food has been replaced by fear, pain and exhaustion.

This lack of cooking gas has done more than cripple our access to food – it has dismantled the rituals that hold families together. Meals are no longer a time to gather and enjoy family time but a time to endure. A time to cough. A time to pray that today's fire does not make someone too sick.

If a bomb does not kill us, we face a slower death: quiet, toxic and just as cruel.

This is Gaza today. A place where survival means inhaling poison just to have a cup of tea in the morning.

A place where firewood has become more valuable than gold.

A place where even the simple act of eating has been weaponised.

And yet, we burn.

We cough.

We keep going.

What other choice do we have?

Lifting sanctions on Syria: a bet on a more prosperous future

Faisal J. Abbas

In a significant shift in US foreign policy, President Donald Trump has initiated the easing of long-standing sanctions on Syria, marking a pivotal moment for the war-torn nation and the broader Middle East. This decision comes in the wake of President Trump's successful Gulf tour and discussions with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It reflects a pragmatic approach to fostering stability and economic recovery in the region.

To understand the implications of this policy change, it is essential to revisit the origins of the sanctions. The US first designated Syria as a "state sponsor of terrorism" in 1979, citing its support for groups like Hezbollah and its military presence in Lebanon. Further sanctions were imposed in 2004 under the Syria Accountability and Lebanon Sovereignty Restoration Act, targeting Syria's alleged pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and its interference in neighboring Iraq. The most stringent measures came in 2011, in response to the

Assad regime's brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters, leading to the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019, which aimed to hold the regime accountable for war crimes.

The collapse of Bashar Assad's regime in December 2024 ushered in a new era for Syria. Ahmad Al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed Al-Golani, has emerged as the interim president. While his past affiliations have raised concerns, Al-Sharaa has made concerted efforts to distance himself from his militant past and present himself as a statesman committed to rebuilding Syria. His first diplomatic outreach was to Saudi Arabia, including a visit to Makkah with his wife. The visit signaled a desire to align Syria with its Arab neighbors – as opposed to Iran – and embrace a more moderate form of Islam and governance.

The decision to ease sanctions is not an endorsement of past actions but a recognition of the changing dynamics on the ground,

and a bet on a future that the US, Saudi Arabia, and other moderate states can help support the great – and now free – people of Syria in rebuilding their country. The sanctions were primarily aimed at the Assad regime's oppressive policies and its destabilizing role in the region. With the regime's fall, maintaining these sanctions would only hinder the Syrian people's aspirations for peace and prosperity. Moreover, Al-Sharaa's commitment to forming an inclusive government, respecting minority rights, and focusing on reconstruction efforts aligns with the broader goals of regional stability.

Syria's economy has been devastated by years of conflict and sanctions, with over 90 percent of the population living in poverty. The lifting of sanctions opens the door for international investment, aid, and the rebuilding of critical infrastructure. It also allows Syria to shift from being a hub for illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, to becoming a center for trade and tourism, remi-

niscent of its pre-war status.

Al-Sharaa's overtures to Arab nations and his efforts to distance Syria from former allies like Iran and Russia suggest a potential realignment that could serve US strategic interests. His political moves, including hiring successful technocrats such as renowned entrepreneur Abdulsalam Haykal in the role of information technology minister, indicate his sincere desire to rebuild the nation. Will he be successful? Will he have a change of heart later on? Time will tell.

However, the one definite fact is that the easing of sanctions on Syria represents a pragmatic approach to a complex situation. It acknowledges the transformative changes in Syria's political landscape and offers a pathway for the country to rebuild and reintegrate into the international community. For the Syrian people, it brings hope for a future free from conflict and economic despair. For the region and the world, it presents an opportunity to foster stability and counteract extremist influences.

To navigate a new order, hire a historian not a social scientist

Nadim Shehadi

What if you became the most powerful man in the world, the president of the United States of America? What would you do? Obviously, create a new world order. That is what every American president has tried, from Harry Truman to Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush to Donald Trump.

A new executive order sends everyone scrambling to understand it, sometimes everyone and their ex, like Christiane Amanpour and her former husband James Rubin, who have just started a podcast for that purpose. Their advantage is having lived through major global changes from different angles; while he was in the policymaking business, she was on the ground living the consequences. The stories they will tell are of lived experience deciphered with tools that include their backgrounds, upbringings, and educations, along with some common sense, instinct, and wit. It is more of an art than it is a science and does not have to be either precise or certain. It is a process that includes human interactions and emotions that no algorithm or artificial intelligence can emulate.

They are, in fact, acting like traditional historians, telling the story and interpreting the changing world. This will help them understand the present and speculate, with a healthy degree of uncertainty, on what is to come. The rise and fall of empires and nations was very much the domain of such historians, before modern social sciences emerged.

But what about the rest of us? Do we have the tools to understand the new world order? The rest of us may well be part of another story – that of the rise and fall of the social sciences. It is a fairly short history of disciplines born out of theological controversies in Europe in the second half of the 19th century and later in the US. The social sciences, which include disciplines like economics, politics, and sociology, dominated the ideas of the 20th century and accompanied the rise of nationalism. Economics, in particular, rationalized or scientifically justified the ever-growing role of the state, on which international affairs and international relations were built.

But doubts have been emerging for quite a while about the adequacy of the individual disciplines and whether they are enough to help us understand the changing world. In a recent piece in the Financial Times, the economist Gillian Tett described the rise of a new discipline, geoeconomics, with a recent conference near the White House and with universities and think tanks rushing to create programs in it. Tett also mentioned the idea that companies should hire a chief geopolitical or geoeconomics officer to help navigate the changing world order, especially after the disruptions brought about by President Trump.

Geopolitics, geoeconomics, and geostrategy are imprecise and sometimes meaningless words. In a nutshell, they mean that the cult-like social scientists are out of their depth and have no clue what they are talking about. They are a product of theological debates resulting from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which attempted to explain the origin of species through science and scientific observation, as opposed to the religious belief of divine creation.

The contradictions between Darwin's theory of evolution and the biblical story of creation sparked huge controversy. This quickly expanded into a heated debate about science versus faith. Disciplines like eugenics were an offshoot of the scientific study of society. For that was the key question: can scientific methods be applied to the study of society?

To understand the intensity of such debates, we should bear in mind that it

was not until 1871 that old universities like Oxford and Cambridge started offering degrees to people who were not members of the Anglican church. It was also expected that any fellows of a college would resign their position at the university if they so much as developed doubts about any of the 39 articles of the Anglican faith.

An Oxford education generally consisted of studying the classics in their original Latin and Greek and developing philosophical ideas. It was considered that reading the likes of Plato, Aristotle, and other classical philosophers, along with historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, was enough to prepare a young man for any pursuit, be it in the natural sciences, mathematics, medicine, or a career in the church, the army or in the rule of India. Darwin himself had such an education before turning to medicine. The works of Adam Smith and other political economists were introduced as part of moral philosophy and the political economy component was meant to help understand history, which was only really introduced as a faculty in the 1850s.

The social sciences as we now know them were therefore a result of the trend toward using the scientific method to understand the world. To believe in its results and recommendations, it is therefore necessary to have faith in science.

Elite education – conferring the tools that were considered necessary and sufficient to equip decision-makers in the art of statecraft – evolved with that trend toward science. The basic degree in classics, or greats, became modern greats and evolved into the study of philosophy, politics and economics, the Oxford "PPE" degree. These subjects replaced the classics as the necessary intellectual tools to understand the world.

In fact, the discipline of economics is still not a stand alone subject for an undergraduate degree in Oxford. It must be combined with something like history. At the more scientifically inclined Cambridge University, it became a subject in 1905.

Economics, which dominated the post-Second World War world, became established as a dominant discipline in the interwar period. It was akin to a religious cult using faith in science instead of faith in God. Its theories were based on quite rudimentary mathematics to advance its principles.

The growth of the state's role, for example, was justified by arguments like increasing marginal returns to scale or the multiplier effect.

Simply put, this argues that the larger the scale, the larger the profit. And because state control would work on a larger scale, it would become more efficient and profitable.

These were dangerous tools in the hands of power-hungry politicians.

A future historian may evaluate the extent of the damage done by the 20th-century doctrine of social sciences. A cult of economists, political scientists, and sociologists ran the world and provided the justification for politicians to expand their power and that of the state.

When such "scientific" theories did not fit with reality, it was reality and people that needed to change, not the theories. This was in the name of science, which is synonymous with indisputable fact.

In fact, it is not Trump's chaotic disruptions that are the problem. In days when we are on the verge of surrendering our lives to mega-processors and AI, and in which we interact more with our screens than with each other, it is not too late to introduce a serious element of doubt into the disciplines we feed these machines. As a repentant economist, I put my trust in Amanpour and Rubin and would hire a historian over an economist anytime.

New geopolitical great game in Central Asia

Andrew Hammond

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have many challenges, not least as some of the most vulnerable climate change nations in the region. However, rarely a month goes by in which world powers do not double down on their diplomatic wooing of them.

Earlier this month, for instance, Beijing signed the China-Central Asia Energy and Power Innovation Alliance. This aims to boost innovation and cooperation in power technology for sustainable development.

However, China is just one of many key world powers devoting more focus to the region, owing in large part to its abundance of critical minerals for clean energy technologies. Take the example of Central Asia's huge deposits of natural mineral resources which include around 40 percent of global supplies of manganese ore, 30 percent of chromium, 20 percent of lead, and 10 percent of titanium.

Little wonder that a wider range of powers, including Russia, Japan, the US, and Europe, are paying close attention. Russia's interest in the region is long-standing and, of course, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were formerly part of the Soviet Union and are now members or associate members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Since the end of the Cold War, however, China has increasingly sought influence in Central Asia, including through its Belt and Road agenda. Beijing has become the region's leading trade partner.

Moscow remains very much in the game of regional influence, however, including in energy politics. In 2023, for instance, Russia intensified exports of gas to Kazakhstan and

Uzbekistan after demand fell from Europe after the Ukraine war began.

While Russia and China, which share an agenda of promoting political stability of the region's regimes, have the upper economic hand in the region, there is a narrowing window of opportunity for other powers to deepen ties too. This was shown last year when Kazakhstan refused to apply for full membership

to diversify global supply chains, including for the green and digital transitions that will power future prosperity. This EU-driven agenda was showcased last month when the bloc hosted its first-ever summit with Central Asia.

The agenda focused on four key areas of the EU's Global Gateway scheme. This initiative will disburse some 300 billion across the world in the period to

region, which traverses not only Central Asia, but also the Caspian Sea, the South Caucasus, and Turkiye. While the Middle Corridor is not yet a serious competitor to the long-standing Northern Route, which passes through Russia, the EU is investing much in it to change that.

The EU is already Kazakhstan's leading trade and investment partner. The last couple of decades has

and France forging close ties with Central Asia. Kazakhstan is, for instance, the biggest producer of uranium in the world with over 40 percent of world supply. Amid competition with Russia for these resources, France wants to engage more on this agenda given the importance of nuclear power to its economy.

Under the Biden administration, the US held its first summit with Central Asia under the so-called C5+1 format with Washington also throwing its support behind the Middle Corridor project. While it is not fully clear yet how much emphasis US President Donald Trump will give to the region, his America First agenda will surely also see him seeking to secure a greater share of Central Asia's natural resource wealth.

Japan is also doubling down on ties with the region via a "Central Asia Plus Japan" dialogue. Japan has a positive influence in the region, and has been a significant donor of aid for much of the post-Cold War period.

Yet another power jockeying for position is Turkiye, which shares a common heritage with Central Asia. The Organization of Turkic States also includes Turkiye, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

One of Turkiye's recent initiatives in the region is a new natural gas deal that will see Turkmenistan ship natural gas via Iran. Gas supplies under the contract began to Turkiye on March 1.

Taken together, Russia and China therefore have the upper economic hand in the region. However, competition is only likely to intensify with growing interest from other powers, including Europe, the US, Japan, and Turkiye, all seeking to tap the region's resource richness.

The strategic value of deepening NATO-MENA ties

Luke Coffey

Recent developments in Syria and the ongoing war in Gaza serve as regular reminders of the importance of the Middle East to Western policymakers.

At a time when many in the West, particularly in the US, would prefer to reduce their engagement in the region and focus more on areas such as the Indo-Pacific, the geopolitical realities on the ground continue to prevent this shift from becoming a reality.

This is especially true for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which has understandably prioritized the territorial defense of Europe in the face of external aggression in recent years. Yet NATO has also maintained engagement with the Middle East.

It is clear why the organization cannot afford to ignore the region. Geography alone makes this impossible but the Middle East and Europe also share a host of security interests and overlapping challenges. These include terrorism, the humanitarian effects of mass migration, and concerns over nuclear proliferation. For these reasons, it makes strategic sense for NATO and countries in the Middle East to enhance their cooperation.

In 2004, NATO established the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which has served as the alliance's primary platform for engagement with the Arab world. Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait currently participate in the initiative, which formalizes regional cooperation between NATO and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and has fostered high-level visits, joint training exercises and military education exchanges. NATO's on-the-ground presence in the region is anchored by the ICI-NATO regional center in Kuwait.

In recent years, there has been an increase in senior-level engagement between NATO and Gulf states. Last month, for instance, the chairperson of the NATO Military Committee, Adm. Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, visited Kuwait for high-level discussions on NATO-Gulf cooperation.

In February, recently appointed NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte visited Baghdad, his first visit to the region since taking office in October last year. During this trip, he reviewed NATO's role in regional security through the work of the NATO Mission in Iraq. Established in October 2018 at the request of the Iraqi government, this mission consists of several hundred NATO troops who train Iraqi security forces to prevent the reemergence of Daesh. The mission represents the alliance's most significant overseas operation today.

Despite this level of engagement, NATO has yet to fully grasp the strategic value of a wider deepening of relations with Gulf states, or the broader importance of the Middle East to European security. For example, in NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, a guiding document for the alliance, the Middle East was mentioned only in passing. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was not referenced at all. Even though 2024 marked the 20th anniversary of the initiative, NATO held no

major events to commemorate this milestone. It again was barely mentioned in the final communique of NATO's Washington summit last year.

Furthermore, a recent NATO-commissioned report on the expansion of engagement with the Global South offered little in terms of meaningful analysis or actionable recommendations for improving relations with the Middle East.

Fortunately, opportunities for expanded cooperation do still exist. NATO's summit in the Netherlands next month presents an ideal occasion on which to bring the Middle East back into focus. With recent escalations in Syria and Gaza, the state of Middle East security serves as a reminder of the region's importance to the transatlantic community.

One concrete step would

for engagement with countries in North Africa and the Levant.

Building on the momentum of US President Donald Trump's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, NATO should explore the potential for deepening its relationship with Riyadh. The foundation for this already exists; Rutte's predecessor as NATO chief, Jens Stoltenberg, made a historic first visit to Saudi Arabia in 2023. Since then, discussions have taken place about the formalization of ties between the alliance and the Kingdom.

Although Saudi authorities have so far opted not to join the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, the time might be ripe to revisit the issue and find mutually beneficial ways to enhance collaboration.

In terms of tangible policy outcomes, two areas stand out for potentially

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for instance, Europe's interest in Central Asia has intensified in a bid to diversify global supply chains, including for the green and digital transitions that will power future prosperity. This EU-driven agenda was showcased last month when the bloc hosted its first-ever summit with Central Asia. The agenda focused on four key areas of the EU's Global Gateway scheme. This initiative will disburse some 300 billion across the world in the period to 2027, including sustainable energy, critical raw materials, digital connectivity, and transport. Key EU Global Gateway commitments so far to Central Asia include the digital transformation of Kyrgyzstan. Plus also Turkmenistan's economic enhancement, including helping it to join the World Trade Organization.

of BRICS, despite encouragement from Russia and China, and only later agreed with Uzbekistan to accept partner status.

This shows how much Central Asian leaders want to engage a wide range of powers, not just Moscow and Beijing. The Central Asia agenda promoted by other powers, including Europe, the US, and Japan, focuses more on promoting democracy and regional economic integration.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for instance, Europe's interest in Central Asia has intensified in a bid

2027, including sustainable energy, critical raw materials, digital connectivity, and transport.

Key EU Global Gateway commitments so far to Central Asia include the digital transformation of Kyrgyzstan. Plus also Turkmenistan's economic enhancement, including helping it to join the World Trade Organization.

On the transport front, since 2022 the EU has pushed for a major Trans-Caspian International Transport Route land and sea initiative (also called the Middle Corridor) to boost its presence in the

also seen huge foreign direct investment from the EU to the wider region.

Monies from the EU have been buttressed by other European governments and wider bodies, including the European Investment Bank, and European Bank on Reconstruction and Development. For instance, the EIB has signed an agreement with the Development Bank of Kazakhstan for a multi-million-dollar framework loan for sustainable projects.

It is not just the EU, but also individual member states including Germany

Israel, it is time to live in the Arab world

Hassan bin Youssef Yassin

Michael Young, an analyst with deep knowledge of the Middle East, on Wednesday summarized the current situation in Gaza for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He wrote: "For the last 19 months, one of the most powerful armies in the world has been dropping the heaviest ordnance available on areas populated mainly by destitute, homeless civilians, most of them women and children ... Israel has destroyed most schools, universities and hospitals in Gaza, and all institutions required to safeguard the territory's social fabric."

Israel's disproportionate and inhumane reaction to the similarly atrocious and unacceptable Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, has been clear from the beginning. But only now are some of the world's liberal democracies beginning to react and finally push back against Israel's actions.

In contrast, the conscience of the world did not require any further convincing as to what Israel's acts constituted from the beginning. The damage to Israel's reputation around the world will be lasting and it will sadly only make life for Israelis and Jews more tense and difficult. In

the Arab world, we have lived in despair for the last 19 months, unable, despite our best efforts and without the assistance of the West, to bring Israel to realize not only the inhumanity of its actions but also the lasting damage it has been doing to its own future.

The Europeans have finally reacted, announcing on Tuesday that the European Commission would review the EU-Israel Association Agreement governing political and economic relations between the two sides. Article 2 of that agreement spells out that it can be suspended in cases of serious human rights violations. On Monday, France, Canada and the UK also issued a joint statement threatening "targeted sanctions" and "concrete actions" should Israel pursue its Gaza offensive, continue to block aid and expand its settlements. The British called the situation "monstrous," Israel's escalation of violence in Gaza "morally unjustifiable" and its withholding of humanitarian aid "cruel and indefensible."

In the meantime, in the US, student activism in support of the Palestinian people continues and more students have unjustifiably

been expelled or had their diplomas withheld as a result. A student at George Washington University was barred last weekend after her address at a graduation ceremony, while a diploma was withheld from a student at New York University for the same reason. At Columbia University, students protested during a graduation ceremony and burned their diplomas outside. This turn of events is deplorable, in large part because a sensible, open discussion of what is happening in the Middle East has been essentially prohibited in the US.

As fellow Semites, we Arabs oppose antisemitism wherever or whenever it may rear its ugly head. Moses is also one of our prophets, we believe in the same God and the same values of compassion and dignity. But in today's world of openness and direct communication, we are all simply humans sharing the same humanity, compassion and respect for each other.

As an Arab, I want to extend my hand to every Jew in the world, to my fellow humans with whom I share an age-old tradition and a related faith. Our

desire for coexistence must be a permanent struggle within and without. We cannot afford to live in the past, to bear ancient grudges that will only continue to poison all our lives. The Jewish people have suffered tremendously over the centuries and the Middle East has also suffered a great deal from the consequences of European decisions.

I would like to evoke here the long-standing relations of mutual respect between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East that existed for centuries before the establishment of the state of Israel. Not only in Al-Andalus and the shared figure of Maimonides, for centuries Jews and Arabs lived side by side in respect in the Middle East. This diversity was particularly strong in Iraq and Egypt, but also in Yemen and Morocco, where Jews served as important ministers, respected businessmen and even as adulated singers.

Many forget that, in the 21st century, a Jewish woman, Houda Ezra Ebrahim Nonoo, served as Bahraini ambassador to the US. Unfortunately, the number of Jews living in Muslim countries has dwindle

d since the establishment of the state of Israel from 1 million to 30,000, and more than a third left in the three years after 1948. A large number of Egyptian Jews left the country after the 1956 Suez Crisis and many Lebanese Jews left after the 1967 and 1973 wars.

I would today like to honor and reestablish the profound links that existed between Jews and Arabs living as neighbors. I believe that we all just want to live in peace together, to see our children grow up in a region of promise and mutual respect. What we need is an atomic bomb of peace, loaded with the fire-power of love, to put all this behind us and simply live together in peace.

As the conscience of the world has been awakened, it is in Israel's interest to mend fences and stop the madness that can only threaten its own future. The Israeli people, I am sure, are ready to adopt the power of love and decency instead of fanning the fires of hatred that risk turning into a volcano.

As an Arab who cares deeply for peaceful coexistence, I call upon us all to grow the tree of life together with the water of love, ensuring that its fruits will be shared by all.

How Egypt is wielding influence on a tight budget

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Despite hemorrhaging nearly \$10 billion in foreign reserves since 2020, and Suez Canal revenues that plunged 38 percent in early 2024 as a result of Houthi-linked Red Sea disruptions around the Horn of Africa, Egypt is playing a high-stakes regional game with remarkable tactical discipline. Cairo is pursuing an asymmetric strategy rooted in diplomatic agility, encirclement, and targeted military cooperation.

At home, inflation remains stubbornly above 35 percent, with the Egyptian pound having lost more than half its value since 2022, and the threat of International Monetary Fund-led austerity measures hanging heavy. Yet abroad, Egyptian policy architects are engineering low-cost counter-offensives that are

shifting power dynamics, from the Gulf of Aden to the Eastern Mediterranean. By drawing closer to Somalia, reviving dormant ties with Eritrea, and aligning with Turkiye against an ascendant Ethiopia, Egypt has effectively militarized its diplomacy without breaching its fiscal constraints.

Cairo's posture in the Horn of Africa is less about projection of power and more about geopolitical denial: boxing out Ethiopia's Red Sea ambitions and forcing negotiations from an advantageous position.

While Addis Ababa lobbies to legitimize Somaliland in exchange for coastal access, Cairo is quietly encircling, exploiting every fracture from Puntland to Djibouti. It is a strategy shaped by scarcity but executed with sharp

calculation. It is less a case of empire building than geopolitical maneuvering, redirecting the momentum of rival states to serve its own ends.

If Egypt's maneuvers succeed in Somalia, and resonate into Yemen, it might reposition itself not as a power in decline but as the regional broker-in-chief.

So, what triggered all this? Ethiopia's agreement in January 2024 to lease 20 km of coastline from Somaliland, a self-declared state not recognized by the UN, for a naval base ignited immediate regional tremors. From Cairo's perspective, the deal threatened to establish an Ethiopian military presence along the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, a maritime bottleneck through which passes 12 percent of global trade and 30 percent of the

world's container traffic, and which is critical to nearly \$10 billion of annual Suez Canal revenues.

Moreover, Ethiopia's activation of the Nile Basin Agreement, a framework that challenges colonial-era water allocations, directly threatened Egypt's freshwater lifeline, the Nile, which supplies more than 90 percent of the country's freshwater for agriculture and domestic use.

Surprisingly, unlike the bluster and saber-rattling of the past, especially concerning perceived threats to Nile flows downstream, Cairo's immediate response was calibrated for cost-efficiency rather than kinetic escalation.

Egypt quickly established a military pact with Somalia that permitted the deployment of up to 5,000

Egyptian troops, alongside modest arms transfers to Mogadishu. Yet these commitments, worth an estimated \$300 million annually, are dwarfed by investments from regional rivals.

Hence, Egypt's strategy has had to bet on tactical alliances rather than financial heft, capitalizing on existing regional fissures in an attempt to isolate Ethiopia.

At the core of Cairo's rather frugal approach is the pursuit of strategic triangulation in hopes of limiting Addis Ababa's options. By partnering with Turkiye, a former adversary that now shares concerns about Red Sea instability, Egypt gains indirect access to Ankara's extensive drone capabilities and naval assets without footing the bill for their

deployment.

Simultaneously, a trilateral summit with Eritrea and Somalia consolidated a coalition anchored in the former's 30-year rivalry with Ethiopia, during which Eritrea has hosted foreign military bases and maintained a 300,000-strong standing army. The end result is a loose coalition that amplifies Egypt's influence at minimal cost, contrasting sharply with Ethiopia's \$1.4 billion military expenditure.

But there are looming risks. Cairo's \$4.8 billion defense budget is already stretched thin by concurrent crises in Libya and Gaza. Regardless, Egypt's moves have so far managed to avoid the pitfalls of mission creep. As the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia has wound down after 17 years and \$21 billion of expendi-

ture, Egyptian troop deployments, focusing on the training of Somali forces and securing supply lines, have been a targeted investment with plausible deniability.

The restraint is deliberate. With nearly 90 percent of its military assets concentrated on the Sinai and Libyan fronts, Egypt cannot afford to divert resources to open-ended conflicts. Instead, it must capitalize on the overextension of others.

Another critical factor in Egypt's strategy for the Horn of Africa is its inextricable links to developments in Yemen. Cairo's sudden openness to hosting delegations from a group it once rejected signals more than just a tactical pivot; it is a calculated overture in regional geopolitics that now includes both Yemen's war

economy and Red Sea security.

By adopting the role of mediator in Yemen while quietly reshaping supply-chain security, from Bab Al-Mandab to the Gulf of Aden, Egypt is transforming its fiscal scarcity into valuable geopolitical currency. It is not appeasement but conditional engagement, an approach that costs little upfront and yields regional influence.

Whether the bet will pay off remains uncertain. But for a country that is managing \$165 billion in external debt and facing persistent inflation, even modest diplomatic gains count as a credible return on investment.

Overall, while Egypt's clever maneuvering in the Horn of Africa is not without its share of risks, for now it all seems to be paying off rather well.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing vegetables from a stall at weekly Sunday Bazaar, Peshawar Morr.

Budget 2025-26: APBF demands business-friendly and export-driven roadmap

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) on Sunday strongly urged the government to focus the upcoming Budget 2025-26 on reviving economic growth by supporting the private sector, encouraging exports, and reducing the cost of doing business.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mehmood, in a post-consultation Budget address, said that the budget must reflect a clear, long-term economic vision rooted in policy consistency, fiscal discipline, and stakeholder engagement.

He said that the business community remains deeply concerned about slowing industrial growth, and dwindling investor confidence. "The government must ensure that Budget 2025-26 is development-oriented, transparent, and supportive of enterprise and exports, rather than relying on short-term revenue measures like excessive withholding taxes or abrupt policy shifts," he said.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi also voiced concern over import restrictions on raw materials and machinery, which he said have severely affected production cycles, disrupted supply chains, and raised input costs. "Policy uncertainty on imports harms investor confidence and stifles industrial productivity. The government must facilitate legitimate imports

required for value-added manufacturing and exports," he emphasized.

Instead of repeatedly taxing the same formal sectors, he advised the government to expand the tax base, curb smuggling, and discourage tax evasion through digitalisation and simplification. "The solution lies not in penalising the compliant, but in integrating the undocumented economy into the tax net," he said.

The APBF President urged that the upcoming budget include targeted relief for exporters and documented SMEs, who he said are the backbone of the economy but remain underserved. "We need sector-specific support, especially in value-added textiles, IT, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, and agro-processing. These industries have the potential to create jobs, generate foreign exchange, and reduce reliance on imports," he said.

Highlighting Pakistan's growing current account deficit and pressure on foreign exchange reserves, Maaz Mehmood called for urgent export enhancement initiatives and industrial revival. "Stabilizing the rupee and reducing the need for external borrowing can only happen through a robust export strategy and a supportive business environment," he said.

He also expressed concern over the delays in finalising an IMF agreement and warned against

designing a budget solely based on IMF prescriptions. "We understand the importance of fiscal discipline and lender confidence, but the budget must also prioritise local economic realities. A purely IMF-driven budget will neither promote growth nor generate jobs," he asserted.

The APBF further demanded the simplification of the tax system, faster refund processes, and an end to coercive tactics. "The FBR must be transformed into a facilitation body, not a punitive authority. Harassment of honest taxpayers and arbitrary notices are counterproductive," he added.

To curb inflation and revive investment, the APBF recommended bringing down the policy interest rate to single digits, easing credit access for SMEs, and offering subsidised utility tariffs for export-oriented sectors. "The current high cost of borrowing and utility rates are unsustainable for most industries. Without tangible cost reductions, business closures and job losses will escalate," he warned.

The APBF called for a comprehensive industrial policy, aligned with the budget, to support innovation, productivity, and competitiveness. Maaz Mehmood emphasized the importance of engaging with business chambers, forums, and private sector stakeholders in all key budgetary decisions.

Call to strengthen Pak-UK trade ties

LAHORE (APP): The Chairman of UK-Pakistan Joint Business Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Sunday said that the United Kingdom, one of Pakistan's largest trading partners in Europe, can play a vital role in driving innovation, enhancing exports, and promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan.

Talking to a delegation of foreign investors led by Arbab Khan, President of the Pak-British Friendship Council (North West Chapter, UK), Mian Kashif emphasized that stronger business-to-business linkages, joint ventures, and strategic collaborations can help unlock new economic opportunities. He noted that deepening economic ties with the UK can significantly contribute to Pakistan's socio-economic development.

He highlighted the evolving nature of the long-standing bilateral relationship, which is now transitioning into a more dynamic and mutually beneficial economic partnership. There is considerable potential, he said, for growth in sectors such as textiles, information technology, agriculture, and renewable energy.

"With renewed interest from both sides in expanding trade relations, a strong foundation is being laid for sustainable economic growth, job creation, and industrial advancement in Pakistan," he stated.

Mian Kashif also acknowledged the valuable role of diaspora communities and chambers of commerce in promoting bilateral trade and investment.

He called for greater engagement from both governments to reduce trade barriers, simplify regulatory processes, and create an enabling environment for long-term cooperation.

He said that the evolving partnership between Pakistan and the UK holds significant promise for shared prosperity and economic resilience.

Govt allocates 2,000 MW in 1st phase for bitcoin mining

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government allocated 2,000 MW in first phase for bitcoin mining and 'AI Data Centers' in landmark digital infrastructure push.

In a groundbreaking move to transform Pakistan into a global leader in digital innovation, the Government of Pakistan has announced the allocation of 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity in the first phase of a national initiative to power Bitcoin mining and Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

This ambitious initiative is spearheaded by the Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC)—a government-backed body under the Ministry of Finance—as part of a broader strategy to monetize surplus electricity, create high-tech jobs, attract billions of dollars in foreign direct investment, and generate billions of dollars for government.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb stated that this strategic allocation marks a pivotal moment in Pakistan's digital transformation journey, unlocking economic potential by turning excess energy into innovation, investment, and international revenue.

Pakistan is uniquely positioned—both geographically and economically—to become a global hub for data centers. As a digital bridge between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, Pakistan offers the most strategic location in the world for data flow and digital infrastructure.

Since the inception of the Pakistan Crypto

Council, there has been tremendous interest from global Bitcoin miners and data infrastructure companies. Several international firms have already visited the country for exploratory discussions, and following this landmark announcement, more global players are expected to visit in the coming weeks.

Pakistan's underutilized power generation capacity is now being repurposed into a high-value digital asset.

AI data centers and Bitcoin mining operations, known for their consistent and heavy energy usage, provide an ideal use case for this surplus.

Redirecting idle energy, especially from plants operating below capacity, allows Pakistan to convert a long-standing financial liability into a sustainable, revenue-generating opportunity.

Bilal Bin Saqib, CEO of the Pakistan Crypto Council, emphasized the transformative nature of this initiative. He explained that with proper regulation, transparency, and international collaboration, Pakistan can become a global crypto and AI powerhouse.

He added that this energy-backed digital transformation not only unlocks high-value investment but enables the government to generate foreign exchange in USD through Bitcoin mining. Additionally, as regulations evolve, Pakistan can accumulate Bitcoin directly into a national wallet—marking a monumental shift from selling power in Pakistani Rupees (PKR) to leveraging digital assets for economic stability.

By offering stable and affordable energy, Pakistan presents a highly competitive environment compared to regional counterparts like India and Singapore, where rising power costs and land scarcity limit scalability.

Pakistan's strategic advantage is further underscored by the global context: while AI data center demand has soared to over 100 GW, global supply remains around 15 GW.

This massive shortfall creates an unprecedented opportunity for countries like Pakistan with surplus power, land, and an emerging regulatory framework.

The country's digital connectivity has also been significantly strengthened by the landing of the world's largest submarine internet cable.

The Africa-2 Cable Project, a 45,000-kilometre global network connecting 33 countries through 46 landing stations, has now landed in Pakistan.

This milestone enhances Pakistan's internet bandwidth, latency, and resilience through redundant fiber routes—key for ensuring high availability and operational continuity for AI data centers.

With a population of over 250 million and more than 40 million crypto users, Pakistan holds immense potential as a regional leader in digital services. Establishing local AI data centers will not only address growing concerns around data sovereignty but will also enhance cybersecurity, improve digital service delivery, and empower national capabilities in AI and cloud infrastructure.

structure.

These centers are expected to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs, catalyzing the development of a skilled workforce in engineering, IT, and data sciences.

This announcement marks only the first phase of a broader, multi-stage digital infrastructure rollout. Future developments are expected to include renewable energy-powered facilities—leveraging Pakistan's immense wind (50,000 MW potential in the Gharo-Keti Bandar corridor), solar, and hydropower resources—strategic international partnerships with leading blockchain and AI companies, and the establishment of fintech and innovation hubs.

These efforts will be complemented by proposed incentives such as tax holidays, customs duty exemptions on equipment, and reduced taxes for AI infrastructure developers.

Pakistan's combination of surplus power, geographic advantage, advanced subsea cable connectivity, renewable energy potential, and a large, digitally engaged population creates a compelling case for becoming a regional epicenter of Web3, AI, and digital innovation.

With the right incentives, strategic investments, and collaborative partnerships, Pakistan is positioning itself not only as a destination for global digital infrastructure but also as a sovereign economy that can accumulate digital assets, export digital services, and lead in the next generation of technological transformation.

Javid as new chief of All Pakistan Car dealers & importers KP elected

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The new cabinet of All Pakistan Car Dealers & Importers Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been officially announced. Ghulam Bilal Javid has been elected as Chairman, Hasan Taimoor as President, and Hashar Zarif as General Secretary.

A grand dinner was organized on this occasion, attended by the central and regional leadership of the association from across the country. Prominent participants included Group Leader Mian Shoaib, Central Chairman Sardar Irfan, Haji Tariq Mehmood (President Punjab), Raja Amir Kareem (Vice Chairman), Malik Qaiser (General Secretary), Jarrar Zaidi (Senior Vice President, Multan), Rana Furman (President Khanewal), Ajaib Khan (President G-8 Islamabad), Waseem Abbasi (General Secretary G-8), Malik Ijaz (Vice President Punjab), Haji Arshad (Vice President Rawalpindi), Rashid Abbasi (Vice Chairman



Rawalpindi), Chaudhry Hameed (Rawalpindi), Chaudhry Arshad (General Secretary Zone 4), and Adnan Qureshi (Rawalpindi).

During the event, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet was also announced. Nisar Babar and Haji Ihsan were appointed as Senior Vice Chairmen, Ghulam Hussain Chand as Vice Chairman, Ammar Khan as Deputy General Secretary, Abdul Haseeb Chughtai as Information Secretary, Basit Khan as Finance Secretary, Sajjad Khan as President Ring Road Peshawar, Kamran Arif as Vice President Ring Road, Syed Bilal Rasool as President Peshawar Cantt, Bilal Nizam as Vice President Peshawar Cantt, and Furman as



Senior Vice President Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

President Hasan Taimoor and General Secretary Hashar Zarif expressed their gratitude to all the esteemed guests, particularly those who came from Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, and other cities. The presence of the Secretary Excise and Director General Excise & Taxation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa further enhanced the significance of the event.

This gathering proved to be a milestone in defining a new direction for unity, harmony, and resolution of issues within the car dealer community.

Upon assuming the position, Ghulam Bilal Javid stated, "I will fulfill my



responsibilities with utmost sincerity, honesty, and dedication. InshaAllah, we will soon organize conventions in every district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to unite car dealers on a single platform. Our aim is to connect the entire province with the strong network of the All Pakistan Car Dealers Association.

We will raise the concerns of our fellow car dealers at every level - be it the Provincial Assembly, National Assembly, the Senate Chairman's chamber, or the office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan. InshaAllah, we will represent them on every forum and continue our strong efforts to resolve their issues."

FRIA urges pro-industry budget

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Chairman of the Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA), Shahbaz Aslam, has urged the government to frame the upcoming federal budget 2025-26 with a strong pro-industry focus to tackle the deepening industrial slowdown, rising costs of production, and waning investor confidence.

Speaking to the media after a consultative meeting with FRIA members, Shahbaz Aslam expressed concern over the repeated delays in the budget presentation and the government's reported move to hike petroleum levies. He warned that increasing indirect taxation will further burden the already struggling industrial units, leading to more closures and layoffs.

"The government must realise that the survival of Pakistan's manufacturing base depends on ease of doing business, affordable inputs, and stable policies," Aslam said. "Instead of burdening industries with more levies, we need targeted support to restore competitiveness."

The FRIA chairman noted that many medium-scale industries along Ferozepur Road have reduced operations due to high energy tariffs, inconsistent raw material supply, and uncertain fiscal policies. He warned that unless the budget includes meaningful relief measures, such as reduction in utility rates and duty exemptions on essential machinery and

raw material, industrial growth will stagnate further.

Shahbaz Aslam proposed a flat reduction in sales tax for the industrial sector and demanded that pending refunds be cleared immediately to ease cash flow issues for manufacturers. He added that a clear industrial policy and reduced regulatory compliance costs were essential to attract both local and foreign investment into the manufacturing sector.

"We request the government to avoid ad hoc taxation to meet IMF targets and instead facilitate production and exports. An industry-led recovery is the only sustainable path for job creation and economic stability," he stressed.

FRIA also called for reining in smuggling and under-invoicing that are eroding the share of domestic producers. Aslam urged the government to work closely with industry stakeholders while finalising the budget to ensure pragmatic, inclusive, and growth-centric fiscal planning.

He added that Ferozepur Road — once the heart of Lahore's industrial belt — could regain its past vitality if the budget 2025-26 recognises industry as the backbone of the national economy and addresses its challenges accordingly. He warned that unless the budget includes meaningful relief measures, such as reduction in utility rates and duty exemptions on essential machinery and raw material, industrial growth will stagnate further. He added that a clear

industrial policy and reduced regulatory compliance costs were essential to attract both local and foreign investment into the manufacturing sector.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has expressed serious concern over the government's decision to delay the presentation of the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 and the possible imposition of additional levies, including a sharp hike in the petroleum levy.

The BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar termed these developments deeply troubling for the already struggling business community and warned that such decisions would further strain the economy and damage investor confidence.

He said that the federal government recently shelved its plan to present the budget on June 2 and is now expected to unveil the fiscal plan on June 10. The delay has been attributed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's foreign tour as well as internal disagreements over the finalisation of

expenditures. He said that this postponement creates unnecessary uncertainty at a time when the business environment is already fragile due to inflation, high energy costs, and sluggish growth.

Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the delay in the budget presentation sends a negative signal to the market, businesses, and foreign investors who are waiting for policy clarity.

He said that businesses plan their fiscal year strategies based on expected policy announcements, and any delay hampers their ability to make timely decisions regarding investment, procurement, and employment. He added that the lack of transparency around budget planning is further eroding trust between the business community and the government.

The BMP is particularly concerned about the government's reported move to increase the petroleum levy, which currently stands at Rs78 per litre. The government is reportedly considering raising this

levy further in order to finance a larger Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of Rs1 trillion for the next fiscal year. Mian Anjum Nisar warned that any additional levy on petroleum products would result in a significant increase in the cost of doing business, leading to a rise in inflation and further weakening the purchasing power of consumers.

He noted that fuel is a key input for industries, transportation, and agriculture, and any increase in its price has a ripple effect across the entire economy. Instead of increasing indirect taxes like the petroleum levy, Nisar urged the government to focus on broadening the tax base, curbing unnecessary expenditures, and implementing structural reforms to improve revenue collection without burdening businesses and the general public.

He also criticised the lack of stakeholder consultation in budget-making, especially when businesses are the biggest contributors to taxes and employment. Nisar said

that the upcoming budget appears to be driven largely by the International Monetary Fund's directives, with little attention paid to the domestic realities faced by industrialists and exporters. He stressed that the government must engage with business leaders to frame policies that are sustainable and practical, rather than relying solely on external advice.

The BMP also raised concerns about possible cuts to subsidies and increased energy costs in the upcoming budget. Nisar warned that the business community will not be able to absorb any further increases in electricity and gas prices, as production costs have already reached unaffordable levels. He said that many industrial units, especially small and medium enterprises, are on the verge of closure due to high input costs and lack of support from the government.

The panel also criticised the government's handling of the circular debt issue in the petroleum sector. The plan to use inflated divi-

dends from state-owned enterprises to clear circular debt lacks transparency and may lead to market distortions. Nisar said that instead of adopting temporary fixes, the government should address the structural flaws in the energy sector, including mismanagement, inefficiencies, and losses in transmission and distribution.

Nisar further said that the recent abnormal increase in the share price of Pakistan State Oil (PSO), despite its poor financial condition, raises serious questions. He supported the IMF's decision to seek more clarity before approving the government's plan and expressed concern over the exclusion of PSO from the debt retirement scheme.

He urged the government to avoid populist decisions that may seem appealing in the short term but create long-term problems for the economy. The BMP also reiterated its longstanding concerns regarding unpredictable taxation policies, frequent changes in rules and regula-

tions, and an overall lack of policy continuity that discourages investment and hampers growth.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government must prioritise lowering the cost of doing business, supporting local industries, and facilitating exports. He said that no economy can grow sustainably without a strong manufacturing and industrial base, and the private sector must be treated as a partner in national development. He called for serious reforms in tax policy, energy pricing, and regulatory practices to bring back economic stability.

He added that the current approach of relying on indirect taxes, foreign loans, and politically driven expenditures will not yield long-term results. Instead, the government should focus on transparency, accountability, and inclusive policymaking. He also urged the authorities to announce realistic, growth-oriented targets in the budget that reflect ground realities and provide relief to struggling businesses.



In brief

Pakistan baseball family mourns Azeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Federation Baseball (PFB) President Shaukat Javed, Secretary Syed Fakhar Ali Shah, Senior Vice President Dr Muhammad Hamood Lakhvi and the entire baseball family of Pakistan is deeply grieved on the demise of Softball Federation of Pakistan President Asif Azeem. In a statement issued here they said, may Allah Kareem in His Infinite mercy shower His countless blessings and grant eternal peace to the departed soul and give strength & courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss. The President PFB and all the Baseball Family of Pakistan express their grief and sorrow to the bereaved family and pray to Allah Almighty for the boon of the departed soul.

Sports trials start

FAISALABAD (APP): The District Sports Department has commenced sports trials of various games for the tehsil and district level under Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Summer Games 2025. A spokesman for the sports department said here on Sunday that open trials for Kabaddi (boys) were arranged at Malik Pur Kabaddi Stadium today (May 25) while its next sessions are scheduled for May 26 at Jinnah Cricket Stadium and May 27 at Government Elementary School Kabaddi Chowk Samundri. These trials are open for boys of all ages. For the Under-21 category, district level trials of badminton (Boys & Girls) will be held on May 28 at Samanabad Sports Complex followed by the trials of volleyball (Boys) on May 29 at Prototype Gymnasium T a n d l i a n w a l a . Meanwhile, hockey trials (boys & girls) were planned for May 30 at Hockey Stadium Madina Town Faisalabad, he said, adding that these trials are part of the inter-tehsil and inter-district level competitions which would help to scout young talent and prepare teams to represent Faisalabad at the provincial level in the prestigious CM Punjab Summer Games. He said that these trials would provide an opportunity to young players to showcase their skills in addition to potentially leading to recognition and further advancement in professional sports. Athletes interested in participating in any of these trials are encouraged to contact the organizing body at 0300-7674197 for further details and registration, he added.

Alonso returns as new coach

MADRID (AFP/APP): Real Madrid appointed Xabi Alonso to replace Carlo Ancelotti as coach on Sunday, with the Spaniard to take over from June 1 and lead the team at the Club World Cup. "Xabi Alonso will be the Real Madrid coach for the next three seasons, from June 1, 2025 until June 30, 2028," said Real Madrid in a statement. With veteran Italian coach Ancelotti taking the reins of the Brazilian national team, Madrid secured a deal with former midfielder Alonso, whom they have been linked with for months. Alonso, 43, leaves German side Bayer Leverkusen at the end of the Bundesliga season after finishing second. "Alonso is one of the biggest legends at Real Madrid and in world football," continued Los Blancos' statement.

Lahore Qalandars crowned champions of PSL 10

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Lahore Qalandars were crowned the champions of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 after defeating Quetta Gladiators by six wickets in the final at Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday. Chasing 202, the Qalandars won the game on the second last ball of the final over, with six wickets in hand and a ball to spare. This is the third time Shaheen Afridi has led Lahore Qalandars to triumph in the PSL final. Earlier, Hasan Nawaz scored a quick fifty as Quetta Gladiators posted 201/9 on the scoreboard against Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 10 final at Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday. The Gladiators lost captain Saud Shakeel early in the inning when he was dismissed by Shaheen Afridi for just four runs in the second over of the innings. They faced another blow in the very next over when Finn Allen fell to Salman Mirza after making 12 off 11 deliveries, leaving them struggling at 21/2 in 3.1 overs. Rilee Rossouw and Hasan Nawaz then stitched

a 38-run partnership to stabilise the innings, however, the former was removed by Sikandar Raza on 22 off just 11 balls. Meanwhile, Hasan Nawaz continued his stellar performance and completed his third fifty of the PSL 10. The young batter shared a 67-run stand with Avishka Fernando to help Quetta Gladiators make a comeback in the game. Fernando fell to Rishad Hossain after making 29 off 22, with the scoreboard showing 125/4 in 12.5 overs. Shaheen Afridi removed Dinesh Chandimal on 22 off 13 balls, and dismissed Hasan Nawaz for 76 two balls later. Haris Rauf removed Mohammad Amir and Abrar Ahmed for ducks in the penultimate over. Faheem then played a late-inning cameo, in which he hit two fours and three sixes. He was dismissed on the final delivery of the innings after making 28 off just eight balls. For Lahore Qalandars, Shaheen picked up three wickets, while Salman Mirza and Haris Rauf bagged two wickets each. Sikandar Raza and

Rishad Hossain chipped in with a wicket each. Lahore Qalandars XI: Fakhar Zaman, Muhammad Naeem, Abdullah Shafique, Kusal Perera (wk), Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Asif Ali, Sikandar Raza, Shaheen Afridi (c), Rishad Hossain, Salman Mirza, and Haris Rauf. Quetta Gladiators XI: Saud Shakeel (c), Abrar Ahmed, Hassan Nawaz, Dinesh Chandimal (wk), Avishka Fernando, Rilee Rossouw, Mohammad Amir, Khurram Shahzad, Faheem Ashraf, Usman Tariq, and Finn Allen. The Gladiators booked a spot in the PSL 10 final after defeating Islamabad United in Qualifier 1. Lahore Qalandars first beat Karachi Kings in the Eliminator and then the defending champions in Qualifier 2 to progress to the PSL 10 final. It is to be noted here that the tenth edition of the Pakistan Super League was suspended for nine days due to rising tensions between Pakistan and India. After both countries agreed on the ceasefire, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced the resumption of the tournament from May 17.



LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars' players carry teammate Sikandar Raza as they celebrate after their victory in the Pakistan Super League Twenty20 final cricket match between Lahore Qalandars and Quetta Gladiators.

Ammad, Anas move in PSA Satellite Squash Tournament final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Muhammad Ammad and Anas Ali Shah moved in the final of the 1st Jansher Khan PSA Satellite Squash Tournament here at Mushaf Squash Complex on Sunday. The tournament has a draw of 32 players. In the 1st semifinal, Muhammad Ammad beat Saeed Abdul 3-1 (10-12, 11-8, 11-3, 11-6) in 46 Minutes while Anas Ali Shah defeated Abdullah Nawaz 3-2 (12-10, 9-11, 9-11, 11-6, 11-4) in 63 Minutes in the 2nd semifinal. The final will be played between Muhammad Ammad and Anas Ali Bukhari on Monday.

Epic Showdown Awaits at Jansher Khan PSA Squash Tournament: The 1st Jansher Khan PSA Squash Tournament, sponsored by the Markhor Squash Foundation, has reached its final stage. The tournament promises an intense finale as Muhammad Ammad and Anas Ali Shah prepare to clash at the Mushaf Squash Complex at 1600 hrs tomorrow. On October 15, Muhammad Ammad emerged victorious in the first semifinal, defeating Saeed Abdul with a score of 3-1 after 46 minutes of play. The match featured a highly competitive start, with Ammad losing the first game 10-12 but rallying back to win the next three games 11-8, 11-3, and 11-6. Anas Ali Shah earned his spot in the final by overcoming Abdullah Nawaz in a five-game thriller. Shah triumphed with scores of 12-10, 9-11, 9-11, 11-6, and 11-4, concluding the match in 63 minutes. Both semifinal matches showcased the players' determination and skill, setting high expectations for the final showdown. Anticipation is building as fans and players look forward to the decisive match that will determine who lifts the trophy in this inaugural tournament.

Mustafizur Rahman out of Pakistan T20Is with thumb injury

DHAKA: Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman has been ruled out of their upcoming T20I series in Pakistan due to a thumb injury he suffered during the IPL. Khaled Ahmed has been named as his replacement. Mustafizur was hit on his left hand while playing for Delhi Capitals against Punjab Kings on May 24, while attempting a caught and bowled off Josh Inglis. According to the Bangladesh physio Delowar Hossain, the injury could take up to three weeks to heal.

"Mustafizur suffered a clip fracture on his left thumb while playing his last match of the Indian Premier League yesterday," Hossain said. "This injury requires a period of rest and rehabilitation. As per our current assessment, he will be unavailable for selection for the next two to three weeks. We will conduct a follow-up evaluation after two weeks to monitor his recovery progress." Mustafizur is the third player to become unavailable for the series that begins on May 28 in

Lahore. Nahid Rana had withdrawn for personal reasons while Soumya Sarkar injured his back and was replaced by Mehidy Hasan Miraz. Mustafizur's replacement Khaled has had a productive 2024-25 season, taking 77 wickets at 21.74 in all formats of competitive cricket. He took 20 wickets at an average of 21.55 in the recent BPL season. Bangladesh play Pakistan in three T20Is in Lahore on May 28, 30 and June 1, having just lost a T20I series 2-1 to UAE in Sharjah. —crinfo

Shoaib wins Federal Cup National Tennis C'ships title

ISLAMABAD (APP): Muhammad Shoaib bagged the men's title of the 37th OGDCL Federal Cup National Ranking Tennis Championships here at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex. This year's tournament featured over 120 players competing across six categories including Men's Singles & Doubles, Ladies' Singles, Boys' U18 Singles, Boys' U14 Singles, and Girls' U12 Singles. A total of PKR 850,000 was distributed among winners and runners-up as prize money and travel allowances. In a thrilling showdown, 23-year-old top seed Muhammad Shoaib of PAF successfully defended his title against Muzammil Murtaza in an exhilarating three-set battle that lasted over 2 hours and 58 minutes. Shoaib claimed victory with scores of 7-6(6), 2-6, 6-4. Muzammil started strong, breaking Shoaib early and taking a 3-0 lead. However, Shoaib quickly adjusted his strategy, breaking back in the fifth game and forcing a tiebreak after both players held serve. In the tiebreak, Shoaib's early mini-break and consistent pressure

earned him a hard-fought 8-6 win in the first set. The second set saw Muzammil bounce back with renewed focus, breaking Shoaib's serve in the 4th and 6th games to level the match with a 6-2 win. In the deciding set, both players showcased exceptional baseline rallies and strategic cross-court play, reaching 4-4. Shoaib then delivered a clinical performance, breaking Muzammil's serve in the ninth game with powerful down-the-line winners. He maintained his composure while serving for the match, forcing unforced errors from his opponent and sealing the final set 6-4. The enthralling final was officiated by ITF White Badge Umpire Husnain Mehmood, ensuring a high standard of officiating. Earlier in the day, in the Junior 18 & Under Singles Final, Muhammad Salar emerged as the champion, defeating promising Islamabad youngster M. Hazik Aasim in a competitive straight-sets match. The encounter showcased the growing depth of talent in Pakistan's junior tennis ranks, with

both players displaying impressive skill and composure. Although Ahmad Hayat Lak, Managing Director of OGDCL, and Ch. Muhammad Aslam, Managing Director of Air Blue, were unable to attend the final due to urgent official engagements, the prize distribution ceremony was graced by distinguished guests. Muhammad Shafik, Director Commercial - Air Blue, Majid Bashir, President of the Islamabad Tennis Association, and Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), attended as Guests of Honor and distributed trophies and prizes to the winners and runners-up. Additionally, M.T. Cheema, Secretary of the Islamabad Tennis Association, and Ahsan Raza Zaidi also took part in presenting awards and acknowledging the players' commendable performances. Men's Singles Final: Muhammad Shoaib beat Muzammil Murtaza 7-6(6), 2-6, 6-4. Junior 18&Under Singles Final: Muhammad Salar beat M.Hazik Aasim 7-5 6-3.

Nadal to bid Roland Garros farewell

PARIS (AFP/APP): Roland Garros will pay tribute to its greatest champion with a ceremony for the retired Rafael Nadal on Sunday, while Aryna Sabalenka gets her French Open campaign up and running on the opening day of the tournament. Nadal, the record 14-time champion on the Paris clay, retired from tennis last November after an illustrious career. He returns to Court Philippe Chatrier a year after suffering a first-round exit at the hands of Alexander Zverev in what proved to be his final French Open. The Spaniard finished with a remarkable 112-4 win-loss record at Roland Garros, dominating the tournament since winning the title on his debut in 2005. Nadal hung up his racquet following the 2024 Davis Cup Finals in Malaga, initially denying him an opportunity to wave goodbye to his adoring fans in Paris. His tally of 14 victories at the single Grand Slam appears unlikely to be beaten, with Margaret Court's 11 Australian Open titles second on the all-time list. Former rivals Roger Federer and Andy Murray are expected to attend Nadal's ceremony, as well as Novak Djokovic -- fresh off his 100th ATP title in Geneva. Nadal's heir apparent Carlos Alcaraz will start his title defence next week as a slight favourite to become the first man to lift the Coupe des Mousquetaires since his compatriot's retirement. Victory over world number one Jannik Sinner in last weekend's Italian Open final gave Alcaraz

the second seeding for Roland Garros. That raises the possibility of the world's top two players meeting in a Grand Slam final for the very first time on June 8. "I think for the people, for the tennis fans, I think it's great to have a match-up from some players that make them excited about watching that match," Alcaraz told his pre-tournament press conference of his budding rivalry with Sinner. "I think for the people and probably the people who don't like watching tennis, I think (our rivalry) is something that because of that (they have) started to watch tennis." Djokovic will launch his sixth bid for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam triumph against American Mackenzie McDonald on Tuesday. The 38-year-old became just the third man to reach a century of tournament victories, after Jimmy Connors and Federer, by defeating Hubert Hurkacz in a three-hour epic in Switzerland on Saturday. But questions remain about Djokovic's form after losing in his opening matches in both Monte Carlo and Madrid to Alejandro Tabilo and Matteo Arnaldi respectively. The Serb faces a difficult draw, with last year's runner-up Zverev a potential quarter-final opponent and Sinner possibly waiting in the last four. - Sabalenka eyeing first French Open - Women's world number one Sabalenka headlines the opening-day action with her first-round match against 75th-ranked Russian Kamilla

Rakhimova. The Belarusian will kick off the schedule on Court Philippe Chatrier as she looks to make a strong start to her tilt at a first French Open title. Sabalenka has never reached the final at Roland Garros, but the tournament appears more open than in recent years given the struggles of three-time defending champion Iga Swiatek. The Pole has slipped to fifth in the rankings and has not reached a WTA final since lifting her fourth French Open trophy last year. Sabalenka believes she is as well-placed as ever to take advantage. "Throughout the years I've improved a lot (on clay) and today I feel physically, mentally... my game is pretty much ready to play on clay. Yeah, I definitely feel stronger than ever," said Sabalenka, who won the Madrid Open earlier this month. Elina Svitolina, a four-time quarter-finalist in Paris, opened the action under the roof on Court Suzanne Lenglen against Turkey's Zeynep Sonmez as play began on Sunday in drizzly conditions. Italian Open champion Jasmine Paolini, who was well beaten by Swiatek in the 2024 final, plays Yuan Yue. Chinese star Zheng Qinwen and rising Russian star Diana Shnaider are among the other women's hopefuls on court. Men's eighth seed Lorenzo Musetti, who has reached at least the semi-finals at all three clay-court Masters events this year, faces German Yannick Hanfmann.

Liverpool lift Premier League trophy after Palace draw



LIVERPOOL (AFP): Virgil van Dijk lifted the Premier League trophy after Liverpool's 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace on Sunday as the Reds held a

title party with their own fans for the first time in 35 years. Arne Slot's side wrapped up their record-equalling 20th English

crown with a demolition of Tottenham in April, but the long-awaited trophy presentation was saved for the final game of the season. Liverpool's last title in

2020 was won during the Covid-19 lockdown, meaning the trophy was held aloft by then-captain Jordan Henderson in front of an empty stadium. The Reds made the most of their first title celebration in a packed Anfield since 1990 as the 61,000-capacity crowd parted along with the great and good of Liverpool's illustrious past. Alan Hansen, who captained Liverpool in their last trophy lift at a full Anfield in 1990, presented the silverware to current Reds skipper Van Dijk. Kenny Dalglish, Liverpool's manager 35 years ago, was watching from the stands, as was Jurgen Klopp, who mas-terminated the Reds' Premier League triumph in 2020 before leaving last year.

Fireworks, smoke and red ticker tape filled the air as the trophy was paraded around Anfield, with the famous Kop stand adorned with banners and flags emblazoned with slogans hailing their heroes. Even Trent Alexander-Arnold — the Liverpool right-back controversially set to leave in a widely-expected move to Real Madrid — was embraced by fans on his final appearance for his boyhood club. Alexander-Arnold had been booed after coming on as a substitute for the recent draw with Arsenal in the first game following his announcement that he will depart when his contract expires in June. Rousing scene With Anfield in party mood, tearful Alexander-Arnold was granted a fond farewell as he was cheered

when he came off the bench in the second half, the Liverpool-born defender responding by kissing his badge. Liverpool failed to win any of their four games after sealing the title. But that couldn't detract from the festive atmosphere, which was in full swing before the game even kicked off as Slot's team were given a guard of honour onto the pitch by Palace's players, before the Reds returned the favour to salute the FA Cup winners. Ismaila Sarr's ninth-minute goal for Palace couldn't spoil the occasion either. Liverpool midfielder Ryan Gravenberch, who had been booked for diving, was shown a straight red card after his foul on Daichi Kamada in the 68th minute.

But Mohamed Salah ensured Liverpool avoided defeat in their finale when he bundled home in the 84th minute. Salah's 29th goal this season equalled the Premier League record of most goal involvements in a season, previously held by Andy Cole and Alan Shearer, who both achieved 47 in a 42-game season. The Egypt forward finished as the Premier League's golden boot winner for a record-equalling fourth time. Liverpool's players gathered in one long line to sing club anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone' in a rousing scene after the trophy presentation. The party is set to continue on Monday when Liverpool will parade the trophy through the city on an open-top bus.



In brief

Rishte Aur Ferishte staged

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Regional Drama Festival has started at Punjab Arts Council (PAC) Rawalpindi, featuring a series of different family dramas at the stage by renowned local artists. On the first day, the drama *Rishte Aur Ferishte* was presented, which was written and directed by Yar Muhammad. Raja Sattar, Anjum Abbasi, Shahid Bhola, Allama Sajjad, Anjum Abbasi, Rizwana Khan, Zahra and Yar Muhammad performed well in the drama team. The theme of the play circles around the greed of money, that results in a man becoming arrogant by keeping all the true relations aside. The drama reflects that a time comes when wealth does not work, making him realize that only the passion of love for the homeland is the greatest relationship. Director PAC, Sajjad Hussain on the occasion said that according to the vision of the Punjab government, the Regional Drama Festival is being presented, with the aim to promote and develop fine arts and provide clean and quality entertainment to the people. A large audience watched the drama and appreciated the efforts of the Punjab government. This festival will continue till June 05.

Traffic violators penalized

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has revealed that a total of 5,497 traffic violations were recorded over the past week, including the impounding of 1,052 vehicles and issuance of thousands of challans for various offenses. A spokesperson told APP on Sunday that 740 motorcycles and 312 vehicles were fined for violating traffic laws. Additionally, 3,315 vehicles faced action for illegal parking, while 634 motorcyclists were penalized for riding without helmets. The report further stated that 114 drivers were fined for using mobile phones while driving and 384 vehicles were ticketed for not wearing seat belts. Action was also taken against 98 vehicles for using black-tinted windows. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider, said strict and indiscriminate action is being taken against traffic violators across the capital. "We are also cracking down on illegal parking. Citizens must respect traffic laws to ensure safe travel for everyone," he added.

Wanted criminal arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested key suspect involved in murder case in the jurisdiction of Rata Amral here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, the suspect along with his accomplices had attacked three citizens, one of the victims later died during treatment. The incident took place in July 2024, and the accused's accomplices had already been taken into custody earlier. The police continued their efforts to track down the main accused, using all available resources, including human intelligence. SP Rawal, Muhammad Haseeb Raja, confirmed the arrest and said the suspect will be presented in court with strong evidence to ensure justice.

Stolen vehicles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two members gang involved in street crimes and recovered three motorcycle and stolen vehicle from their possession here on Sunday. According to police spokesman, Dharmyal police while taking action held two members gang and recovered motorcycles, stolen vehicle from their custody.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a high-level meeting. —APP Photo

Kamran Tessori visits Shaheed Sq Ldr Usman Yousuf's home

RAWALPINDI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori visited the home of Shaheed Squadron Leader Usman Yousuf here on Sunday to offer condolences to his family.

The governor offered Fateha for the departed soul and prayed for his high ranks in Jannah.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Governor Tessori paid homage to Shaheed Usman saying that he had sacrificed his life for the defence of the motherland. He said the entire nation was proud of its martyrs and stood united behind the armed forces.

"Pakistan gave a strong and befitting reply to Indian

aggression," he said, adding, "It was not only the Pakistan Army that faced the enemy bravely but also the whole nation which supported them fully."

Governor Tessori lauded the bravery of Shaheed Usman Yousuf and said his whole family had served in the military. "We are all united to protect our homeland," he added.

He also criticized the Indian media, saying it spread fabricated news during the conflict. "India has not presented any proof regarding (its baseless allegation of Pakistan's involvement) the Pahalgam incident. The Indian media kept lying, while Pakistan's

media exposed them by highlighting the truth, he added.

He said the Pakistan Armed Forces were fully capable and strong enough as evident from the Pakistan Air Force which shattered India's false pride in having the latest defence technology. Likewise, the enemy could not dare for any misadventure on the sea front as the Pakistan Navy was also fully prepared, he added.

Tessori thanked the friendly countries which played a role in helping to ease tensions. "Pakistan is now on the road to economic development," he concluded.

ICT Police arrest 16 outlaws, recover drugs, weapons

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 16 criminals during the last 24 hours in ongoing operations across the federal capital.

A police spokesman told APP on Sunday that Kohsar, Tarnol, Sangjani, Sabzi Mandi, Shams Colony, Khanna, Kirpa, Nilore, and Phulgran police stations apprehended 10 individuals involved in various criminal activities, including drug peddling and possession of illegal weapons.

He said police teams also recovered 2,672 grams of heroin, 12 wine bottles, and 10 pistols along with ammunition from the suspects. He said that under a special campaign to arrest proclaimed offenders and absconders, six more criminals were apprehended by different police teams.

He said cases have been registered against all the arrested individuals and further investigations are underway. He said the Islamabad Police is committed to protecting the lives and property of citizens and that no one will be allowed to disturb public peace.

ICT Police nab four dacoits, seized stolen motorcycles, weapons: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police

have arrested four members of dangerous gangs involved in dacoities and motorcycle thefts in various areas of the federal capital.

An official told APP on Sunday that teams from Khanna, Sihala and Margalla police stations apprehended four suspects linked to a series of street crimes and motorcycle theft incidents. The arrested individuals were identified as Usama, Tahir, Sahil, and Muhammad Mustafa.

He said police recovered several snatched mobile phones, cash, stolen valuables, six stolen motorcycles, one motorcycle used in the crimes and arms with ammunition from the possession of the accused.

He said multiple cases had already been registered against the suspects at different police stations, and during preliminary interrogation, the accused confessed to committing several criminal activities. Further investigation is underway.

Naqvi chairs meeting to focus on urban management

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired an important meeting in the capital, focusing on urban management, law enforcement, and administrative reforms.

The meeting was attended by Islamabad's Chief Commissioner, Inspector General of Police, Deputy Commissioner, DIGs, SPs, ACs, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, and the Federal Interior Secretary.

A major decision was taken to launch an immediate crackdown against illegal constructions in Islamabad. Naqvi ordered

strict action against unapproved housing structures and unauthorized housing societies, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy.

"All relevant officers must ensure strict implementation of this policy," Naqvi said, directing the use of the Land Information and Management System (LIMS) and satellite mapping to prevent any illegal development.

Naqvi stressed that providing world-class services to the residents of Islamabad must be the top priority. He urged the police and administration to improve their image through public trust and

proactive service delivery. "The safety of citizens' lives and property must not be compromised," he said, instructing SPs and ACs to perform their duties actively.

He also called for new initiatives from officers to improve public convenience, promising full support for their implementation.

"This mission must be pursued with full commitment and national spirit," Naqvi added.

The Interior Minister also directed effective price control of essential commodities and special cleanliness measures during Eid-ul-Azha.

Water availability a challenge

RAWALPINDI (APP): Water, the essence of life, is recognised as a universal right, a crucial component of people's lives, and a country's security and sustainability. Water has profoundly impacted human history in the tapestry of civilization across diverse landscapes, geography, and periods, becoming the linchpin of prosperity and progress.

Water management refers to planning, implementing and regulating various activities related to the successful sourcing and extraction, sustainable use, distribution, conservation, and treatment of its resources. It involves a comprehensive approach to ensuring the availability of clean water for various purposes, including drinking, agriculture, industry, sanitation and environmental preservation.

Addressing the water availability challenges of the Garrison City of Rawalpindi requires a multi-faceted approach, including expanding water storage capacity through dams and reservoirs, improving water distribution networks, promoting water conservation measures, and addressing issues like tanker mafia and infrastructure maintenance.

Recognising these challenges, the city's civic agencies have been taking measures for the construction of new dams like Chahan and Dadhocha dams, and side by side steps for maintaining the storage capacity of existing Rawal and Khanpur dams.

Managing Director (MD) of Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Muhammad Saleem Ashraf informed APP that the Garrison City needed a total water supply of around 51 Million Gallons Daily (MGD) in winter, 30.5 MGD of which through 480 tube-wells, 10 MGD from the Rawal Dam and 6 MGD from the Khanpur Dam.

The city had to face a shortfall of around 7 MGD in winter, which rose to around 19 MGD during summer, with the daily water demand reaching over 70 MGD, he added.

Both the cantonments (Rawalpindi and Chaklala) also received some 12

MGD water from the Rawal Dam, the WASA MD said. For overcoming the water shortage, Saleem said work was already underway on the Developing Resilient Environment and Advancing Municipal Services (DREAMS-I) project, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The project's overall scope involved the treatment and transportation of 14.5 MGD water from Chahan Dam to Rawalpindi city, besides the improvement and replacement of the city's existing water supply system, he added.

Moreover, he said, the rehabilitation and upgradation of Rawal Lake filtration plants were also in process to supply an additional 5 MGD water to the Garrison City. Similarly, he said, two new heavy pumps were being installed at the Khanpur Dam to increase water supply to 8 MGD. The project to provide a 24/7 water supply to three union councils of Khayaban-e-Sir Syed was also underway.

"This project (DREAMS) of public importance will be completed in two years instead of the stipulated period of three years," he added. The MD further said that work on the Chahan Dam treatment plant had been kicked off, which was expected to provide 10 MGD of water to Rawalpindi city.

He said the feasibility of setting up the Dadhocha Dam had been included in the Punjab Annual Development Plan, which would hopefully provide 30.5 MGD water to meet the future needs of the city.

As regards water losses, he said that water leakage and theft from the distribution network were major sources of water loss and needed to be addressed.

He said the Punjab Government had banned the establishment of new car washing stations across the province. In compliance with the orders of the Lahore High Court, the Punjab Environmental Agency (EPA) had imposed a ban on non-essential use of underground water and violators, including car wash/service stations, would have to face heavy fines, he warned.

Chief Executive Officer

of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) Syed Ali Rizvi apprised APP that the RCB provided some 1.50 MGD water to its residents from 55 tubewells, 11.28 MGD from the Khanpur Dam and 0.03 MGD from the Rawal Dam.

The RCB's distribution network included eight overhead reservoirs and 34 underground tanks, he added. The Board provided clean drinking water to the people through 52 filtration plants, he said.

Member of the National Assembly Malik Ibrar Ahmed told APP that the construction of modern underground tanks having capacity to store 1 MGD water had entered the final stage. The project aimed to provide a lasting solution to the longstanding water shortage in local communities of RCB areas, ensuring improved supply and overcoming the seasonal scarcity, especially during the summer months.

He stated that every year, with the onset of summer, the residents of Rawalpindi and Chaklala cantonments faced severe water shortages due to the lack of storage facilities. The release of allocated funds was being prioritized for the timely completion of the vital projects to ensure sufficient water supply to the public during the hot weather, he added.

The construction of underground tanks at Bhata Chowk, with a storage capacity of 200,000 gallons per day, and Gawalandi, with a capacity of 100,000 gallons per day, was rapidly progressing, the MNA said.

Additionally, he said, projects were underway at Naseerabad, Barf Khana Chowk, Ghazi Abad, Afshan Colony, Tench Bhatta, Tahli Mohri, and Wards 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the Chaklala Cantonment, each designed to store 50,000 gallons daily. Malik Abrar mentioned that the water storage projects were being executed by the Public Health Engineering Department and Rawalpindi and Chaklala cantonment boards. He further said that Rs 85 million was being spent to lay new water supply and sewerage lines, significantly improving both water distribution and drainage systems.

Govt to transform PR into passenger-friendly

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Sunday reaffirmed the government's commitment to transforming Pakistan Railways into a modern, reliable and passenger-friendly mode of transport.

"Efforts are underway to make the railway a reliable and preferred mode of travel," he said while paying an unannounced visit to Margalla Railway Station. The minister assessed the overall facilities and engage directly with passengers and staff.

During his visit, Hanif

Abbasi conducted a detailed inspection of cleanliness arrangements across the station premises and expressed satisfaction over the efforts of the staff.

He instructed station authorities to ensure that high standards of hygiene and sanitation are consistently maintained.

Hanif Abbasi personally inspected each coach of the train stationed at the platform, evaluating onboard conditions and facilities provided to passengers.

He also took time to interact with travelers, listening attentively to their complaints and sugges-

tions regarding railway services.

The minister held discussions with railway personnel about the quality of service and various operational challenges.

He also reviewed the progress of ongoing development projects aimed at upgrading the Margalla Station infrastructure.

The minister announced plans to introduce recreational facilities at Margalla Station and said that specially designed public restaurants are also under consideration as part of the station's future development.



ISLAMABAD: Animal being brought to the Cattle Market in sector 1-12. The Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad has set up a Cattle Market.

Renewed efforts ramped up to crack down on single-use plastics in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Enforcement efforts under a plan have been stepped up to clamp down on use of single-use plastics in the Islamabad and its adjoining areas and punish those violating the ban on single-use plastic items, particularly polythene bags, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination's media spokesperson Mohammad Saleem Shaikh said in a statement on Sunday.

Sharing details of the various enforcement crackdowns conducted in various areas of the federal capital city under the plan, he said that the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) in collaboration with the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its enforcement of the Single-Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations, 2023 through a series of inspection drives, targeting prominent commercial areas in the city.

Inspection teams visited bakeries, hotels, plastic suppliers, and local vendors across various localities to ensure strict compliance with the ban on single-use plastics. These operations resulted in the confiscation of significant quantities of prohibited items and fines imposed on multiple violators, the climate change and environmental coordination ministry's spokesperson Saleem Shaikh added.

The ministry official recalled that on May 23, a Pak-EPA's enforcement team conducted a targeted inspection in Islamabad's upscale G-6 sector, seized over 15 kilogrammes of banned single-use plastic products. Six shopkeepers were fined and issued warnings for non-compliance. Encouragingly, most shops in the area were found using eco-friendly alternatives for packaging.

In a separate operation on May 22, Pak-EPA teams carried out inspections at key markets, including G-9 Peshawar Morr Market, Safa Gold Mall (F-7 Markaz), and Rana Market (F-7/2). These raids led to the confiscation of over 300 kilogrammes of banned items and the imposition of Rs. 45,000 in fines on seven violators, the ministry spokesperson Muhammad Saleem said further.

The official added that earlier on May 16, inspections in G-7 Markaz and adjacent markets resulted in the seizure of 150 kilogrammes of single-use plastics and Rs. 10,000 in fines. Lauding the joint crackdowns by Pak-EPA and ICT Administration against those violating the single-use plastics. Pak-EPA Director General Nazia Zeb Ali emphasised the agency's firm in its stance against plastic pollution.

"This crackdown is part of our sustained efforts to enforce the

Single-Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations, 2023, so as to reduce plastic pollution in the capital city and its adjoining areas for overall protection of environment and public health," she remarked. She highlighted that stringent actions would continue at all levels against those disregarding the ban, contaminating the city's environment and harming public health.

The Single-Use Plastics (Prohibition) Regulations, 2023 ban the manufacture, import, distribution, sale, and use of single-use plastics, including polythene bags and disposable beverage containers, within the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Pak-EPA remains committed to ongoing inspection efforts and strict enforcement to ensure environmental protection and promote sustainable practices.

Pak-EPA's DG Nazia Zeb Ali warned that anyone found using,

selling and manufacturing polythene bags would be liable to pay fines. In case of violation of law, an individual would be fined Rs5,000, a manufacturer Rs100,000 and a shopkeeper Rs10,000.

Highlighting the environment and public health burden of single-use plastic items, Nazia Zeb Ali remarked that single-use plastics, such as polythene bags, disposable utensils, and plastic straws, are among the leading contributors to urban pollution.

"In Islamabad alone, a significant portion of municipal waste is composed of polythene bags. Besides being known as a major cause of deleterious impact on environment and public health, these plastics clog drainage systems, contribute to urban flooding and take centuries to decompose," she highlighted.

She said further that such plastics release toxic chemicals as they degrade. These

microplastics enter soil, water, and even the air, posing long-term health risks. Open burning of plastic waste, still a common practice, produces harmful fumes that directly impact respiratory health—especially among children and the elderly, she added. Nazia Zeb Ali also urged the public to support the government's efforts to rid the city of the growing burden of single use plastics and its adverse impacts on environment, public health and the city's sewer networks.

"As Pakistan's scenic capital city and a fast emerging hub for tourism, we all must play our part and strive to preserve its natural green belts, parks and Margalla Hills by getting rid of the city of the single-use plastic litter and ensure that it no more spoils scenic areas and threaten wildlife that may ingest or become entangled in plastic waste," Pak-EPA's DG Nazia Zeb Ali said.

45m afs projects launched

KABUL (Pajhwok): Reconstruction projects worth 45 million afghanis have been launched at university in Balkh. These projects included reconstruction of a mosque, internal roads, deep wells, water supply systems and the building of the faculty of education. “We and you will rebuild Afghanistan, and from now on, the capacities and experiences of professors will be utilized in the country’s sectoral ministries”, said acting higher education minister Maulvi Nida Mohammad Nadeem.

1 killed in Laghman accident

KABUL (Pajhwok): One individual was killed and another injured as a result of a traffic accident on the Kabul-Jalalabad highway in Laghman province on Sunday morning. In a statement, police spokesman Yunus Yousufzai said a Corolla-type vehicle collided with two cars in Kakas area of Qarghayee district. A driver lost his life and another individual was injured and he is said to be in stable condition. The accident was linked to carelessness of drivers.

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

Nearly 50,000 e-cards distributed to drivers

KABUL (TOLONews): The ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation announced that they have distributed nearly 50,000 electronic cards to drivers of taxis, buses and trucks. Hikmatullah Asifi, the spokesperson for the ministry, told TOLONews that the e-cards will ensure the safety of passengers, enhance the quality of travel and bring further transparency in the transportation system. “The e-cards are given to

the drivers of taxis, buses and trucks in Kabul and other provinces. These cards are important for the safety of passengers, safe trips and tracking the cars. So far, nearly 50,000 of these cards have been distributed to drivers across the country,” the spokesperson said. Asifi also said that these cards are important for the identification of drivers as well. Drivers in Kabul welcomed the distribution of the cards, saying that the initiative will create order

in cities and rural areas. Javid, a driver in Kabul told TOLONews, “The cards given to us are important to track our cars and will prohibit the theft of cars.” Another driver in Kabul, Ajmal said, “This is a better initiative, all drivers should have their cards.” Earlier, the Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation said that they have installed 8,000 GPS devices in passenger cars and trucks and that the process is still ongoing.

Nationwide anti-polio campaign starts today

SAR-I-PUL (Pajhwok): An anti-polio vaccination campaign was launched in northern Sar-i-Pul province on Sunday a day before a nationwide drive, targeting more than 200,000 children under five years of age. Polio Free Afghanistan said on its Facebook page, it would launch the first sub-national polio vaccination campaign of the current year tomorrow. It asked people to play their part for a Polio Free Afghanistan. Officials in Sar-i-Pul said a four-day anti-polio vaccination campaign was launched on Sunday, targeting 200,000 children under five in the province. The Deputy Governor Maulvi Khal Mohammad

Haqqani said: “Officials are cooperating in the implementation of polio vaccination, mullahs, imams, influential people and villagers have been told to cooperate with the polio vaccination campaign. It is the duty of all sections of society to fight against polio and save children from the crippling disease”. Haqqani urged local media to work on raising awareness about the polio vaccine and that no child under the age of five should be denied vaccination. Hafiz Naqibullah, deputy director of public health department, explained during the four-day campaign, 200,000 children under the age of five would be given the drops in

Sar-i-Pul province. Polio vaccination teams are implementing the drive on a door-to-door basis and are trying to ensure that no part of the province is left out, he added. The success of this campaign depends on cooperation of the people and various social institutions. According to Abdullah, a tribal elder, “We thank the government and international organizations for the free vaccination. Families are ready to cooperate with health teams”. Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only countries where polio remains endemic and the continuation of these campaigns is vital to completely eradicate the virus.

Historic pools of Herat: From drinking water sources to tourist attractions

HERAT (TOLONews): The historic pools of Herat, which once served as sources of clean drinking water for the residents of the province, have today transformed into scenic spots for both domestic and international tourists. According to local officials, these pools boast a history of over 1,500 years, and some of them have been restored and renovated in recent years. “Water would flow into the Chaharsu pool through a canal, and people used this water for drinking. I remember that the water in these pools would freeze in winter, and in the summer, we used it and carried it home in clay pots,” said Mohammad Anwar, a resident of Herat. “This pool water was used for drinking, and people would take

it home. There were also specific individuals who would bring the water to the market and distribute it,” said Mohammad Ebrahim Habibi, head of the Behzad Art Gallery. Available statistics indicate that there are over 450 historic pools in Herat, most of which are located in villages and districts and have fallen into ruin. Sediq Mir, Director of Historical Monuments Preservation at Herat’s Department of Information and Culture, said: “Every village, district, city, and neighborhood in Herat has historic pools. Some neighborhoods even have several pools. The number of these pools exceeds 450.” These clay-constructed pools are seen as symbols of Herat’s glorious history and civilization. They were

designed to provide cool water during the summer. “The water in these pools was clean, cold in the summer, and the covered design played a significant role in maintaining hygienic water. Unfortunately, many of the pools in the villages were destroyed during the war, and due to a lack of budget, no attention has been given to their preservation and restoration,” said Wali Shah Bahra, a historical monuments expert. The water for these pools used to come from the Harirod River, but since the installation of water pipelines and the establishment of a municipal water system, the pools have been dry for fifty years. Some of these historic pools, after restoration, are now used as cultural centers.

Ministers agree to streamline projects

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani, Minister of Urban Development and Housing, held discussions with Finance Minister Mullah Mohammad Nasir Akhund on Saturday to streamline priority infrastructure projects across Afghanistan. According to a statement from the Urban Development Ministry, the ministers focused on determining the status of key projects under the Finance Ministry’s purview, with particular attention to improving implementation efficiency. Finance Minister Akhund requested prioritized processing for his ministry’s projects, including detailed planning for customs facilities in several provinces. Minister Nomani assured that technical teams would systematically address these priorities to ensure high-quality completion within established timelines. “Ministries should refrain from independently hiring external designers,” Nomani emphasized, underscoring his ministry’s legal mandate to prepare all architectural plans, blueprints, and construction designs for government entities.

Both officials agreed to enhance inter-ministerial coordination to facilitate more effective development outcomes. The meeting concluded with commitments to standardized project management procedures that align with the Islamic Emirate’s infrastructure modernization goals.

Work launched on projects

KABUL (Pajhwok): Construction work has been initiated on 175 development projects at a cost of 245 million afghanis in the Salang and Shinwari districts of central Parwan province. The projects include the construction of rural roads, bridges, culverts, retaining walls and irrigation canals, says the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MoRRD). Minister Mullah Mohammad Yunus Akhundzada said the projects would not only create employment opportunities for local residents but also contribute to the community’s economic development. He added hundreds of people would be employed during the implementation phase and the projects, once completed, would help address key infrastructure challenges faced by residents of the two districts.

Ministry convenes meeting to tackle foot-and-mouth disease outbreak

KABUL (Ariana News): In response to the recent outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) across central Afghanistan and several provinces, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock convened a high-level coordination meeting with national and international partners, government agencies, and members of the agriculture sector. The meeting aimed to establish joint strategies to contain the spread of the highly contagious animal disease and mitigate its impact on the livestock sector. Deputy Minister Sadr Azam Osmani warned of the serious economic consequences if the outbreak is not brought under control. “FMD is one of the greatest threats to Afghanistan’s livestock industry,” he said. “Uncontrolled, it could inflict severe damage on the national economy.



Close cooperation from international and local partners is vital.” Mokhtar Mohseni, Head of Animal Health at the Ministry, emphasized that the disease, while previously present at lower levels, has now spread significantly. “This is not just the government’s responsibility—

it requires coordinated action from all partners,” he said, noting that both short- and long-term response plans have been developed and are underway with the support of key stakeholders. FMD is a viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle,

sheep, goats, and pigs. It causes fever, painful lesions, and excessive salivation, particularly in cattle and pigs. If left unchecked, the disease can lead to severe losses in the livestock sector, which plays a critical role in Afghanistan’s rural economy.

Remote ID processing serves nearly 8,000 Afghans abroad

KABUL (BNA): Afghanistan’s National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) announced on Sunday that it has processed identity document services for 7,643 Afghan citizens residing abroad during the first two months of the current solar year (1404) through its remote digital system. According to the NSIA press office, the services included issuance of 1,978 new paper ID cards, 509

replacement cards, and verification of 2,068 existing documents. An additional 3,088 citizens received corrections to their citizenship information through the remote portal. Within Afghanistan, the Civil Registration Department reported distributing 3,062 new paper ID cards in Kabul during the same period, while processing 27,271 document modifications and 4,952 verification requests for capital residents.

“The Civil Registration Department remains committed to providing efficient and transparent services through both in-person and remote channels,” the NSIA statement emphasized, noting the digital initiative aims to better serve Afghanistan’s global diaspora. The remote services come as part of the Islamic Emirate’s efforts to modernize civil documentation for Afghan citizens worldwide, particularly in neighboring

countries hosting millions of Afghan migrants. Authorities highlighted the system’s importance for maintaining accurate population records while reducing bureaucratic burdens.

230 Afghans returned home

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) says 230 more Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan. These individuals returned to the country over the past two days, the ministry announced in a brief post on its X handle on Sunday. Citing Spin Boldak-based border officials in Kandahar, the ministry wrote the returnees had spent one to two days in jails and had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan. After receiving humanitarian assistance on arrival in Afghanistan, the returnees were transported to their respective native areas, the ministry added. On May 22 and 23, about 287 Afghan refugees had been released from Pakistani prisons before being sent to their home country.

Four killed and seven injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, Afghan officials participated in six international meetings held in Russia, China, Iran and Uzbekistan. The World Bank resumed the process of disbursing its remaining loans to Afghanistan. The International Crisis Group expressed concern over the forced deportation of Afghan refugees, while UNHCR called the reduction in international aid in this regard alarming. **Casualties:** Last week, four people were killed and seven others injured in various incidents across Afghanistan. Local officials said that unknown individuals killed a rickshaw driver in Khost; while a young man was killed in Nangarhar province. In Sar-e-Pul, a man stabbed his father to death and injured his sister. A man killed his brother in a dispute over water distribution, injuring another brother and his two sons in Daikundi. Additionally, in Samangan, the explosion of an old mortar shell injured three people. In the previous week, four people had been killed in Afghanistan. Before the regime change in 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security personnel would get killed and maimed in clashes and bomb blasts every week.

Afghan delegations’ foreign trips Last week, Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi travelled to Iran and China. He held talks with Iran’s Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and President Masoud Pezeshkian on bilateral relations, security issues, water resources and refugees. The two sides also discussed bilateral ties between Tehran and Kabul and the situation of Afghan refugees in the neighbouring country. President Pezeshkian described Afghanistan and Iran as good neighbours. He said his country was ready to expand relations with Afghanistan across all sectors. He also emphasised the importance of strengthening ties and assured the Afghan side of his government’s efforts to improve conditions for Afghan refugees living in Iran. Muttaqi stressed the imperative of positive engagement with other countries based on a balanced foreign policy on the opening day of the “Tehran Dialogue Forum.” Muttaqi highlighted the Islamic Emirate’s foreign policy, asserting that security in Afghanistan benefitted the entire world. Over the past 40 years, he claimed, Afghanistan had been a victim of global power rivalries due to a

lack of a balanced foreign policy. At the trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan and China in Beijing, he stressed the importance of political and economic relations among the three countries. He expressed hope for further progress in these areas. Officials said all three sides agreed to enhance trade and facilitate improvements in the transit sector. At a separate meeting with Muttaqi, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi pledged continued political and economic support for Afghanistan and said efforts would be made to remove obstacles to the import of agricultural products and other Afghan goods. Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Naeem stated Afghanistan served as a natural bridge between Central and South Asia and was ready to play an active and constructive role in both regional and international processes. Speaking at the Termez Dialogue in Uzbekistan, he underlined Afghanistan’s commitment to regional peace, cooperation and sustainable development. Naeem expressed sincere appreciation to the government of Uzbekistan for hosting and initiating dialogue under the theme “Creating a Shared Space

for Peace, Friendship and Prosperity.” He described Uzbekistan as a close neighbor and strategic partner, noting the significant and unprecedented growth in bilateral relations in recent years. Last week, Minister of Justice, Maulvi Abdul Hakim Sharaie, participated in the 13th session of the St. Petersburg International Legal Forum in Russia. The event was attended by justice ministers and judicial officials from more than 80 countries. In his address, Sharaie emphasised the importance of global legal reforms to ensure international justice. He said reducing crime on a global scale required coordination and awareness, adding that if these elements accompany punishment, crime rates could decline. Additionally, \ Minister of Information Technology Maulvi Najibullah Hayat Haqqani took part in the 31st meeting of regional countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. During the meeting, Hayat Haqqani discussed Afghanistan’s current state in the field of technology, the role of fiber optics and the potential for regional connectivity through data transit using Afghanistan’s geographic location. He also highlighted the

development of digital infrastructure and the services provided by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. Meanwhile, a delegation led by Minister of Mines and Petroleum Mullah Hidayatullah Badri visited Iran. Badri participated in Iran’s International Mining Exhibition and held meetings with various Iranian officials. These discussions focused on joint cooperation in the mining sector and experience sharing. He also encouraged numerous Iranian private companies to invest in Afghanistan’s mining industry. Several Iranian investors expressed interest in investing in Afghan mineral resources. National Environmental Protection Authority (NEPA) chief Maulvi Mati-ul-Haq Khalis, leading a delegation, has participated in the 11th Nevsky World Environmental Congress in Russia. In a statement on Friday, NEPA said the major global event brought together representatives from various countries, international organizations, environmental experts, activists, and academic institutions to discuss environmental challenges and opportunities amid climate change. The congress agenda included key topics such as food security under climate

change, circular economy, eco-friendly technologies, carbon reduction, green economy, youth engagement, BRICS sustainable development, eco-tourism, mining, and urban ecology. **WB resumes debt repayments** Last week, the World Bank (WB) resumed the disbursement of outstanding loans in Afghanistan, with nearly 11 million US dollars to be paid to companies in the first phase. MoF said the World Bank reopened its office in Kabul, following continued engagement and negotiations between ministry officials and bank representatives. The statement added the bank was fully prepared to commence the process of repaying its outstanding debts in Afghanistan. The World Bank owes approximately \$50 million to Afghan logistics and construction companies, based on verified data. This amount is to be disbursed in four installments, in coordination with MoF and allocated to the respective companies. In the first phase, which began last week, the bank would directly release \$10.8 million to eligible firms. The remaining \$39.1 million will be paid in three subsequent phases via MoF. **Zalmay Khalilzad wife’s statement** Cheryl Benard, the wife of former US ambassador

Zalmay Khalilzad, argued denying women’s activities in Afghanistan presented a misleading image of the country. She asserted no one should fear returning to Afghanistan and, if the international community genuinely wished to assist Afghans, it must ease the current sanctions. Benard made the observations in an article she penned a month after her visit to Kabul. In her article, published in The National Interest, Benard wrote the decision was criticised, immediately and at times histrionically, by the affected Afghans and by NGOs that take care of them. She commented it was only natural that the refugees would prefer to remain in the United States and continue receiving American taxpayer support for their housing, education and living costs. She wrote: “Shawn Van Diver of AfghanEvac called the decision ‘insane’ and sarcastically challenged Noem to go to Afghanistan if she thinks it’s so safe. I don’t know how many of these distraught dissenters have been to Afghanistan recently. “I have, and I would like to issue a message of reassurance. I would also encourage Noem to take Van Diver up on his suggestion. I confidently guarantee her a warm welcome,

frank conversations, and interesting insights; just as I experienced last month in Kabul.” Regarding security and safety in Afghanistan, the wife of ZalmayKhalilzad said Taliban’s two opponents Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah were a good example of safety. **Afghan refugees** The International Crisis Group (ICG) called on the European Union (EU) and its member states to pressure Pakistan to stop the forcible expulsion of Afghan refugees, regardless of their legal status. Earlier, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan significantly reduced its assistance to returning Afghan families due to a decline in international funding. While the agency previously provided \$2,000 per family, that amount has now dropped to just \$150 – a sum that UNHCR considers insufficient. More than 250,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan and Iran, including about 107,000 who were deported between April 1 and April 30, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Beijing would construct 160 houses and provide 30 million Chinese yuan in assistance to Afghan refugees returning from neighboring countries, the Chinese envoy announced.



GAZA CITY: Tents are set up for displaced Palestinians along the beach near the port in Gaza City, Palestine, on Sunday.

BD’s Yunus seeks unity with fresh political talks

DHAKA (AFP): Bangladesh’s interim leader will meet multiple parties on Sunday in marathon talks as he seeks to build unity and calm intense political power struggles, party leaders and officials said.

Muhammad Yunus, the 84-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner who leads the caretaker government as its chief adviser until elections are held, has called for rival parties to give him their full support.

The South Asian nation of around 170 million people has been in political turmoil since former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted by a student-led revolt in August 2024, ending her iron-fisted rule of 15 years.

The talks come after

meetings that stretched late into Saturday evening with major political parties, including those who have protested against the government this month.

“Chief adviser professor Muhammad Yunus will meet the leaders of several parties on Sunday,” his press secretary Shafiqul Alam said. There are 54 registered political parties in Bangladesh – not including the now-banned Awami League of fugitive former leader Hasina.

Alam did not specify how many parties were invited to this round of talks.

Mamunul Haque, leader of the Islamist Khelafat-e-Majlish party, said he was attending discussions expected to focus on “the ongoing crisis.”

Zonayed Saki of the liberal Ganosamhati Andolon party said he was also attending. After a week of escalation during which rival parties protested on the streets of the capital Dhaka, the government led by Yunus warned on Saturday that political power struggles risked jeopardizing gains that have been made.

“Broader unity is essential to maintain national stability, organize free and fair elections, justice, and reform, and permanently prevent the return of authoritarianism in the country,” it said in a statement.

Microfinance pioneer Yunus, who returned from exile at the behest of protesters in August 2024, says he has a duty to implement democratic reforms before

elections he has vowed will take place by June 2026 at the latest.

The caretaker government has formed multiple reform commissions providing a long list of recommendations – and is now seeking the backing of political parties.

Yunus last held an all-party meeting – to discuss efforts to overhaul Bangladesh’s democratic system – on February 15, and some parties cited frustration at the lack of contact.

But on Saturday, the government warned that it had faced “unreasonable demands, deliberately provocative and jurisdictionally overreaching statements,” which it said had been “continuously obstructing” its work.

Reasons behind the delay revealed Auction of over 300 scrap vehicles at Excise warehouse on May 29

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The long-awaited auction of over 300 scrap vehicles lying idle for years at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Excise Warehouse is now expected to take place on May 29, 2025. These vehicles were seized during bomb blasts, terrorist incidents, and security operations, and were later handed over to the Excise Department by Frontier Core (FC) and other security agencies following legal proceedings.

A senior official from the Excise Department told that all judicial proceedings related to these vehicles have been completed, and clearance has also been obtained from the Forensic Science

Laboratory (FSL).

The official revealed that the auction was originally scheduled for May 7, 2025, but was delayed due to departmental objections and formalities raised by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Regulatory Authority (KPPRA).

“The auction committee includes representatives from both the Excise and Administration departments, and the entire process will be conducted with transparency and merit,” the official stated. “Our goal is to prevent these government assets from going to waste and to utilize the proceeds from the sale in the interest of the province.”

He added that the rescheduled auction will now take place on May

29 at the Excise Warehouse, and besides scrap vehicles, other confiscated items may also be included. To ensure transparency, members of the media, civil society, and relevant institutions will be invited to witness the process.

Sources say that auctioning these vehicles will not only boost departmental revenue but also free up space in the warehouse for other essential uses.

It is noteworthy that the number of such cases has declined significantly in recent years due to improved security conditions, but vehicles from older cases remain in government custody-making their disposal through auction a long-overdue necessity.

CM Murad urges MPs to lead Polio eradication campaign

KARACHI (APP): In a compelling and urgent appeal, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has called upon all elected representatives, including Members of the National Assembly, Provincial Assembly, and local government representatives, to take active ownership of the polio eradication campaign and spearhead efforts to protect future generations from this crippling yet preventable disease.

Addressing lawmakers from both the treasury and opposition benches in a detailed letter, the Chief Minister emphasised the urgent need for unified and intensified action ahead of the upcoming National Immunisation

Day, scheduled for May 26, 2025.

“Polio eradication is not merely a health priority; it is a moral imperative,” the letter underscored. “The future of our children and the well-being of our communities depend on our collective resolve to rid our land of this crippling disease once and for all.”

Shah highlighted that Pakistan remains one of only two countries worldwide where wild poliovirus continues to be endemic. Alarmingly, 74 cases of wild poliovirus were reported nationwide in 2024, a significant increase compared to previous years. Sindh province, particularly Karachi and its northern districts, accounted for a

substantial portion of these cases.

Despite ongoing immunisation campaigns, persistent challenges remain. Many children are still missing vaccinations due to parental refusals, limited access in remote or underserved areas, and unregistered births.

The CM urged elected representatives to lead community engagement efforts, raise awareness, and support comprehensive health initiatives to overcome these obstacles.

Major actions outlined by Murad Ali Shah included ensuring complete and accurate birth registrations to identify all eligible children, enforce rigorous routine immunisation schedules at all levels, address-

ing parental refusals through targeted community engagement and education, reaching missed children through innovative outreach methods, including mobile teams and local volunteers, and striving for 100 per cent immunisation coverage during every vaccination drive.

The letter also highlighted the upcoming Sub-National Immunisation Day in July, calling for sustained momentum and vigilance in the fight against polio.

“This is a moment for unity and leadership,” the Chief Minister said adding, “Together, we can make history by eradicating polio from Pakistan once and for all.”

Five skiers found dead on Swiss mountain

BERN (Reuters): Five skiers have been found dead on a Swiss mountain close to the luxury ski resort of Zermatt, after emergency services were alerted to some abandoned skis at 4,000 metres (13,000 feet), the prosecutors’ office in Canton Valais said on Sunday.

Skiers notified the authorities on Saturday afternoon about the skis found on the slopes of the Rimpfischhorn mountain, east of Zermatt and south of the village of Saas Fee.

Rescue workers found the bodies near the Adlergletscher glacier after air and ground searches in the area in southwest Switzerland near the border with Italy, the prosecutor’s office said.

Local airline Air Zermatt said that three of the bodies were found on the debris of an avalanche a few hundred metres below where the skis were spotted.

The other two were discovered higher up the 4,199 metre-high mountain, it added.

The airline’s aircraft are deployed for search missions and other emergencies.

The identities of the five have not been established yet, and an investigation has been launched into what caused the accident, Valais prosecutors said in a statement.

North Korea detains officials over warship accident

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea has detained shipyard officials responsible for a recent major accident during the launch of a new warship, state media said on Sunday.

The failed launch that crippled the 5,000-tonne warship was witnessed by leader Kim Jong Un who said the accident damaged the country’s dignity and vowed to punish those found responsible.

The mishap likely occurred in front of a large crowd at the northeastern port of Chongjin, increas-

ing the public humiliation for Kim who tried to show off military might, experts say.

As the investigation into the case intensified, law enforcement authorities arrested the chief engineer of the Chongjin Shipyard among others, state KCNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Satellite imagery shows the warship, covered in blue tarps, lying on its side, with the stern swung out into the harbor, but the bow remaining on the side slipway, according to the U.S.-

based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Kim has ordered the ship restored before a ruling party meeting in June. KCNA said the rehabilitation plan was pushing ahead.

Against U.S. military buildup in the region, North Korea’s armed forces “will thoroughly contain and control all sorts of military threats from the enemy countries”, KCNA said in a separate dispatch citing the policy chief at the defence ministry.

Formalities completed to become bishop of Rome Pope Leo XIV declares ‘I am Roman!’

ROME (AP): Pope Leo XIV declared himself a Roman on Sunday as he completed the final ceremonial steps cementing his role as the bishop of Rome.

The first American pope formally took possession of the St. John Lateran Basilica, which is Rome’s cathedral and seat of the diocese, with an evening Mass attended by Roman priests and faithful.

In his homily, Leo said he wanted to listen to them “in order to learn, understand and decide things together.”

One of the many titles that Leo assumed when he was elected May 8 was bishop of Rome. Given his

responsibilities running the 1.4-billion strong universal Catholic Church, popes delegate the day-to-day governance of running of the diocese of Roman to a vicar.

Sunday’s ceremonies at the St. John Lateran and a stop at St. Mary Major basilicas follow Leo’s visit last week to the St. Paul Outside the Walls basilica. Together with St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican, the four papal basilicas are the most important basilicas in the West.

Rome’s Mayor Roberto Gualtieri welcomed Leo first at the steps to City Hall, noting that his May 8 election fell during a Holy Year, an event occurring

every 25 years to invite pilgrims to Rome. The city underwent two years of traffic-clogging public works projects to prepare and expects to welcome upwards of 30 million people in 2025.

Leo said he felt the “serious but passionate responsibility” to serve all Romans during the Holy Year and beyond.

Wearing his formal papal garb, Leo recalled the words he had uttered from the loggia of St. Peter’s Basilica on the night of his election. The Augustinian pope quoted St. Augustine in saying: “With you I am Christian, and for you, bishop.”

From cyber silence to battlefield brilliance: Pakistan’s triumph over India

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

IN the early hours of May 7, 2025, the world witnessed an extraordinary demonstration of national will, military discipline, technological prowess, and divine favor when Pakistan decisively repelled Indian aggression in a conflict that lasted less than twenty-four hours but reshaped strategic thinking in South Asia. What unfolded was not just a military encounter—it was a moment in history where truth stood against deception, preparation against arrogance, and resolve against recklessness. The brief war became a symbol of Pakistan’s supremacy, not only in conventional defense but in the cyber domain as well.

The events began when Indian forces, encouraged by their political leadership and

overconfidence in their numerical strength, initiated a series of strikes across the Line of Control, particularly targeting civilian areas in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. However, what India failed to understand was that Pakistan was no longer a country it could test with impunity. Within minutes of the first assault, the Pakistan Armed Forces activated their defense mechanisms, initiating a swift and calculated response. Air, land, and naval units moved in complete harmony, proving that Pakistan’s defense doctrine was not based merely on reaction, but on preparation, precision, and deterrence.

Yet, what surprised the global observers and left Indian command structures in disarray was Pakistan’s unprecedented cyber dominance. The Inter-Services Intelligence and Pakistan’s Cyber Command had, in preceding months,

developed capabilities to penetrate India’s most critical infrastructure. As Indian jets were airborne, many of their communication networks failed. Radar systems were rendered blind. Indian naval assets lost GPS navigation, and their missile targeting systems misfired or shut down. Major power grids in Delhi, Mumbai, and military hubs such as Pathankot and Ambala collapsed under massive cyber breaches. Even India’s media broadcasting systems were hijacked, displaying messages of peace from Pakistan, highlighting its unwillingness for war but preparedness for defense.

This surgical dismantling of India’s war machine without a single soldier crossing the border became a historic milestone in the evolution of hybrid warfare. The Indian Parliament, in an emergency session on May 8, was forced

to acknowledge the scale of the damage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, under immense pressure from global leaders and domestic outrage, admitted that India’s offensive miscalculated Pakistan’s strength. International media—from Washington Post to Al Jazeera, from BBC to Tokyo’s NHK—hailed Pakistan’s performance not only as a military victory but as a demonstration of national unity and technological maturity. Think tanks across the globe published immediate analyses noting that Pakistan had emerged as a “regional cyber superpower,” and its war strategy could serve as a case study for military academies worldwide.

It was not just force and intelligence that led to Pakistan’s supremacy, but also the moral and spiritual strength embedded in the belief of its people and leadership. The entire nation stood in prayer,

unshaken by the threat, trusting in Allah’s promise in the Holy Quran: “And how many times has a small group overcome a large group by the will of Allah. And Allah is with the patient.” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:249).

This verse echoed in the hearts of every Pakistani soldier and citizen alike, reminding them that victory is never solely determined by numbers or power, but by faith, unity, and justice.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said, “Do not wish to meet the enemy in battle, but when you meet them, be firm and patient.” (Sahih Bukhari). Pakistan did not desire war, nor did it initiate aggression. Its doctrine remained consistent: peace with dignity, and defense with might. But when the aggression was imposed, it responded not with emotion, but with strategic brilliance.

China, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and even Western countries acknowledged that Pakistan acted not only with competence but with restraint, avoiding civilian harm and preserving regional stability. Many compared Pakistan’s handling of the war to the defensive precision seen in modern military alliances, but with the moral clarity that emerges only from a just cause.

More importantly, the unity of the Pakistani nation, from the mountains of Gilgit to the coasts of Gwadar, was exemplary. In every mosque, church, temple, and home, people prayed together. Civil-military coordination was seamless. Media acted responsibly. The parliament stood united. Political differences were set aside. That was perhaps the greatest victory—one that no missile or malware could achieve. India’s loss was not just in

destroyed systems or failed missions; it was a blow to its strategic credibility. With millions of dollars lost in defense technology that failed, international arms markets began reconsidering their sales to India. Insurers and investors saw the vulnerability of a country that could not protect its own command systems. Meanwhile, Pakistan’s defense exports, software development sector, and global image all received a boost.

No doubt, May 7, 2025, will be remembered not just as a date of military supremacy, but as a day when Pakistan’s spirit, science, and sincerity combined to defend its sovereignty. It was a moment when the blood of martyrs, the prayers of the nation, and the vision of its founding fathers all aligned to echo a timeless truth: “Indeed, the party of Allah—they will be the successful.” (Surah Al-Mujadila, 58:22).