

**Ruet body to meet today**  
**F.P. Report**  
ISLAMABAD: The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee will meet in Islamabad on Tuesday for sighting of moon of Zil-Hajj 1446 Hijri. Chairman of the Committee Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabeer Azad will preside over the meeting. The Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees will also meet separately at their respective headquarters for sighting of the moon.



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TEHRAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid a courtesy call on Supreme Leader of Iran, Sayyed Ali Khamenei.

## SIC not entitled to reserved seats: SC judge

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench has observed that the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is not entitled to reserved seats, questioning how independents can join a political party that is not part of Parliament.

During a live-streamed hearing on the reserved seats case, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan led an 11-member constitutional bench that heard arguments on whether the SIC could claim reserved seats after the inclusion of independent candidates. The court remarked that while independents can join a party represented in Parliament, it is constitutionally unsound for them to join one that did not participate in the elections.

"How can independent candidates join a party not present in Parliament?" questioned Justice Musarrat Hilali. "Did Sunni Ittehad Council even contest the elections?" The bench repeatedly questioned how SIC could lay claim to reserved seats, given that it did not contest the 2024 general elections and had no electoral presence in Parliament.

Representing the de-notified women MNAs, senior lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan argued that the SIC's appeal had been unanimously dismissed and the elected members on reserved seats were de-notified without receiving

any formal notice. Justice Hilali reminded the court that the Election Commission of Pakistan's notification had earlier been declared null and void. "This case concerns proportional representation. Reserved seats are allocated based on party performance in elections," she stated.

Khan contended that the Supreme Court's previous ruling had made no reference to Article 225 of the Constitution, which bars challenges to election matters outside the election tribunals. However, the bench questioned the applicability of Article 225 in a case that concerns proportional representation rather than a direct election.

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, later during the hearing, said unequivocally that the Sunni Ittehad Council is not eligible for reserved seats. The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow (Tuesday), with the court directing the SIC's counsel to present arguments in the next session.

At the heart of the dispute is a July 12, 2024, Supreme Court order that, if fully implemented, would see the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerge as the single largest party. The July 12, 2024 order supported by eight out of 13 judges, declared 39 out of 80 contested MNAs as returned candidates of the PTI. This ruling,

if enforced, would significantly bolster PTI's parliamentary strength.

However, implementation has been stalled, with the National Assembly yet to act and the ECP raising objections. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and the ECP have all filed review petitions against the Supreme Court's order. The Supreme Court's detailed verdict in the reserved seats case on September 23, authored by senior puisne judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, was particularly critical of the ECP.

The court observed that the ECP's "numerous unlawful acts and omissions" had "caused confusion and prejudice to PTI, its candidates and the electorate who voted for PTI." The ECP was further castigated for failing to fulfil its "role as a guarantor institution and impartial steward" of electoral processes.

The judiciary did not shy away from reiterating its stance. On September 14, 2024, the Supreme Court issued a clarification, reprimanding the ECP for its non-compliance with the July 12 ruling. Justice Shah further clarified on October 18, 2024, that an amendment made to the Elections Act 2017 in August of the previous year could not negate the reserved seats case verdict. — Agencies

## Saif demands transfer of merged dists' funds

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has emphasized the urgent need to transfer the funds of the merged districts to the provincial government, in light of the current situation. He stated that law and order in the merged districts is a serious concern, yet the federal government has unlawfully withheld the funds allocated for these areas.

Barrister Dr. Saif asserted that following the merger, the funds for the merged districts constitutionally and legally belong to the province. Withholding these funds is a violation of both the Constitution and the law. He urged the federal government to rise above political bias and cooperate with the province on critical issues like security, rather than politicizing them.

He added that the provincial government is making effective efforts to maintain peace and order in the merged districts within its available resources. To this end, billions of rupees have been allocated to enhance the capabilities of the police and the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). However, he stressed that the federal government must stop treating the province unfairly and fulfill its constitutional obligations.

Barrister Dr. Saif highlighted that the purpose of the merger was to bring the merged districts at par with the rest of the province and to accelerate development in these areas. Unfortunately, the federal government has retained the funds and failed to transfer them to the province, thereby hampering the development process.

# Ready to talk with India for peace: PM

### Premier, Iranian President resolve to enhance cooperation, work for regional peace, security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif paid a courtesy call on His Eminence Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran on Monday and discussed matters of bilateral and regional interest.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar. During the call, the Prime Minister conveyed his deepest respect to the Supreme Leader underlining that His Eminence was an iconic figure in the Muslim World and the Muslim Ummah looked up to him for guidance and patronage.

The Prime Minister briefed him about recent conflict with India and India's hegemonistic and revisionist designs and profusely thanked leadership of Iran for supporting Pakistan against Indian aggression. The Prime Minister underlined that Pakistan always desired that peace should prevail in the region leading to economic development and prosperity. He briefed the Supreme Leader about the steps taken to elevate Pakistan-Iran ties to highest levels and maintained that his government was committed to further deepen strategic cooperation with Iran in the complex geopolitical times.

He praised the farsightedness of the Iranian leadership in pursuing the nuclear negotiations with the United States and hoped that a constructive deal is reached between the two countries in order to promote peace and stability in the region. The Supreme Leader appreciated the efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in promoting regional peace and stability with farsightedness and praised his personal commitment to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties. The Supreme Leader prayed for

greater prosperity, growth, and development of Pakistan and its people.

The Prime Minister deeply appreciated Supreme Leader's dedication to the poetry of Allama Iqbal, the poet of the East, and particularly requested the Supreme Leader to visit Pakistan again at earliest convenience.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during wide ranging talks resolved to enhance cooperation to boost bilateral trade and investment and work together for maintaining peace and security in the region.

While talking to media at Sa'dabad Palace here after the delegation level talks, the Prime Minister said he had a productive and useful meeting with the Iranian President, covering all areas of mutual interest and cooperation. "There was total agreement that the two brotherly neighbouring countries must enhance cooperation in diverse fields including trade, investment and economy," he added.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan and Iran had deep rooted cultural and historical relations. "We have decided to transform these relations into a very productive cooperation in various fields of life."

He said, "I also took this opportunity to thank the President for calling me and showing his concern on the evolving situation in the sub-continent a few weeks ago." "I deeply appreciate your sense of concern and brotherly feelings for the people of Pakistan and your ardent desire that this crisis comes to a grinding halt instead of escalating further," he told the President. He said his government had the opportunity to have extensive discussions with the Iranian foreign minister who visited Pakistan some time back.

He said Pakistan came out of the crisis with India as victorious because of the brave actions of our outstand-

## Earthquake jolts Khuzdar

F.P. Report

QUETTA: A mild earthquake measuring 3.6 on the Richter scale jolted Khuzdar and its adjoining areas in Balochistan province. People came out of their homes in panic and started reciting verses from the Holy Quran. No loss of life and property was reported from any part of Khuzdar. The epicenter of the earthquake was located 45 kilometers south of Khuzdar at the depth of 12 kilometers.

## KP govt launches two programmes for orphans and widows

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has officially launched two flagship welfare initiatives aimed at supporting orphans and widows—Roshan Mustaqbil Card and Sahara Card. A formal ceremony was held at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar on Monday, with the Chief Minister attending as the chief guest.

The event was also attended by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah, members of the Provincial Assembly, government officials, and other dignitaries. During the ceremony, Chief Minister Gandapur distributed Roshan Mustaqbil Cards among orphaned children and Sahara Cards among widows. According to details, the Roshan Mustaqbil Card program will provide a monthly stipend of Rs. 5,000 to orphaned children aged 5 to 16. In its initial phase, 9,000 orphan children will benefit from the scheme.

Similarly, the Sahara Card initiative

will provide Rs. 5,000 per month to widowed women aged 45 and above, initially covering 15,000 beneficiaries. These payments will be disbursed regularly by the 5th of each month. The first disbursement will begin this month, with recipients receiving Rs. 10,000 to cover both May and June due to the upcoming Eid-ul-Adha. Selection of the beneficiaries for both programs has been conducted through a transparent and merit-based process. The scope of the initiatives is set to expand in the future, with additional registrations scheduled to begin in July this year.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to the welfare vision of the party's founding leader, stating that merit, justice, and equality are the hallmarks of a true Islamic welfare state. He commended the Department of Social Welfare for successfully launching these programs, emphasizing that supporting vulnerable segments of society is a core responsibility of any state. He

added that data collection efforts are underway to identify more disadvantaged individuals across the province. "This is just the beginning," he remarked, "and the scope of these support programs will continue to grow."

The Chief Minister also announced that electric wheelchairs are being provided to persons with disabilities and differently-abled students. Moreover, the Sehat Card program has been expanded to cover costly medical procedures such as implants and transplants. Bone marrow, kidney, and liver transplants are now available free of charge in the province. In a significant policy move, the dowry fund has been increased from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 200,000, facilitating marriages for 4,000 deserving girls this year. "We are committed to spending public funds on the public," he said, asserting that his government has generated billions in additional revenue without imposing new taxes by plugging systemic leakages.

(Continued on Back Page)

## Aurangzeb promises tax relief for salaried class

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Monday that economic stability had been achieved in Pakistan, and the world was surprised by the pace of Pakistan's economic improvement.

He said Pakistan was moving towards macroeconomic stability and efforts were being made to reduce

the burden on the salaried class. Speaking at a seminar in Islamabad, Aurangzeb said that the debt repayment burden is expected to decrease, and reforms are being introduced in the tax system. He noted that the significant reduction in the policy rate has had a positive impact on the economy, and that reduced human intervention in the FBR will lead to

greater transparency.

He added that PIA is undergoing a relaunch process, and the tax submission process for salaried individuals will be made easier, adding that economy is heading towards a technological transformation. The minister also stated that "we will assist the Pakistan Armed Forces as much as possible; this is not just a military need but a national necessity."

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PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur distributing Sahara Card amongst windows.

## Aleem Khan: M-6, M-10 Motorways to be launched in Sindh

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has stated that the construction of Motorways in Sindh is a top priority of the Government. Talking to the media in Karachi, he announced that the M-6 and M-10 Motorways will be launched simultaneously.

“The M-6 is Pakistan’s lifeline which was unfortunately neglected by previous Governments,” he added. Federal Minister emphasized that this Motorway will be incomplete in its utility without being connected to the C-Port and that both the M-6 and M-10 will be linked to the Karachi Port to ensure full functionality.

Highlighting the significance of the M-6 Project, Federal Minister for Communications shared that it is a nearly PKR 400 billion initiative comprising upon five sections, each approximately of 60 kilometers long. “There is no better opportunity for investment than this project,” he pointed out.

Abdul Aleem Khan said that financing has already been secured for two sections while discussions for the remaining three are

ongoing. “Insha’Allah, we will finalize the feasibility report and present it to the Prime Minister within the next 15 days,” he added.

Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan further stated that the Motorways from Karachi to Hyderabad and from Hyderabad to Sukkur will be completed as early as possible while working on the N-25 Highway from Karachi to Quetta is also scheduled to begin later this year. Karachi’s challenges are not just provincial—they are national issues and we will address them on a priority basis,” he emphasized.

Replying to the questions, Federal Minister stressed that his focus is on delivering progress rather than engaging in blame games. “My effort is to prioritize the launch of Motorway Projects in Sindh, similarly, we are committed to completing the Kaghan-Naran Motorway,” he said. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan also shared that the National Highway Authority (NHA) has recorded unprecedented growth in revenue over the current fiscal year and attaining the target from PKR 64 billion to PKR 110 billion while this additional income will be utilized into

improving road infrastructure and constructing new Motorways.” To ensure road safety, Federal Minister stated that strict measures are being implemented against dangerous driving on Motorways. “Drivers exceeding 150 km/h are not only being fined but also facing FIRs, he added. Mandatory use of M-Tags is helping reduce long queues, and staffing shortages in motorway police are being addressed.”

Abdul Aleem Khan said. Regarding his visit to Karachi, Abdul Aleem Khan mentioned that he, along with the Federal Secretary Communications and Chairman of the NHA held meeting with the Chief Minister of Sindh and assured full support from his Ministry. He also held a highly productive meeting with the business community led by Mr. Arif Habib, where investors expressed interest in participating in the development of Sindh’s Motorways and road networks. Additionally, he noted that a joint team is being formed to focus on additional options for the Lyari Expressway in Karachi, including improvements to interchanges and exploration of further development projects.

## Pakistan Navy selection conducted

F.P. Report

JAMSHORO: According to details, the Pakistan Navy Selection Center Hyderabad organized a recruitment test for youth at Government Alibaba Boys Degree College Kotri for positions as sailors and in other departments of the Pakistan Navy.

The candidates’ original educational certificates were verified, and the test was conducted in accordance with the official advertisement. The test was held under the supervision of Pakistan Navy Commander Asif Raza and Lieutenant Imran Khalid. Those who successfully passed the test will be contacted soon and recruited as sailors or into other departments of the Pakistan Navy.

The entire testing process was carried out with complete transparency. Additionally, the administration of Government Alibaba Boys Degree College and personnel from Jamshoro Police were present on the occasion.

## CIA held two personnel in ransom

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Almost three departments raided dysfunctional call center and abducted his owner for ransom. The owner registered First Information Report with Crime Investigations Agency (CIA) after his release by paying ransom.

CIA has arrested National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Deputy Director driver Adnan Satti and police constable serving at Karachi Company police station Islamabad.

However, another department took three culprits in their custody.

Meanwhile, CIA registered FIRs against four personnel of other two departments for simple kidnapping without mentioning ransom charges.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan talking to the media after meeting business community in karachi.

## CM launches insulin card for diabetic children

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has launched a pioneering initiative, the “CM Insulin for Diabetes” program, aimed at supporting children diagnosed with Type-I congenital diabetes.

As part of the initiative, she formally inaugurated the ‘CM Insulin Card’ scheme, which will ensure the free delivery of insulin and related medical supplies directly to the homes of affected children.

In a symbolic and compassionate gesture, the CM personally delivered insulin cards to several young patients. Accompanied by Pakistan Post riders, she visited the home of Wasay Adnan, a resident of Sabzazar Q-Block, and presented him with the insulin card. She also visited Zainab Waheed and Zain Shahzad in Jamil Town to hand over their insulin cards.

In addition to the cards, the CM also provided insulin, glucometers, blood sugar testing strips, and needles to the children. She expressed affection for the young patients, warmly greeting their families and embracing Wasay Adnan’s grandmother. Deeply moved by Wasay’s condition, being the youngest of three siblings

and diabetic since birth, she promised to gift him a car. She also spent time speaking with Zainab and showing her affection.

CM Maryam Nawaz also issued instructions for Zain Shahzad’s eye check-up and treatment. Her visits drew large crowds, with residents gathering on rooftops and in the streets to welcome her. Young girls showered her with flower petals, and she obliged their requests for selfies.

Elderly women prayed for her success and well-being. Speaking to families, the CM expressed her concern for children’s health, saying, “I understand the pain and anxiety families go through when their child has diabetes.

This free insulin pro-

gram is a response to the heartfelt appeals of struggling parents and the urgent needs of their children.” She emphasized that under the ‘Sehatmand Punjab’ vision, the government is committed to reaching every child in need of essential medicines.

“For the first time, chil-

dren are receiving not just insulin but glucometers and testing strips as well. Children are the future of our nation, and we are dedicating all possible resources to their care,” she stated. She also raised concern over the alarming increase in diabetes among children.

### SUIT ADVERTISEMENT

In the Court of Mr Liaqat Ali Judge Banking Court-I Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar  
Case No: 56/01 of 2025 Date of hearing: 17-06-2025 Suit for the Recovery of Rs.267605/- HBL Super Market Branch Vs: Mujtaba Hussain Shah Islamabad Notice Versus:- Mujtaba Hussain Shah S/o Abdar Hussain Shah R/o Room02 Wing 214 SS Frontiers Crops FC Head Quarter Warsak road, Peshawar. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.267605/- Against you under section 10 (2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper. Failing which an ex-parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issue today on 22-05-2025 under my signature and seal of the Court.

Registrar | Banking Court, 1 Peshawar

## “Zardari Presidency—Now It Must Be Told” unveiled in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: “Zardari Presidency—Now It Must Be Told”—memoirs of former senator and Presidential spokesperson Farhatullah Babar during Zardari’s first presidency (2008-2013) was formally unveiled by Lightstone Publishers managing director Ameena Saiyid Monday afternoon in Karachi press club, also attended by the author.

“It is not a biography of President Zardari but an insider’s first-hand account, never published before, of the most tumultuous, sometimes bordering on bizarre, incidents that shook not only the president personally but the country”, he said on the occasion.

“It Must Be Told” is an obligation to throw light on the triumphs and the ambushes endured by a civilian elected president of the country and draw appropriate lessons, he said.

The 500-page book has over 80 chapters. In addition to ‘Zardari As a Person’ the book contains a detailed account of the most cataclysmic events of the time:

- Discovery of Osama Bin Laden in a military cantonment and the army and Intel chiefs moving Chaudhry Court against the supreme commander.
- Mundane goings on just when US Navy Seals were bombing Osama Bin Laden, a red-faced establishment vainly searching for scapegoats to blame, unconvincing claims that CIA was indeed tipped by Pak agencies and outlandish suggestions that the raid was tacitly approval at some higher command level.
- The fight between Justice Chaudhry and Zardari, mediation bid, Zardari yelling ‘enough is enough’ and Chaudhry dismounting the high horse.
- Tense relationship with the establishment breathing down the President’s neck.
- Three services chiefs abstaining from President’s banquet for a foreign dignitary.
- Context and fall out of Prime Minister’s yell in Parliament ‘state

within state unacceptable’ and asking ‘who gave Osama Pakistani visa’

- Ambassador Munter’s extraordinary worries to get Raymond Davis out of Pakistan, leaving Zardari rather perplexed.
- A besieged Zardari hitting back at the entrenched establishment in the Memogate scandal, leaving him profusely bleeding, the establishment knawing teeth, and the civil-military disconnect further widened.
- Political manoeuvring to chase Musharraf out of the presidency
- Revealing for the first time, the draft of the charge sheet to impeach Musharraf.
- The ‘cat and mouse games’ played by the establishment with the civilian and political leadership of the country during Zardari presidency.
- Zardari’s offer of talks to India on no first use of nuclear weapons and its spectacular failure.
- Secret bid for rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran
- Three hours long meeting with Aung Suu Kyi in Naypyida and extraordinary conversation.
- The scene at night when troops thudded in the Presidency to brow beat a defiant president, described thus “In the car park I sat inside the car for some time, trying to figure out what was happening, and drew out my notebook and pen I watched how the troops moved in pairs more closely, strutting around with an air of assumed authority. I began noting it in short hand”.
- Farhatullah Babar said that the book is neither ‘Aik Zardari sab par bhari’ nor of Zardari a villain and street smart wheeler dealer as painted by sections of media. Zardari portrayed is as he was—a human being, not a saint or an angel, resilient but going far too far in seeking reconciliation, the broad grin on his face hiding a shrewd and calculating politician adept in the art of keeping cards closest to his vest. It is the portrait of the political leader generous to a fault, a product of power, and also its prisoner.

The memoirs is a window into Zardari presidency—from the perspective of a witness, a participant, and perhaps the lone scribe at the time who maintained a personal diary for the sake of recording history—even while thinking that his stint will not last long.

It is the tale of a president walking on a tightrope and juggling allies, opponents, judges, his party, ghosts, and generals. This is not heresy but an eye witness’ offering to history.

The book begins with a confession: Zardari was seen as an accidental president, unlikely to complete his five year term.

Farhatullah Babar writes that he also believed that Zardari would not survive as president for long, and even if he did, he himself would not survive as Spokesperson for long. He did not print visiting cards as ‘Spokesperson to President’ thinking that each day might be the last. He acknowledges that Zardari proved him and many others wrong.

Zardari has been sinned against far more than sinning, he says.

“In the final analysis, the life of Zardari, painted as a villain, brings to mind Dostoevsky’s famous novel ‘Crime and Punishment’. In it, the central character, Raskolnikov, believed that the woman named Sonya was a sinner. Upon discovering the truth about her—that Sonya was not a sinner—he leapt towards her, kissed her feet, and asked for forgiveness. In that profound encounter, Raskolnikov acts as if he “worshipped the triumph of human endurance, and the strength of the human spirit, which could withstand so much and bear so much.”

“Those who, in the words of General Musharraf, have played ‘Cat and Mouse’ have lost their game to human endurance. Even if they have not yet sought forgiveness, Zardari couldn’t have asked for more. He had the last laugh”.

Farhatullah Babar said that he had not sought permission for this work from Mr. Zardari or from the PPP.

## Wafaqi Mohtasib resolves record 223,198 complaints in 2024

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Wafaqi Mohtasib’s institution, in its long journey of over four decades, has emerged as a truly poor man’s court serving the people and the downtrodden with exemplary zeal and dedication. The institution is dispensing free and expeditious administrative justice to the victims of maladministration, having its presence at twenty-six cities across the country. It believes in transparency, inclusivity and accountability, upholding the core values of Ombudsmanship. Serving the underserved and less privileged has been its hallmark and the guiding principle. It has over the years taken steps to enhance its efficiency and efficacy besides fine tuning its complaints handling mechanism comprising investigation, appraisal, review and implementation of its findings/decisions.

During the year 2024, incidence of complaints rose

from 194,106 to the highest ever number of 226,372 (showing an increase of 17%) and disposal reached an all-time high of 223,198 as compared to the figure of 193,030 in the year 2023 (indicating an increase of 16%). The Office also recorded an impressive increase in the implementation rate of its decisions/findings during 2024, which reached 93.21% as compared to 85.70% for the year 2023. In financial terms, total relief equivalent to Rs.8.22 billion was provided to the complainants during 2024 as compared to Rs. 4.9 billion in 2023.

The ever-increasing number of complaints is, in fact, an outcome of various initiatives including opening of new regional offices across the country, holding Khuli Katcheries, launching of the Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) mechanism and the visits of Ombudsman’s Inspection Teams to various service delivery agencies, in addition

to leveraging technology for enhanced accessibility. There is no requirement to hire services of an advocate nor the complainants have to face lengthy legal processes as the cases are disposed of within the prescribed limit of sixty days. The procedure for filing a complaint is simple as it can be done without visiting the Office personally, either by post or through email or mobile app. Hearings can be organized online, too, whereby the elderly or the poor complainants are saved of any discomfort in the process.

While resolving individual complaints relating to maladministration, this Office has not lost sight of the need for introducing long-term reforms with a view to addressing systemic issues. It has so far prepared 80 studies/reports, which focus on crucial areas such as pension reforms, jail reforms, national savings, street children in ICT etc.

By addressing systemic issues, the Ombudsman’s Institution strives to introduce long-term improvements in public administration.

This approach ensures that the institution remains a powerful agent of change. It is no longer a mere complaint redressing office, but an architect of good governance in the country.

It aligns its operations with the internationally acclaimed benchmarks like the Paris Principles and the Venice Principles in addition to the guidelines contained in the UNGA Resolution 79/177 for the ombudsman and the mediator institutions worldwide.

Similarly, the Wafaqi Mohtasib’s commitment to upholding the children’s rights is manifested in the appointment of Grievance Commissioner for Children providing institutional mechanism and collaborative endeavours with other stakeholders in the country.

## KMU bans refreshments at thesis defenses to cut student costs

FP Report

PESHAWAR: Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, has announced a significant decision to abolish the informal tradition of hosting lunch or dinner during thesis defenses or viva examinations for MPhil, Master’s, and PhD programs. Recognizing the increasing financial strain on research scholars—especially during the final stages of their academic journey, which already involves expenses such as publication, printing, and other academic requirements—Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq declared that expecting students to bear the additional burden of meal hosting is inappropriate and unnecessary. As per the new policy, no research scholar will arrange any form of meals

or refreshments during thesis defense or viva proceedings. The Vice Chancellor stated that this decision aims to promote a supportive, respectful, and financially sustainable academic environment, particularly during these times of economic hardship.

All relevant departments and responsible staff have been directed to ensure strict and immediate compliance with this policy. Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq further stated that this initiative will not only encourage

age a culture of simplicity, transparency, merit, and contentment at the university but will also significantly reduce the unnecessary financial pressure on students and their parents from underprivileged and middle-income backgrounds.

## INVITATION FOR BIDS

District health Officer Swat invites sealed and postal Bids on letter paid of Firms for the supply of UPS system (Batteries and Inverters) through single stage single envelopes bidding procedure as per Khyber Pakhtunkhwa public procurement regulatory authority (KPPRA) Procurement rules 2014, for Financial year 2024-25, from reputable dealers and suppliers registered with income tax and Sales tax departments.

- Bids must be delivered at the address given below on or before 13/06/2025(Friday) at 11:00 AM and shall be opened at the address below at 12:00 PM (Noon) on the same day, in the presence of the bidders or their representative.
- A pre-bid meeting will be held with the interested bidders on 11/06/2025 at 11:00AM in the conference room of the District Health Officer Swat.
- Offered rate will be valid up to 30/6/2025.
- The Bid security @Rs.2% in the shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR) in the name of District Health Officer Swat will be required, which will confirm from the concern Bank.
- Description of items can be obtained from the office of the undersigned in office hours.
- In case of substandard supply/ non matching with the requirements, not according to the specification, observation by the end users, the bidders will be responsible for its replacement on his own cost and risk.
- The bidders are requested to give the most competitive lowest rates as no negotiation will be made in this regard.
- All applicable taxes & stamp duty shall be deducted as per Govt. rules.
- Quantity of items can be increased and decreased subject to the availability of budget.
- Supply will be on FOR basis.
- The advertisement is also available on KPPRA website.

Note: the competent authority has the right to reject all bids by given reason under rules 47 of the KPPRA rules 2014. Any errors, omission shall be subject to rectification.

Address: District Health Officer Swat at Gulkada  
Phone No. 0946-9240139  
Fax No. 0946-9240215  
Email: edohswat@yahoo.com

INF(SW) 25/2025

District Health Officer Swat  
Gulkada Swat

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**AUCTION OF GOLD**

Branch: Haripur	Auction Date: 30-05-2025	Branch code: 0017	Time: 11:00 AM
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Customer Name	CNIC #	Address	Gold Weight (GM)	Detail of Gold Ornaments
Mujadadd Riaz	13302-7467758-5	Dehdan, Post Office Kot Najibullah, Tehsil and District Haripur	4.800	1 chain, 1 ring

Notice is hereby given to the customer in above mentioned that if payment of entire outstanding amount financed along with markup is not made by them to Mobilink Bank within 1 day of the publication of this notice, Mobilink Bank shall auction the gold ornaments and no further Public Notice shall be issued to call upon the customer to make the payments.



# AC clears Swati’s corruption allegations

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati, has been cleared of all corruption allegations by the provincial Accountability Committee.

The committee, formed to curb corruption in the province, concluded its investigation and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Speaking to journalists at the Assembly Secretariat on Monday, Speaker Swati revealed that the accusations were initially made by PTI leader Azam Swati following his release from jail.

“After Azam Swati made these claims during a speech in Mansehra, I wrote to the PTI Chairman and the Chief Minister requesting an official inquiry into the matter,” he said.

Azam Swati later submitted a formal complaint to the Accountability Committee, expanding the scope of the allegations to include misuse of authority, illegal appointments and promotions within the Assembly Secretariat.

However, the committee found that all actions had been carried out in accordance with relevant laws and rules, and no evidence of corruption was discovered, effectively closing the inquiry.

Swati highlighted the reforms undertaken during his tenure, particularly the formulation of the Assembly Act, which he said was accomplished in a record six months.

“What could not be done in fifty years, we achieved in half a year,” he remarked, crediting assembly members, relevant departments, and the National Assembly Secretariat for their efforts.

Commenting on Azam Swati, the Speaker claimed he is a man who does not compromise and questioned the motives behind the accusations, suggesting there might be hidden influences at play.

He recounted how he was appointed Speaker without lobbying, saying he was asleep when Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur called to inform him of the decision.

Upon assuming office, he found the Assembly Secretariat in disarray and said that the new Assembly Act has brought structure and accountability.

“Now, positions at grade 17 and above are filled through promotions instead of direct appointments by the Speaker,” he explained.

Reaffirming his loyalty to his party, Swati said, “I am a party man. If the party chairman or provincial president sends me a message, my resignation will be on the table within five minutes.”

Swati also discussed the Kohistan corruption case, saying that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has recovered Rs 26 billion in the case, which involved three departments and the National Bank.

“Our role is to ensure oversight, not investigation. A forensic audit over the past ten years, as ordered by the Public Accounts Committee, will uncover everything,” he concluded.

# Minister visits jail, directs improvement of facilities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jihan, on Monday, paid a visit to the District Jail at Daggar, in Buner.

He was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Buner Kashif Qayyum, Additional Deputy Commissioner (HR & Relief) Akram Shah, Tehsil Nazim Chagharzai Haji Mohammad Sharif Khan, Ex. Town Nazim Khalil Khan, President Buner Press Club Mukhtar Alam, Qaisar Advocate and Azmat Khan, brother of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan.

Upon arrival, the Provincial Minister was warmly received by Jail Superintendent Zahoor Elahi along with other senior officials and staff. The minister was presented with a formal guard of honor.

During the visit, Syed Fakhar Jihan conducted a detailed visit of various barracks, interacted directly with inmates, and listened to their concerns.

Syed Fakhar Jihan reviewed the facilities provided to prisoners and issued directives for their immediate improvement.

The minister emphasized the importance of offering recreational and sporting opportunities to inmates. He instructed the concerned authorities to provide solar energy solutions and ensure the availability of basic amenities within the prison.

Responding to the requests made by inmates, the minister directed the District Sports Officer to provide appropriate sports equipment to support physical fitness and well-being within the jail.

Furthermore, he instructed the jail administration to maintain respectful and humane treatment of prisoners, with the objective of rehabilitating them into responsible, peaceful, and constructive members of society after completing their sentences.

Syed Fakhar Jihan reiterated the provincial government’s commitment to implementing meaningful reforms in the prison system. Syed Fakhar Jihan stressed that ensuring the welfare of inmates and improving prison infrastructure are among the government’s top priorities.



PESHAWAR: Health worker administering polio vaccine to a child during a polio campaign.

# Govt to build underpasses at Lahori and Ramdas

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to construct underpasses at Lahori and Ramdas intersections here to address the city’s growing traffic problems.

According to the Planning and Development Department, the construction of these underpasses has been included in the upcoming fiscal year’s development projects and will be initiated on a priority basis.

The decision comes amid increasing traffic congestion in the inner city, particularly at these two critical junctions where thousands of vehicles pass daily.

Long traffic jams have become a routine issue due to intersecting routes from multiple directions, causing severe inconvenience to commuters and delays in emergency response times.

The authorities noted that the feasibility studies, designs, and technical planning are being finalized, and construction work is expected to begin soon.

These projects aimed to improve traffic flow, save time and fuel for residents, and enhance overall urban mobility.

Additionally, the government plans to build more underpasses at other key locations in the city, including two on University Road, as part of a broader strategy to resolve traffic issues across Peshawar.

Lahori and Ramdas chowks have been prioritized in the first phase to provide immediate relief to the public.



PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati briefing journalists of Provincial Assembly Press Gallery on Assembly Act.

## Five days anti polio campaign begins in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): A five-day anti-polio campaign was launched in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Peshawar. According to the KP health department spokesperson, during this five-day campaign, nearly 7.3 million children under the age of five across the province will be administered polio drops.

Polio is a dangerous disease that can leave children permanently disabled, causing lifelong difficulties for both the affected children and their families.

Moreover, the presence of the virus in the area continues to pose a constant threat to other children. Therefore, it is extremely important to vaccinate all children against polio during the drive, which is the Primary The Emergency Operations Center Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has finalized all arrangements for the campaign. A total of 35,465 trained polio workers have been organized into teams, including 32,155 mobile teams, 1,918 fixed teams, 1,225 transit teams, and 167 roaming teams.

In addition, 8,351 area in-charges have been appointed for effective supervision of these teams. Security arrangements have also been made across the province to support the polio teams during the campaign.

## KP govt to pay salaries, pensions on May 30

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial government has decided to release salaries and pensions to its employees on May 30.

The provincial government has decided to release the salaries and pensions for the month of May to all government employees of the province on May 30.

Due to the closure of banks on June 1, salaries and pensions will be paid in advance. Finance Department has confirmed that all government employees will receive their salaries and pensions on May 30.

## Surayya appointed Chairperson

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Surayya Bibi, has been appointed Chairperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Safety Commission, said a notification on Monday.

The Public Safety Commission plays a crucial role in monitoring police performance, ensuring public safety, and promoting justice. Surayya Bibi’s appointment is seen as a significant step in strengthening oversight and enhancing accountability within the province’s law enforcement framework.

# Rubina pays surprise visit to Tehsil Office

PESHAWAR (APP): Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Center, Senator Rubina Khalid, paid a surprise visit to Peshawar Tehsil Office Town-II and the camp office.

The purpose of the visit was to listen directly to the complaints of women receiving payments and issue instructions to resolve their issues.

She said there is no fee for the survey in BISP and is completely free, adding at the time of registration in the survey, register the mobile number that is in personal use of people.

She advised women beneficiaries to count their money and obtain a receipt. In case of any deduction from the payment, she said a complaint at 8171 may be lodged immediately.

Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Center, Senator Rubina Khalid warned that strict action will be taken against those who make unauthorized deductions.

“BISP is the vision of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and is a sacred institution meant to provide relief to the masses”, she added.

Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Center, Senator Rubina Khalid said it is the directive of the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari that there should be no compromise on the dignity and respect of women visiting the centers. She said about 10 million poor families are benefiting from the program.

Under the Benazir Hunarmand Program, efforts are being made to improve the lives of deserving women and their family members.

A second survey is not possible before two years and beneficiaries who have been receiving aid for three years must undergo a new survey.

Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Center, Senator Rubina Khalid said messages from BISP are only sent from 8171 and until people receive a message from 8171, do not visit the payment centers.

## Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games: Payment for female’s accommodation and transport still unpaid

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The institutions that provided accommodation, transport and equipment facilities for female athletes during the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Games have still not been paid. According to them, the Directorate of Sports was supposed to pay 2.7 million rupees for providing these facilities at various locations, but despite the passage of several months, the issue remains unresolved.

However, according to the Sports Department, the full amount has already been paid to the concerned contractor in a lump sum.

On the other hand, various vendors are struggling to recover their dues. They stated that during the women’s games held in Charsadda, Hayatabad, and the Board of Intermediate,

they provided transport services to take players from hostels to the grounds and back, as well as utensils and related services in the hostels - but they have yet to receive any payments.

It is worth mentioning that instead of hotels, female athletes were accommodated in hostels where basic services were arranged. According to the Directorate General of Sports, a contract worth 9.7 million rupees was awarded for providing services during the games, and payments have already been made to the vendors. The affected vendors have appealed to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Sports Minister, the Secretary of Sports, and the Director General of Sports to take notice of the matter and ensure that they are paid.

# PDMA issues weather alert for rain, thunderstorms across KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday issued a weather alert forecasting rain accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds across most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa starting Tuesday evening.

The rainfall is expected to continue intermittently until Saturday.

According to PDMA, affected areas may include Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Shangla, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Malakand, Buner, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Waziristan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Bannu, Karak, and Kohat.

In preparation, PDMA has issued directives to all district administrations to ensure readiness for any potential emergency.

The authority emphasized the need for availability of both light and heavy machinery to deal with possible incidents caused by heavy rainfall.

It urged residents to avoid contact with electric wires, dilapidated buildings, signboards, and billboards during storms. Farmers are advised to plan their activities according to the weather forecast.

In upper sensitive regions, both tourists and local residents were advised to stay informed of weather conditions and take precautionary measures.

District administrations in sensitive areas had also been directed to communicate warnings in local languages to ensure public awareness.

In case of road blockages due to landslides or flooding, all relevant departments have been instructed to remain alert and ensure quick restoration of road links, while also providing alternative routes for traffic.

Tourists were advised to check weather and road conditions before traveling to recreational spots and to contact the Provincial Disaster Management Authority helpline at 1700 for updated information.

# Gang of motorcycle theft busted

PESHAWAR (APP): In a major breakthrough, Khan Raziq Shaheed Police Station on Monday claimed to have arrested two members of a gang involved in multiple motorcycle thefts in Peshawar’s busy Qissa Khwani Bazaar and surrounding areas.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of DSP City Circle Imtiaz Alam Khan on the instructions of SP City Division Muhammad Atiq Shah Khan.

Led by SHO Mudassar Iqbal, the police team successfully apprehended two suspects — one identified as a resident of Tedi Gate and the other as a national of neighboring Afghanistan.

Both individuals were allegedly involved in stealing motorcycles from different inner-city locations. After stealing the vehicles, they would dismantle them and sell the parts at throw-away prices.

During initial interrogation, the suspects confessed to their involvement in several thefts. Acting on their information, police recovered four stolen motorcycles and one additional bike in dismantled condition. Further investigation is ongoing to identify other members of the gang and trace additional stolen property.

The operation was launched following a complaint filed by a citizen, Iftikhar Ahmed, who reported his motorcycle stolen to Khan Raziq Shaheed Police.

A case was registered, and investigation commenced promptly.

Taking serious notice of

the increasing motorcycle thefts, SP City Division Muhammad Atiq Shah formed a special team to track down and apprehend the culprits.

Multiple suspects were interrogated using modern investigative methods, leading to the identification and arrest of the accused identified as Mansoor of Tedi Gate, and Muslim from Afghanistan.

The police have confirmed the recovery of stolen motorcycles and spare parts. Further legal action was being initiated.

# Plant canopy trees to call rains, combat rising temperatures

PESHAWAR (APP): Amidst intensifying climate challenges, environmentalists and forestry experts are urging city planners and the public to embrace a simple but powerful solution such as planting native canopy trees to call rains to beat rising temperatures.

Experts said these green giants not only purify the air and provide shade, but also help cool cities and may even encourage rainfall to combat air pollution.

“Canopy trees like Siris, Pipal, Bakin, and Shisham are nature’s air conditioners,” said Gulzar Rehman, former Conservator of Forests Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in a conversation with APP.

“Cutting them down for housing schemes and urban expansion has left cities like Peshawar choking on heat and air pollution.”

Once blessed with rich forest cover and biodiversity, Peshawar is now reeling from the environmental cost of rapid urbanization. Historic accounts like Tuzk-e-Babari, the memoir of Emperor Babar, speak of thick forests and abundant wildlife around the city.

Today, the view from Surey Bridge offers a stark contrast: a grey haze of pollution hovering over buildings, once a lush green canopy now reduced to concrete.

According to Gulzar Rehman, Pakistan is home to over 200 native tree species and nine unique forest ecosystems, many found nowhere else in the world.

“A single healthy canopy tree can supply oxygen to four people and absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide daily,” he said. In fact, just one hectare of such trees can trap six to eight tons of CO2 every day.

This becomes all the more critical as Peshawar

and other urban centers face a dangerous rise in PM2.5 — fine particulate matter that poses serious health risks.

Muhammad Irshad, Chief Analyst at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) KP, explained that PM2.5 particles are small enough to bypass the body’s defenses, settling deep in the lungs and bloodstream, causing heart attacks, strokes, and chronic respiratory diseases.

“EPA studies found PM2.5 levels in Peshawar up to 52 micrograms per cubic meter — over three times the National

Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) limit of 15 µg/m³,” said Irshad.

“These pollutants can stay suspended in the air for hours, even days, and the only sustainable solution lies in planting and preserving canopy trees which naturally filter them.”

While the provincial government launches seasonal plantation drives, experts highlight systemic flaws in tree selection, care, and follow-up.

Wajid Ali, former KP Forest Minister, criticized the preference for ornamental or non-native species over cost-effective and hardy indigenous trees.

“We saw failed attempts to plant date palms on the Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway, despite past failures in Islamabad’s Blue Area. These species simply aren’t suited to the region’s climate,” he said.

In addition, Peshawar’s native birds and aquatic life are dwindling. Once a haven for Cranes and the Houbara Bustard, Peshawar’s outskirts are now quiet. Rivers Swat and Kabul have also seen a sharp decline in Mahseer and Trout populations, both affected by warming waters and polluted runoff.

“Not all is bleak. The 10 Billion Trees Tsunami Project, led by the KP government, has shown promise,” said Diyar Khan, Project Director 10 billion trees project.

He said that first man-made forest in KP — modeled after Changa Manga — was established in Ghari Chandan near Peshawar. “Millions of native saplings, particularly canopy species, have been planted to combat heat, reduce pollution, and help bring back rainfall patterns,” he shared.

The government is now scaling this initiative through the ‘Billion Trees Plus’ program, prioritizing canopy trees to fight urban heat and restore ecological balance. These efforts, though monumental, need sustained public support, expert guidance, and political will.

Canopy trees are not just green ornaments — they are lifelines for overheated, overbuilt cities. Their roots hold more than soil and hold the promise of clean air, cool shade, and even the possibility of rain.

As KP’s environmental future hangs in the balance, the message from experts is clear: plant canopy trees, and let the skies respond.





## In brief

### Transgender Wafa killed F.P. Report

MALAKAND: A transgender was shot dead while the driver was critically injured when assailants fired at a car in Badraga area of Malakand's Dargai tehsil, police informed on Monday. The victim, identified as Shahab alias Wafa, was returning from a party when unidentified armed assailants opened fire near Badraga. Wafa, a resident of Taro Jabba, died on the spot after receiving a fatal bullet shot. The driver of the vehicle, Naveed, sustained serious injuries in the attack. Levies officials, have registered an FIR and launched an investigation to apprehend the suspects involved in the shooting.

### Protest against load shedding Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: The residents arranged protest demonstrations across Nowshera district against the prolonged and unscheduled load shedding of electricity and Sui gas. The major protest held at Akora Khattak led by Pir Zulfikar Bacha in which large number of public and the trader community participated, on Monday. The protesters blocked the Grand Trunk (GT) Road at Akora Khattak from both sides, halting all types of traffic. The protesters carried banners and placards with slogans against the prolonged load shedding of Sui gas and electricity. The district administration sprang into action, and officials from the Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) and Sui Gas authorities arrived to hold talks with the protesters. The protesters dispersed after the successful negotiations. Pir Zulfikar Bacha said in a media statement that the PESCO and Sui Gas authorities should reconsider their load shedding schedules. He emphasized that the load shedding of gas and electricity had made life difficult for the people, and the lack of sleep at night had made the nation psychologically ill.

### Residents hold protest F.P. Report

LARKANA: Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (JUI) Emir Hafiz Shoaib Junejo, chairing a meeting against the power load shedding for several hours in different areas of Larkana city including Murad Wahan, Allahabad, Tank Chowk and Sachal Colony, said that power load shedding is being done for 18 to 20 hours a day, on Monday. The speakers claimed that most areas of Larkana city including Murad Wahan, Allahabad, Tank Chowk and Sachal Colony, due to which the life of the business community and the people has become difficult, while the burnt transformers of most areas have not been replaced. He further said that the elected representatives of the PPP party should raise their voice in the assembly for Larkana city and surrounding areas to make Larkana a load shedding-free city. Meanwhile, the struggle of Badeh Taluka Movement, formed by citizens, social organizations and representatives of civil society, to give Badeh, a city with a large population of Larkana district, a taluka status has been completed for six years, but the higher authorities of the Sindh government and the elected members of the provincial and national assemblies of the region have adopted their silence. In this regard, a huge protest rally was taken out by the citizens from the BTM platform from Badeh Media House to the Town Hall.



BUNER: KP Minister for Sports, Syed Fakher Jehan interacting with inmates during visit to District Jail.

## KP grabs by Ali Baba and his 40 thieves: PPP

F.P. Report

WANA: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) South Waziristan president has called on the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to rise up and reclaim their rights. He announced that preparations are underway for a province-wide campaign aimed at "saving Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

Addressing a press conference, Wazir lambasted the ongoing power crisis, terming the prolonged load shedding and inflated electricity bills as acts of economic oppression. He also criticized the imposition of what he described as unjust taxation on traders, while urging an end to the exploitation of farmers. He called for the abolition of what he termed "anti-farmer" agricultural taxes and demanded the immediate disbursement of funds owed to local government bodies.

The PPP leader alleged massive corruption in various sectors, including a claim that Rs. 16 billion

worth of solar panels intended for a mosque project in Mardan were siphoned off. He also pointed to irregularities in government contracts, corruption worth billions in the health department's procurement of medical equipment and medicines, and financial misconduct within educational institutions.

Highlighting alarming infrastructure gaps, Wazir revealed that over 1,600 schools in the province lack basic toilet facilities. He further cited financial scandals in several major projects, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Oil and Gas ventures, the Gabriel-Kalam Hydropower Project, and the much-debated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system.

Perhaps most startling was his demand for an inquiry into a suspicious transfer of Rs. 450 billion to a dumper driver's bank account in Kohistan, alongside allegations of Rs. 700 billion in corruption. He also expressed concern over the province's deteriorating law and order situation.

ongoing financial crises in public universities, and delays in the appointment of vice chancellors.

**Two healthy facilities operationalized:** In a significant development aimed at improving healthcare delivery in the tribal region, the health centers in Spin and Shakai—two remote areas of Lower Waziristan—have been made fully functional and are now providing round-the-clock medical services to the local population.

District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Israr Ahmad, while speaking to the media, confirmed that both facilities are now operational 24 hours a day, ensuring timely treatment for patients who previously had to travel long distances for basic healthcare needs. The Shakai Basic Health Unit (BHU) has been equipped with essential medicines and staffed with a dedicated doctor and a nurse who are available at all times, particularly to cater to underprivileged patients.

## JI stages protest sit-in

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Lower Dir staged a protest sit-in outside its headquarters in Balambat against the prolonged closure of the Balambat Irrigation Channel, which has remained non-functional for the past four years.

Dozens of the JI's workers, farmers, and local residents participated in the demonstration held at Balambat here on Monday. The protesters expressed concern over the continued suspension of water supply in the Balambat Irrigation Channel, which they said had badly affected agriculture and drinking water sources in the area.

The sit-in was held under the leadership of JI district deputy chief and former MNA Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob Khan. During the protest, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Timergara and the Executive Engineer (XEN) of the irrigation department visited the site and announced that repair work on the channel would commence from Tuesday (today), after which the protesters dispersed peacefully.

Addressing the gathering,

Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqoob said the authorities had long ignored the issue despite repeated appeals. He called the officials' announcement a positive step but urged strict monitoring to ensure timely completion of the work.

Other JI leaders including district deputy chief Syed Muhammad Shah, provincial secretary information Engineer Yaqub ur Rehman, former tehsil nazim Imranuddin advocate, tehsil emir Sahibzada Sadiq Jan, and JI district general secretary Shoaib Ahmad also addressed the participants. They slammed the provincial government, local lawmakers, and irrigation officials for what they termed criminal negligence in failing to restore the water supply.

The speakers warned that if the promised work was delayed again, the JI would intensify its protest and bring the people onto the streets. The irrigation channel had been closed for the last four years owing to repair and construction work. The release of water into the channel is expected to improve irrigation of crops and orchards besides replenishing dried-up springs and wells. The

local residents and farmers have been complaining of severe hardships for the last four years due to the closure of Balambat irrigation channel.

**PML-N joined:** Haji Javed Iqbal, deputy chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) in Lower Dir, has decided to join the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), sources confirmed on Monday. His formal announcement of joining PML-N is scheduled to take place at a public gathering in Chakdara on May 31 in the presence of PML-N provincial president engineer Amir Muqam.

Javed Iqbal previously served as the district general secretary of JUI-F in Lower Dir. He also contested the 2022 local government elections as the party's candidate for tehsil chairman. In the 2024 general elections, he was initially nominated by the party as a candidate for the provincial assembly. However, he declined the nomination, after which the party awarded the ticket to Maulana Muhammad Imran. Political observers see his switch as a significant development in the local political landscape ahead of the next electoral cycle.

## Police fails to protect people from bandits F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The main Jati-Sujawal road, which connects several villages, coastal localities, and small residential areas to the district headquarters Sujawal, has become a sanctuary for bandits over the past two months, this correspondent learned. Frequent incidents of robbery have sent waves of fear across the district, mainly in Taluka Jati of Sujawal district, which has recently grown as a commercial locality.

Local residents are dissatisfied with the performance of the area police in curbing the soaring incidents of robbery. Local merchants, trade organizations, members of civil society, and noted citizens have termed the ongoing state of affairs a threat to flourishing economic activities in Jati Taluka, particularly in areas like Jati town, Baran Abad, Nohria Abad, Kachi Begna, and Begna.

The Station House Officer (SHO) of Police Station Jati stated that complainants were reluctant to report robbery incidents to the police, which had delayed action against the bandits. "For the first time in my lifetime, I have been posted in this district," he mentioned, adding that he would require some time to take decisive measures against robber gangs.

When contacted, officials of the district police department said that comprehensive directions were issued to concerned station house officers to take steps to prevent soaring incidents of dacoity and robbery. The SHO of PS Jati said that in two separate incidents, local residents apprehended three bandits, but after handing them over to the police, the locals were unwilling to cooperate.

A local trader, Rafique Memon, said that they had been encountering a state of uncertainty for the past couple of months due to dismal security conditions in the area. He further said that business activities had been harshly affected in the wake of the ongoing scenario.

A driver, Deedar Hussain Notiyar, said that traveling at night on the main Jati-Sujawal road was tantamount to risking his own life as well as the lives of passengers. They urged the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sujawal to take stern steps against robbers operating in the area with impunity.

# Seminar on Pakistan defense held at KUST



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: A significant national seminar was held at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) to honor the outstanding success of Operation Bunyan um Marsus and to pay rich tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces. The event was attended by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas; Pro-Vice Chancellor; Deans; Directors; Heads of Departments; faculty members; and a large number of students.

The Chief Guest, General Officer Commanding (GOC) 9 Division, Major General Zulfikar Ali Bhatti, emphasized that the youth are the true strength of Pakistan. He warned that the enemy, alongside traditional warfare, is now engaging in cyber warfare

aimed at creating rifts between the people and the armed forces. However, he commended the nation's unwavering unity, which has consistently thwarted such conspiracies.

Addressing the gathering, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas described Operation Bunyan um Marsus as nothing short of a miracle. He stated that after this successful operation, no adversary would dare challenge Pakistan's sovereignty. He saluted the Pakistan Armed Forces and expressed gratitude to all the dignitaries and participants.

Prof. Dr. Fakhru-ud-Islam, Director of the Pakistan Study Centre at the University of Peshawar, highlighted that despite economic challenges, the year 2025 saw a remarkable demonstration of national solidarity by the Pakistani

people—an encouraging sign for the future. He urged the government to further promote this national spirit.

Prof. Shakeela Naz from Government Girls Postgraduate College, Kohat, remarked that the presence of Pakistan's three major pillars armed forces, educators, and students under one roof symbolized true national unity. She also delivered an insightful talk on Pakistan's geo-strategic importance.

General Officer Commanding (GOC) 9 Division, Major General Zulfikar Ali Bhatti, praised Pakistani scientists and youth, declaring them the real heroes of this modern-day conflict. He added that Operation Bunyan um Marsus is proof that Pakistan is not only militarily robust but also progressing toward technological advancement.

## Minister hand over financial grant to Bar Association

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Federal Minister for Law Senator Azam Nazir Tarar, presented a government grant cheque to the Hafizabad District Bar Association during a special meeting. The cheque was formally handed over to Bar President Muhammad Usman Afzal Chatha, Secretary Mian Ali Raza Bhatti, and former Bar President Advocate Umar Khizar Hunjra.

Addressing the gathering, Azam Nazir Tarar emphasized the pivotal role lawyers play in ensuring justice and described the legal fraternity as the backbone of the judicial system. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the legal community, stating that the welfare and institutional strengthening of bar associations are integral to the broader goal of timely justice for the public.

Bar President Muhammad Usman Afzal Chatha, along with other office bearers, expressed gratitude to the federal minister for his support.

They described the grant as a significant and encouraging step toward strengthening the legal system and improving the professional standards within the district's legal community.

Private schools to face legal actions in violation against summer schedule: Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad, Muhammad Akram Ashraf, has issued a stern warning to all private educational institutions, stating that any school found open during the officially declared summer vacation period will face strict action, including cancellation of registration and sealing of premises.

"The Government of Punjab has issued clear directives mandating summer vacations for all public and private schools across the province. No exceptions will be tolerated," stated Akram Ashraf. He further clarified that private school administrations are also prohibited from collecting advance fees for the entire summer period. "School owners are only permitted to collect monthly fees—one month at a time. Demanding three

months' fees in advance is a direct violation of government orders," he said.

**Anti-polio vaccination campaign started:** A five-day national anti-polio vaccination campaign commenced today across Hafizabad district, with the goal of immunizing 238,551 children under the age of five against the debilitating poliovirus. The initiative is being led by the District Health Authority under the supervision of the Health Department.

Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq inaugurated the campaign by administering oral polio drops to children of nomadic families residing in makeshift settlements. He was accompanied by District Health Officer Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan remains one of the few countries where poliovirus continues to pose a threat to child health. The government's ongoing polio eradication efforts, supported by international partners and local communities, aim to permanently eliminate the disease from the country.



MALAKAND: Adviser to KP CM, Pir Mosavir Khan inaugurating newly constructed girls' primary school at Haryankot, Dargai.

# Paraplegic center Peshawar: CM visit, message of hope

Ghulam Hussain Ghazi

**THE recent visit of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, to the Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) is a testament to the evolving landscape of public health and the government's commitment to the treatment, rehabilitation, and self-reliance of persons with disabilities (PwDs). This was far from a ceremonial visit rather it was a sincere acknowledgment of the tireless services provided by this unique institution in medical rehabilitation, socio economic empowerment of PwDs, and its specialized treatment for conditions such as clubfoot and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).**

Accompanying the Chief Minister were key members of the provincial cabinet, including

Advisor on Information Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor on Health Itisham Ali Khan, and Advisor on Prisons Humayun Khan. The Chief Minister was received by one of the center's rehabilitated individuals respectfully referred to as "graduates" at the Center wheelchair Mehnaaz Afridi, who welcomed him with flowers to the applause of the attendees. Not long ago, during Barrister Saif's visit, a Saudi graduate of the Center, Abdul Ilah, had greeted him with the same affection, offering flowers and expressing, "We, the people of Saudi Arabia, love you because you love us, the PwDs."

The Chief Minister visited various departments of the center, including assistive devices, physiotherapy, the Autism Spectrum Unit, and the state-of-the-art gym, appreciating the staff's spirit and the high-quality

facilities provided there. The official ceremony commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Ehsan Danish, a wheelchair-bound Paralympian athlete, poet, and the Center's Sports Coordinator, filling the seminar hall with a spiritual ambience.

Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO of the Center, shared its history, services, and challenges. He explained that the Center was initially established by the Red Cross during the Soviet-Afghan war. However, after the war, the institution fell into neglect until it was revived through the personal efforts of former Chief Secretaries Abdullah, Rustam Shah Mohmand, and Finance Secretary Zia-ur-Rehman. Eventually, it gained autonomy and recognition as a prestigious national institution through an act of the Provincial Assembly. Dr Ilyas gave credit to the ex-

bureaucrats but it's daylight fact that he burnt midnight oil to revive this institution of vital importance and had to lose his sweet house and car to bear expenses of the center's revival.

Today, the Paraplegic Center is not only a modern rehabilitation facility but a model of financial transparency, discipline, and sustainability. Around 45% of its annual expenses are met through generous donors and philanthropic organizations, ensuring its continued growth and independence. The Center offers free treatment for individuals with spinal cord injuries and also provides quality care for modern conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, clubfoot in children, bed sore rehabilitation, audiology services, custom-made wheelchairs, follow-up programs, world-class research, and assistive technology, making it truly one-of-a-kind

in Pakistan.

In his address, the Chief Minister made several important announcements viz increasing the annual grant from Rs. 300 million to Rs. 400 million, additional grant of Rs. 50 million for relaunching the patients' follow-up program and release of land payment for the Center's expansion in Regi Model Town. In response to the students' request, the Chief Minister also announced the launch of paid internship program at the adjoining College of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (CPMR), a step that will enhance the outgoing students professional skills.

The Chief Minister praised the Center's visionary approach and highlighted its meaningful slogans: "The patient is the boss," "Hope remains alive," and "The sky is just the beginning." He emphasized that if all

public bodies work with such purpose and vision, not only would all the public institutions be strengthened, but the nation as a whole would progress significantly.

Acknowledging PwDs as active members of society, the Chief Minister stated that their physical and psychological rehabilitation is a hallmark of a civilized society. He extended heartfelt thanks to all those associated with the Paraplegic Center, the doctors, physiotherapists, social workers and benefactors, who serve the suffering humanity with their dedication, time and resources.

This visit ultimately delivered a powerful message: in the noble mission of selfless service and physical rehabilitation of the ailing humanity, the Paraplegic Center Peshawar stands not alone, but shoulder to shoulder with the government and society at large.





## After brief return home, a family in Gaza is forced by war to flee again

GAZA CITY (AP): The Abu Jarad family is homeless once again. For the 10th time during Israel's 19-month campaign in Gaza, they have been forced to flee, and the latest uprooting was the most painful of all. In January, during a ceasefire, Ne'man Abu Jarad, his wife and six daughters had a joyous return to their home in northern Gaza. They hoped it might be the end of their ordeal after more than a year of escaping Israeli offensives by traversing the length of the Gaza Strip and back.

Weeks later, bombs started falling again. They tried to hold out, but the Abu Jarads eventually abandoned their home a second time. "Each time you take this decision to leave, it's like you're executing yourself by your own hand," Ne'man said. He spoke in Gaza City, where he and his brothers had set up tents for their families in the rubble-strewn yard of a destroyed apartment building.

The Associated Press has tracked the Abu Jarad family's journey across a territory where nearly the entire population of some 2.3 million Palestinians has been driven from their homes by the war. Like the Abu Jarads, most have moved multiple times. The latest wave of forced displacement across the territory accelerated after Israel broke the two-month ceasefire on March 18 and resumed its military campaign. At least 430,000 people have been on the move since then, and more are certain to follow as the Israeli military issues evacuation orders covering greater territory in an accelerating assault. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel intends to force the population into the far south of Gaza.

This time, the displacement is unfolding under the threat of famine. Israel blocked all food, fuel, medicine and other aid from entering Gaza starting March 2, pushing hundreds of thousands close to starvation. It said the blockade and its resumed military campaign aim to force Hamas to disarm and release the 58 hostages it holds. The past week, Israel let in a trickle of supplies, but aid groups say it is far short of what is needed. Ne'man and his wife, Majida, were visibly gaunter than in January, when AP last spoke to them. Like others, they have struggled to feed their family. Their daughters range from age 6 to the eldest in her 20s, married and with a baby born just before the war began. "When one of my daughters tells me, 'Baba, I want to eat,' I give her one or two bites so her piece of bread lasts till the end of the day," Ne'man said.

It was only days into the war when the Abu Jarads first left their home in the far north of Gaza, as Israel began fierce bombardment in retaliation for Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on south-



ern Israel. They returned 15 months later, among hundreds of thousands of Palestinians streaming north on foot during the January ceasefire. "Our happiness ... was like we were entering Paradise," Ne'man said. The house was damaged but still standing. Most of their belongings had been stolen or were under rubble. But after months of living in tents, they had a sense of home and privacy again, he said. They did some repairs. Ne'man, whose garden was his passion before the war, revived some of his flowers. On March 18, Israel resumed its campaign with one of the heaviest nights of bombardment of the war, hitting across Gaza and killing some 400 people. The military told residents of northern Gaza to leave.

"We said, let's just be patient for a bit, maybe the situation will improve," Majida said. They didn't want to undergo the pain of displacement again, Ne'man said. His daughters were crying, telling him, "We want to die in this house, this time we're not leaving," he said. But the shelling and gunfire was intense all around them, he said. The water trucks stopped delivering because it was too dangerous. "When you find death all around you ... at that point I was forced to take the decision," he said.

They packed up some belongings and went to a piece of land owned by his relatives in an area called Manshiya on the outskirts of the town of Beit Lahiya, only about a mile away. They felt safe. Ne'man's uncle's house was nearby and other relatives were in tents around them. But again the bombardment caught up to them. Last week, Israeli forces began baraging Manshiya - the heaviest Ne'man said he had experienced in the whole war. They huddled in their tent for three days and nights, afraid to leave even to go to the bathroom. At one point, a drone struck only 20 meters (yards) away. Another strike hit his uncle's home, killing one of his cousins. "It was so dangerous, we

couldn't even go help him," Ne'man said. The cousin's family buried him on the spot, he said. Others around them fled, but again the Abu Jarads tried to stay as long as they could. "I was conflicted between two fires, should I leave or stay," Majida said. Some of their daughters wanted to stay; the younger ones were terrified and wanted to go, she said.

Ne'man and his son-in-law went to Gaza City to scout out where to move. They found a place that seemed promising - an empty lot next to a demolished apartment building. They returned to Manshiya, the family set out. Erecting the tents They walked for miles, each of them weighed down with backpacks and plastic sacks filled with clothes and other belongings. At the edge of Gaza City, they found a pickup truck to take them the rest of the way. They arrived after sunset, too late to set up their tents. A family in an intact apartment building was kind enough to take them in for the night, Ne'man said. Ne'man's brothers joined with their families. It took them three days to clear a lot of rubble and wreckage, smooth down the earth, pound tent pegs into the ground and erect seven tents for all of them. Majida and her daughters lay mattresses on the ground inside and arranged their things around them.

The men dug a pit by the edge of the lot for all the families to use as a toilet. Then they sat for their meal of the day. Majida made a broth of boiled water, some tomato sauce and a little bit of bulghur wheat, then she mashed shreds of stale bread into it. Now they face an unknown future. His daughters are depressed and see little hope, he said. Wherever they move, there is still Israeli bombardment. All they can do is try to flee death, over and over, Ne'man said. "We want the torrents of blood to stop," he said. "But this is our nation, our land. Even if it is soaked in our blood, we won't leave it."

## North Korea makes arrests over botched ship launch

SEOUL (BBC): North Korea has detained three shipyard officials over an accident during the launch of a new warship, state media say. Parts of the 5,000-tonne destroyer's bottom were crushed during the launch ceremony, tipping the vessel off balance. An investigation into the incident, which North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un described as a "criminal act", is ongoing.

KCNA, North Korea's official news agency, identified those detained as the chief engineer of the northern Chongjin shipyard where the destroyer was built, as well as the construction head and an administrative manager. The report said that the three were "responsible for the accident". KCNA said the manager of the shipyard, Hong Kil Ho, had been summoned by law enforcers. Satellite images showed the vessel lying on its side covered by large blue tarpaulins, and a portion of the vessel appeared to be on land. North Korea's state media did not mention any casualties or injuries at the time, downplaying the damage. KCNA reported that there were no holes on the ship's bottom - contrary to initial reports.

"The hull starboard was scratched and a certain amount of seawater flowed into the stern section," the agency said. Kim said the accident was caused by "absolute carelessness, irresponsibility and unscientific empiricism". He added that those who made "irresponsible errors" would be dealt with at a plenary meeting next month. It is not clear what punishment they might face, but the authoritarian state has a woeful human rights record. It is uncommon for North Korea to publicly disclose local accidents - though it has done this a handful of times in the past. This particular accident comes weeks after North Korea unveiled a similar 5,000-tonne destroyer, the Choe Hyon. Kim had called that warship a "breakthrough" in modernising North Korea's navy and said it would be deployed early next year.

## Ex-police chief escapes from prison

CALICO ROCK, Ark. (AP): A former police chief in Arkansas who is serving decades-long sentences for murder and rape escaped from prison, state corrections officials said. Grant Hardin, the former police chief of the tiny town of Gateway near the Arkansas-Missouri border, escaped from the North Central Unit in Calico Rock, where he has been held since 2017. Corrections officials did not provide any details about how he escaped.

The Division of Correction and the Division of Community Correction are following leads with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Hardin pleaded guilty in October 2017 to first-degree murder in connection with the shooting death of 59-year-old James Appleton. According to an affidavit filed in the case, Appleton worked for the Gateway water department and was talking to his brother-in-law, then Gateway Mayor Andrew Tillman, when he was shot in the head on Feb. 23, 2017 near Garfield.

## US military shifts messaging in Africa

TAN TAN, Morocco (AP): The US military is backing off its usual talk of good governance and countering insurgencies' underlying causes, instead leaning into a message that its fragile allies in Africa must be ready to stand more on their own.

At African Lion, its largest joint training exercise on the continent, that shift was clear: "We need to be able to get our partners to the level of independent operations," Gen. Michael Langley said in an interview with The Associated Press. "There needs to be some burden sharing," Langley, the US military's top official in Africa, said, the final day of the exercise.

For four weeks, troops from more than 40 countries rehearsed how to confront threats by air, land, and sea. They flew drones, simulated close-quarters combat and launched satellite-guided rockets in the desert. Maneuvers mirrored previous editions of African Lion, now in its 21st year. But mostly gone now is language that emphasizes ideas the US once argued set it apart from Russia and China. Messaging about the interwoven work of defense, diplomacy and development once formed the core of Washington's security pitch. In their place now are calls for helping allies build capacity to manage their own security, which Langley said was a priority for President Donald Trump's Defense Department.

"We have our set priorities now - protecting the homeland. And we're also looking for other countries to contribute to some of these global instability areas," he said, referencing US support for Sudan. The shift comes as the US military makes moves to "build a leaner, more lethal force," including potentially cutting military leadership positions in places like Africa, where America's rivals continue to deepen their influence. China has launched its own expansive training program for African militaries. Russian mercenaries are recalibrating and cementing their role as security partner of choice throughout North, West and Central Africa. In an interview a year ago, Langley emphasized what US military officials have long called a "whole of government approach" to countering insurgency. Even amid setbacks, he defended the US approach and said force alone couldn't stabilize weak states and protect US interests against the risk of violence spilling out.

"I've always professed that AFRICOM is not just a military organization," Langley said last year. He called good governance an "enduring solution to a number of layered threats - whether it be desertification, whether it be crop failure from changing environments, or whether it be from violent extremist organizations." The "whole of government approach" no longer occupies the same place at the center of US messaging, though Langley said holistic efforts have worked in places like Ivory Coast, where development coupled with defense had reduced attacks by jihadi groups near its volatile northern border. But such successes aren't a pattern. "I've seen progression and I've seen regression,"

## Spain hosts European, Arab nations

MADRID (AFP): The international community should look at sanctions against Israel to stop the Gaza war, Spain's foreign minister said, as European and Arab nations gathered in Madrid to urge an end to its offensive.

Some of Israel's long-standing allies have added their voices to growing international pressure after it expanded military operations against Gaza's Hamas rulers, whose 2023 attack on Israel sparked the devastating conflict. An aid blockade lasting almost three months has worsened shortages of food, water, fuel and medicine in the Palestinian territory, stoking fears of famine.

Aid organisations say the trickle of supplies Israel has recently allowed to enter falls far short of needs. The talks aimed to stop Israel's "inhuman" and "senseless" war in Gaza, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares told reporters before the meeting opened. Humanitarian aid must enter Gaza "massively, without conditions and without limits, and not controlled by Israel", he added, describing the territory as humanity's "open wound". Representatives from European countries including France, Britain, Germany

said Langley, who is scheduled to exit his post later this year. The US military's new posture comes even though many African armies remain ill-equipped and insurgent groups expand. "We see Africa as the epicenter for both al-Qaida and Islamic State," a senior US defense official said earlier this month, noting both groups had growing regional affiliates and the Islamic State group had shifted command and control to Africa. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the issue publicly. Africa has rarely ranked high on the Pentagon's list of priorities, but the US has still spent hundreds of millions of dollars on security assistance and has roughly 6,500 Africa Command personnel on the continent. In some regions, the US faces direct competition from Russia and China. In others, regional affiliates of al-Qaida and the IS still require direct military action, Langley said.

The messaging shift from "whole of government" to more burden-sharing comes as fears grow that rising violence could spread beyond hotspots where insurgents have expanded influence and found vacuums in which they can consolidate power. Parts of both East and West Africa have emerged as epicenters of violence. In 2024, more than half of the world's terrorism victims were killed across West Africa's Sahel, a vast desert territory ruled by military juntas, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace. The group, which compiles yearly terrorism statistics, also found Somalia accounted for 6% of all terrorism-related deaths, making it the deadliest for terrorism in Africa outside the Sahel. Since Trump took office, the US military has escalated airstrikes in Somalia, targeting IS and al-Shabab operatives. But despite air support, Somalia's army remains far from being able to maintain security on the ground, Langley acknowledged. "The Somali National Army is trying to find their way," Langley said, adding that they had regained some footing after years of setbacks. "There are some things they still need on the battlefield to be very effective."

Similarly in West Africa, the notion that states could soon have the capacity to counter such threats is a distant prospect, said Beverly Ochieng, an analyst at Control Risks, a security consulting firm. Even before Western influence began to wane in the Sahel, needed military support was limited, threats remained active, and local militaries were left without the tools to confront them. Western powers with a presence in the Sahel have gradually scaled back their engagement, either by choice or after being pushed out by increasingly hostile governments. "Many of them do not have very strong air forces and are not able to monitor the movement of militants, especially in areas where roads are very difficult to traverse, the infrastructure is extremely poor," Ochieng, who specializes in the Sahel and Great Power competition in Africa, said.

## Maduro wins landslide in election boycotted by opposition

CARACAS (AFP): Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's party swept the board in parliamentary and regional elections that were boycotted by the opposition in protest over his disputed re-election last year.

The United Socialist Party of Venezuela won 23 out of 24 state governor positions and scored 82.68 percent of the votes cast for lists of National Assembly members, the electoral council (CNE) said. The constituency-level results of the parliamentary vote had yet to be tallied. The main opposition group, led by popular figurehead Maria Corina Machado, had urged voters to stay away to avoid legitimizing what she described as a "farce" election.

AFP journalists who visited polling stations in several cities said turnout was much lower compared to the July 2024 presidential election. The run-up to the vote was marked by mass arrests and a new crackdown on dissent. Over 70 people were arrested on suspicion of planning to "sabotage" the election. Among those arrested was leading opposition member Juan Pablo Guanipa, held on charges of heading the "terrorist network" behind the alleged plot. Venezuela's authoritarian leftist government frequently alleges foreign-backed, opposition-led initiatives to topple Maduro, who took over on the death of his mentor, socialist firebrand Hugo Chavez in 2013.

Alleging an infiltration of foreign mercenaries, Venezuela closed its busy border with neighboring Colombia for the period of the election. The vote was for 285 members

of the National Assembly and 24 governors -- including for the first time in Essequibo, an oil-rich region controlled by neighboring Guyana but claimed by Caracas. Delphos polling company forecast a turnout of just 16 percent of 21 million eligible voters. The low level of participation testified to the lack of faith many Venezuelans have in the electoral process after last July's presidential vote.

Electoral authorities quickly declared Maduro the winner of a third six-year term, without releasing detailed results. But the opposition published its own tally from individual polling stations, showing a convincing win for its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia. The crackdown on post-election protests left 28 dead, hundreds arrested, and cemented Venezuela's pariah status on the world stage. Before the results were announced, Maduro shrugged off the opposition boycott. "When the opponent withdraws from the field, we advance and occupy the terrain," he said matter-of-factly. Machado published several pictures of deserted polling stations on social media.

She said the opposition had shown the election up as a "grand farce" and called on the armed forces to "act" against Maduro -- her latest call for them to mutiny. The military has ignored previous such entreaties from Machado. Writing on X, Gonzalez Urrutia, who went into exile in Spain late last year, said the boycott was a "silent but resounding declaration that the desire for change, dignity and a future remains intact." "I'm not

going to vote because I voted (in the presidential election) and they stole the elections. So it's really a farce," said Candelaria Rojas Sierra, a 78-year-old retired civil servant in San Cristobal, on her way to mass to "pray for Venezuela." Samadhi Romero, a 32-year-old university student, however defended the election as an "important process of civic participation."

She voted for Maduro's son, 35-year-old MP Nicolas Maduro Guerra, who was seeking re-election in Caracas. A small opposition faction led by two-time former presidential candidate Henrique Capriles refused to be part of the boycott, arguing that previous voter stayaways had merely allowed Maduro to expand his grip on power. The election comes as the country's economy -- once the envy of Latin America, now in tatters after years of mismanagement and sanctions -- faces even further turmoil. US President Donald Trump has revoked permission for oil giant Chevron to continue pumping Venezuelan crude, potentially depriving Maduro's administration of its last lifeline. Washington has also revoked deportation protection from 350,000 Venezuelan migrants in the United States and expelled hundreds of others to a maximum security prison in El Salvador. Venezuela's elections for the National Assembly and for state governor of Essequibo sent alarm bells clanging internationally. Guyana has administered the region for decades but Caracas has threatened to partially annex it -- a threat that Maduro repeated.

## ‘Russian couple who became informants for Ukraine’

MOSCOW (BBC): It was shortly after Moscow annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 that Sergei and Tatyana Voronkov decided they would leave Russia. The couple, who had long been critical of Vladimir Putin, had condemned the actions of Russia to friends and acquaintances. In response, they were told that if they didn't like it they could leave.

So the couple, both Russian citizens, decided to relocate to Ukraine, where Tatyana was born. In 2019 they eventually settled in Novolyubymivka, a village of about 300 people in the south-eastern Zaporizhzhia region. The couple got four dogs and started raising livestock, while Sergei, 55, also found work as a land surveyor - his specialism during his time in the Soviet army. They hoped for a quiet life. But when Moscow launched its full scale

invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the peace of their new lives was shattered by the first Russian rockets flying over their home. "I heard something whistling, something flying, and I went outside," Tatyana, 52, recalls. "A rocket was flying right over the house. I went on the internet to see what had happened and they wrote that Kyiv had already been bombed." The couple quickly found themselves in occupied territory, and decided to become informants for Ukraine. What followed was detention, interrogation, an escape into Europe - and a letter of thanks from the Ukrainian army.

It was when a Russian convoy passed their home for the first time that Tatyana decided to act. She ran inside and messaged an acquaintance in Kyiv, whom she believed had contacts in Ukraine's security services.

The contact sent her a link to a chatbot on messaging app Telegram which told her they would be contacted by a person with a unique identifier. The couple were then asked to provide the location and details of Russian electronic warfare systems and military hardware they had seen, particularly missile systems and tanks. The locations would help the Ukrainian army target and destroy Russian troops in the area with drones and artillery.

"We didn't think of it as treason," says Tatyana, who along with Sergei insists the information they gave did not result in any strikes on civilians or civilian infrastructure. "Nobody attacked Russia. This was a fight against evil." For two years, Sergei would collect coordinates and Tatyana would transmit them from her phone - removing all traces of the

messages afterwards - as and when their village's internet access allowed them to do so. But all of this came to an end when Sergei was detained in April 2024 by armed men while he was shopping for gardening seeds in the regional centre of Tokmak. Sergei says he was taken to an abandoned house and put in a cold basement pit - around two metres wide and three metres deep - where he slept in a squatting position.

The next day he was questioned about whether he had passed details of Russian positions to the Ukrainians. Sergei says a bag was kept over his head during the interrogation and he was threatened with violence. After initially denying his involvement, Sergei confessed on the fourth day of his captivity, fearing that if he were subjected to violence he might accidentally implicate others.

While all of this was happening, Tatyana was desperately searching for information on his whereabouts. She travelled the area and phoned hospitals and morgues, while the couple's son, who was still living near Moscow, contacted various authorities there.

Ten days after Sergei's arrest, security forces searched the Voronkovs' home and dug up \$4,400 that had been hidden by the couple in their garden. Shortly after, Tatyana was told that her husband was "sitting in a basement" and was with Russia's security services, the FSB.

Weeks later, after 37 days in captivity, Sergei was made to confess to assisting Ukraine on camera by people who introduced themselves to him as FSB. But to his surprise, he was released two days later, though almost all of his documents, includ-

ing his passport, were confiscated. To this day, Sergei and Tatyana do not understand why he was released. However, the BBC understands this is not uncommon in parts of Ukraine occupied by Russia, where investigative and judicial processes lack transparency and often no explanations are given as to why a person is detained or released.

In the weeks after Sergei's release, the couple believe they were kept under surveillance, with cars constantly driving up to their home and strangers asking them if they were selling anything. Believing they'd never be left alone, the couple began plotting a way to leave. After consulting human rights activists, Sergei and Tatyana decided to try to travel to Lithuania. But to do that, they needed to return to Russia first to get Sergei a new passport.



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## Democracy in East Africa

**L**AST week, Ugandan lawyer Agather Atuhaire was finally set free five days after she was detained by the Tanzanian police for unclear reasons. She was unceremoniously dumped at the Mutukula border crossing between the two countries. Details of Atuhaire's condition remain unclear, but a statement from the organisation she works with as well as Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi, who was detained with her, alleged that she was tortured. He himself showed signs of physical abuse after he was also dumped at the Kenya-Tanzania border a day earlier.

For East Africans, Atuhaire and Mwangi's ordeal has been a painful reminder of just how far democracy in the region has retreated. People organising to resist state excesses have been increasingly facing structural and physical violence with little space for redress. Mwangi and Atuhaire were among a small group of regional activists and political figures who flew into Tanzania to show solidarity with Tundu Lissu, the leader of the Tanzanian opposition. Lissu is facing several charges, the most grievous among them treason, for comments he allegedly made at a political rally.

But Lissu is not alone in the region in facing reprisals for political action. In neighbouring Uganda, leader of the opposition Kizza Besigye is facing the same charges, based on the same idea that organising and leading opposition against an entrenched political power amounts to treason. Meanwhile, in Kenya, the aftermath of the 2024 anti-finance bill protests is haunting the country. In the absence of a well organised political opposition, which is stymied by frenetic deal-making and horse-trading, protesters and youth activists have become the country's unofficial political opposition.

The youth have borne the brunt of political violence during last year's protests, which killed at least 82 people. Kidnappings and abductions of protesters spiked after the demonstrations, and activist groups alleged that some people remain unaccounted for despite President William Ruto's assertion to the contrary. In Burundi, people continue to live under the shadow of police excesses and in fear of the possibility of war with its expansionist neighbours.

In Rwanda, several opposition figures who tried to run against President Paul Kagame were jailed on various charges. The neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo is perennially caught between war and political crisis. So how did we get to this state of affairs? The simplest answer is that we allowed ourselves to conflate elections with democracy, and the malicious intentions of those who wield power took advantage of that faith. The reality of building robust democratic systems is far more complicated than lining up to vote every four or five years, and real democracy requires round the clock vigilance.

A meaningful democracy requires robust local government, transparent political parties as well as institutional accountability and participation, all of which have been on the retreat in the region in the past two decades. Power has remained highly centralised in the executive, enabled by the capitulation of legislatures and the "naomba serekali" ("I am requesting of the government") approach to politics.

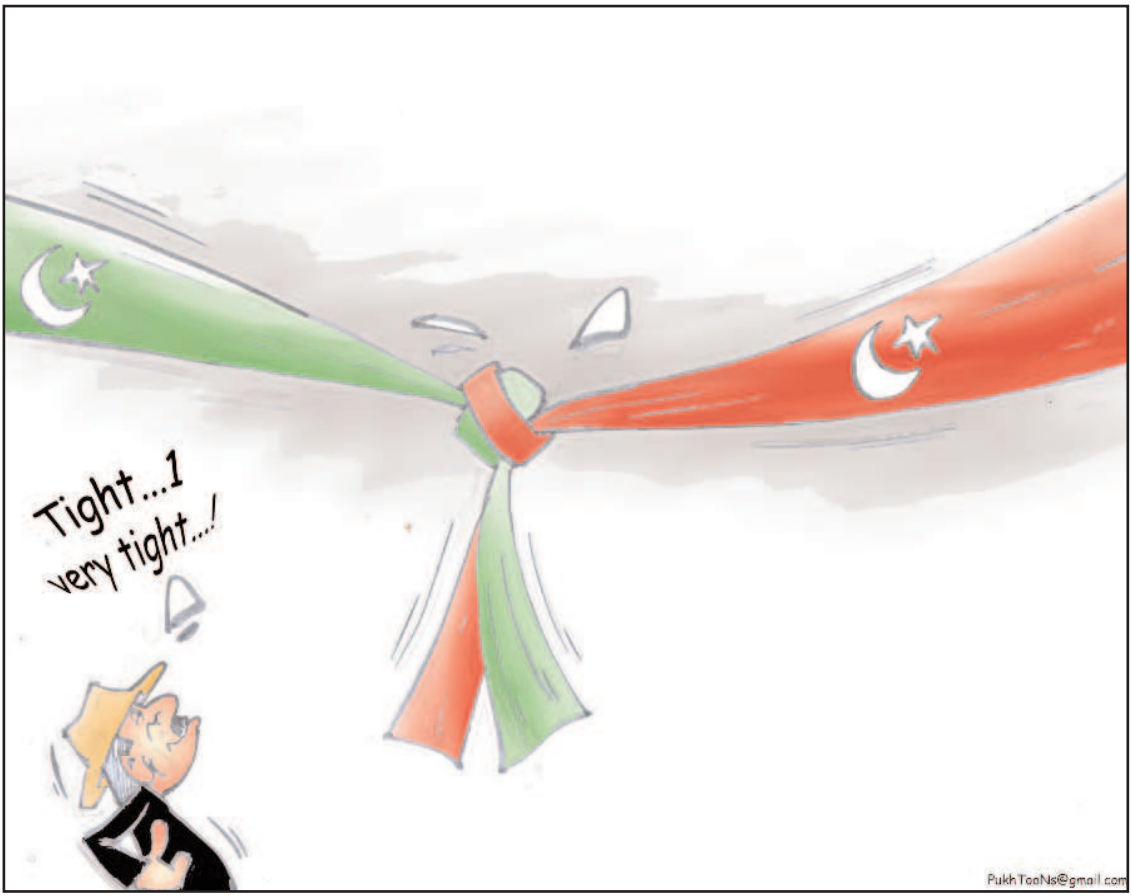
Parliaments are empowered by the legitimacy of a popular vote, but they repeatedly submit to the executive. Proof of this can be easily found in the experience of women trying to run for office in the region. As outlined in a 2018 volume on the Kenyan election that I co-edited, Where Women Are: Gender and the 2017 Kenyan General Election, the weakness begins within political parties, in which candidates must kowtow to a kingpin to gain permission to appear on the ballot. Those who do not are often locked out from competitive electoral cycles. As a result, save for constitutional quotas, women's participation in electoral politics has declined – a canary in the coalmine of shrinking democratic space. Meanwhile, parties have mastered the art of managing gender optics as a substitute for real change, reducing debates about democracy to the periodic performance of voting. Thus, Samia Suluhu's presidency in Tanzania is not a sign of improving democracy but rather that of a political machine that picked the least contentious candidate who would allow the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi, to continue managing the country. Similarly, the dominance of women in Rwanda's parliament is not in itself indicative of progress for women but of the ability of the ruling party to select candidates who are less likely to push back. Once these candidates are laundered through the political party machine, they enter the legislature more beholden to their political kingpin than to voters. And this is the case whether the kingpin is in government or in the opposition.

In Kenya, opposition candidates like Edwin Sifuna, who vociferously defended the rights of protesters during the June 2024 protests, have become tongue-tied in 2025 because their party kingpin has since struck a deal with Ruto and blind obedience is the only guaranteed pathway to power in this system. In Uganda, politicians are bought off with state cars and loans, and in Tanzania, they are silenced by arrests, detentions and disappearances of critics of the state. The net effect is that elections become a performance whose actual impact diminishes rapidly over time. A quick scan of global politics will affirm that this is not a uniquely East African problem. The same crisis is taking shape in the United States, particularly after the evisceration of the Republican Party by Tea Party politics and of the Democratic Party by careerist politicians. But the events of the last week show that for East Africa, an extra layer of risk exists because of the unquestioning and blind loyalty of security services to the whims of the state – something the current US administration seeks to build into the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

The long-term solution to this state of affairs is for ordinary people to become more engaged in localised democratic practices, changing the quality of people who rise up the ranks in politics. Of course, this can be difficult when people are merely trying to survive a hostile political and economic climate, but in the long term, it creates new entry points for civic engagement. Democracy is strengthened when more people participate in the governance of civic institutions like schools, hospitals, trade unions, cooperatives, neighbourhood associations, and even sports and social clubs – in processes that they can immediately connect to their quality of life. Elections then become the culmination of four or five years of regular exercises of democracy, not a separate process that floats above the reality of people's lives. In parallel, the onus is on the legislators of East Africa to find their teeth and their purpose. Their job is not political survival or the pursuit of political careers. Their job is to defend the people who elected them, to rein in the excesses of the executive and to defend the integrity of the constitution. Meanwhile, we, the people, should all heed the call of Nigerian public intellectual Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem: "Don't agonise, organise," and seek to rebuild democracy in East Africa from the ground up. — Aljazeera

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## Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations: The arc of brotherhood

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

**I**N the changing geopolitical terrain of Central and South Asia, alliances rarely last. Interests change, partners adapt, and strategic alignments evolve. Yet there are exceptions - ties that defy transactional thinking, relationships that deepen not through convenience but through consistency and shared convictions. The Pakistan-Azerbaijan axis has proven to be just that: a model of fraternal statecraft based on mutual respect, regional vision and political alignment.

Recent developments between the two nations reveal the substance behind the symbolism. While world powers get caught up in cycles of rhetoric, Baku and Islamabad are charting a course based on decisive action, tangible cooperation and strategic foresight.

Relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan are based on real-time cooperation in energy, defense, connectivity and global engagement. Azerbaijan's embrace of Pakistan is not just gratitude for Pakistan's unwavering support during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It is a strategic recognition of Pakistan's potential as a regional stabilizer, economic link and global voice.

Azerbaijan sees Pakistan as a partner that not only shares historical sentiments but also shows the institutional and ideological will to work towards a common future. The geography of Pakistan and Azerbaijan positions them as important corridors. Azerbaijan connects Europe and Central Asia while Pakistan, with its warm water ports and access to the Arabian Sea, is the natural end point of these routes. The port of Gwadar, provides Azerbaijan with direct access to markets stretching from the Middle East to East Africa and beyond.

Likewise, Azerbaijan's growing rail and road infrastructure creates a route for Pakistani exports to Europe and Central Asia.

This convergence of geographic opportunity is now being formalized through policy. The two sides have set in motion agreements that do more than build infrastructure-they build interdependence. Energy corridors, LNG trade extensions, and transport linkages are not just economic measures. They are acts of strategic integration. They redefine regional alignments.

They reduce reliance on historically unreliable intermediaries. And most critically, they insert Pakistan and Azerbaijan into a network of Eurasian trade and security that has long been dominated by larger, often self-serving, powers.

But geography alone cannot sustain an alliance. It must be matched by shared principles and mutual recognition of each other's core concerns. Here too, the Pakistan-Azerbaijan partnership stands out. On matters that most nations avoid for fear of offending larger powers, both countries have taken firm, unequivocal positions.

Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's stance on Jammu and Kashmir and endorsed Pakistan's call for a resolution based on international law and United Nations resolutions. This solidarity is not forgotten in Islamabad. It is repaid with equal fervor by Pakistan's consistent support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty. One of the most consequential shifts in Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations is the movement from symbolic defense ties to operational defense cooperation.

Military exercises, joint training, and strategic dialogues are no longer ceremonial-they are preparatory. The discussions on joint defense production mark a clear intent to institutionalize defense collaboration beyond procurement. For Pakistan, this partnership offers an entry point into the defense architecture of Central Asia. For Azerbaijan, it provides access to a battle-hardened military industry that has developed under the constraints of international sanctions and persistent regional insecurity. But more than that, it signals a mutual readiness to reduce dependency on traditional arms markets, and instead, build indigenous capabilities aligned with regional needs.

The April visit of a high-level Azerbaijani delegation to Pakistan is expected to solidify this vision. Islamabad and Baku are no longer satisfied with the optics of parades and protocol. The time has come, as both sides have made clear, for production, for co-development, for sharing of technologies and techniques. In an age where conventional

alliances are becoming transactional, this move toward self-reliant regional defense integration is a statement of intent-and one that other nations are quietly watching.

Beyond military cooperation, the extension of the LNG trading framework between SOCAR and its Pakistani counterpart signals another frontier of trust. In a world reeling from energy shocks, supply chain disruptions, and volatile prices, such agreements are not signed lightly. They require predictability, reliability, and political alignment. Pakistan, currently diversifying its energy portfolio, views Azerbaijan as a stable and cooperative partner. SOCAR's willingness to not only extend existing frameworks but to explore deeper commercial linkages is a reflection of confidence in Pakistan's energy sector reforms and future demand trajectory.

This is not mere gas trade-it is energy diplomacy in motion. It binds national interests through critical infrastructure. It creates interdependence that goes beyond paper agreements. It anchors bilateral relations in real-world stakes. The International system is shifting. Old hegemonies are fraying, and new poles of power are forming. Pakistan and Azerbaijan are forging their own alliances.

The political rhetoric of peace, progress, and prosperity is not hollow when it comes from leaderships that act on it. From Islamabad to Baku, there is a clear recognition that their nations can no longer afford to be reactive. They must be proactive. They must lead in their regions-not simply balance others. This leadership is also reflected in moral diplomacy. While global capitals offer muted, calculated responses to crises in Kashmir or Gaza, Pakistan and Azerbaijan speak with a clarity often absent in international forums. Shehbaz Sharif's calls for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and a viable two-state solution are not performative-they are rooted in principle. So too is Azerbaijan's longstanding support for Muslim causes globally, including Palestine.

Such moral clarity builds credibility. And in a world where credibility is the currency of diplomacy, Islamabad and Baku are quietly accumulating influence.

While political and economic cooperation forms the skeleton of bilateral relations, the flesh is provided by growing people-to-people contact. Increased air links, tourism, academic exchanges, and cultural integration are now on the agenda.

The success of these efforts lies in the shared cultural affinity between the peoples of Pakistan and Azerbaijan. With overlapping religious values, similar historical experiences, and a shared desire for modernization without westernization, both societies see in each other not foreign counterparts but familiar allies. This grassroots diplomacy reinforces what official statements declare. It ensures that the relationship is not limited to ministries and boardrooms but lives in the aspirations of ordinary citizens.

In an age where alliances are often crafted in boardrooms and undone in press releases, the Pakistan-Azerbaijan relationship is refreshingly resilient. It is built not on dependency, but on dignity. Not on hierarchy, but on mutual respect. Not on opportunism, but on shared purpose. As global fault lines deepen, as economic rivalries intensify, and as new cold wars begin to surface, smaller states must navigate with greater precision. Pakistan and Azerbaijan have chosen to do so together. Their partnership is not merely about hedging bets or balancing powers-it is about creating a third way. A path that is independent, principled, and purposeful.

From defense to energy, from transport to diplomacy, the message is clear: Pakistan and Azerbaijan are not waiting for the world to define their role. They are defining it themselves. And in doing so, they offer a model of modern statecraft where strategy meets solidarity, and cooperation meets conviction. This brotherhood is no longer an aspiration. It is now a geopolitical reality. And as both nations deepen their ties, one thing becomes certain: the arc from the Arabian Sea to the Caspian is not just symbolic-it is strategic, and it is here to stay.

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## Food issues in Gaza

Sumaya Mohammed

**O**N April 27, my brother-in-law, Samer, was killed in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza when his vegetable stall was bombed. He wasn't armed. He wasn't a political figure. He was a peaceful man trying to earn a living to feed his children in a place where food has become more expensive than gold. Samer wasn't a vendor by profession. He was a lawyer who defended the rights of the oppressed. But the war forced him to change his path.

During the ceasefire, he was able to buy vegetables from local wholesalers. After the war resumed and the crossings into Gaza were closed in March, supplies dwindled dramatically, but he maintained a small stock of vegetables. He continued selling day and night, even as buyers became scarce due to the high prices. He often tried to give us vegetables for free out of generosity, but I always refused.

When I heard about Samer's killing, I froze. I tried to hide the news from my husband, but my tears spoke the truth. He looked like he wanted to scream, but the scream remained trapped inside his throat. Something held him back – perhaps his burdened soul could no longer bear even the expression of grief. Samer left behind three little children and a heartbroken family. No one expected his death. It came as a shock. He was a good and pure-hearted young man, always cheerful, loving life and laughter, even in the toughest times.

I still remember him standing in front of his vegetable stall, lovingly calling out to customers. Samer is among countless food sellers who have been killed in this genocidal war. Anyone employed in providing or selling food has been targeted. Fruit and vegetable vendors, grocers, bakers, shop owners and community kitchen workers have been bombed, as if they were dealing with weapons, not food. Bakeries, shops, farms and warehouses have been destroyed, as if the food they were providing was a threat.

Ten days after Samer was killed, a restaurant and a market on al-Wahda Street, one of the busiest in the Remal neighbourhood of Gaza City, were bombed. At least 33 people were killed. Two weeks before Samer's martyrdom, the vicinity of a bakery in Jabaliya was bombed. Days before that, a food distribution centre in Khan Younis was targeted. According to the Government Media Office in Gaza, more than 39 food and distribution centres and 29 community kitchens have been targeted since the beginning of the war.

It is clear by now that in its campaign of deliberate starvation, Israel is not only blocking food from entering Gaza. It is also destroying every link in the food supply chain. As a result of the repeated targeting of vendors and markets, all that is available now to buy – for those who can afford to buy food – are scraps. Death has become easier than life in Gaza.

The starvation is affecting babies and little children the worst. On May 21, the EuroMed Human Rights Monitor reported at least 26 Palestinians, including nine children, died within a 24-hour period due to starvation and lack of medical care in Gaza. On May 5, the Ministry of Health in Gaza said it had registered the deaths of at least 57 children caused by malnutrition since the aid blockade began in

early March.

As a mother, I often go days without eating just to feed my children whatever little food we have left. My husband spends the entire day searching for anything to ease our hunger but usually comes back with mere scraps. If we're lucky, we eat a piece of bread – often stale – with a tomato or cucumber that I divide equally among our children. The hardship Samer's wife faces is even more unbearable. She tries to hide her tears from her children, who keep asking when their father will return from the market. The loss forced her to become a father overnight, pushing her to stand in long queues in front of community kitchens just to get a bit of food.

She often returns empty-handed, trying to comfort her children with hollow words: "When Dad comes back, he'll bring us food." Her children fall asleep hungry, dreaming of a bite to fill their stomachs – one their late father will never bring. Israel has claimed that it is blocking aid to Gaza because Hamas takes it. The Western media, fully complicit in distorting the truth, has parroted the claim.

Yet it is clear that Israel is not just targeting Hamas but the entire population of Gaza. It is deliberately using starvation as a weapon of war against civilians, obstructing the flow of humanitarian aid – a war crime, according to international law. Recently, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made the true aim of his government more than apparent by demanding all Palestinians be expelled from Gaza as a condition for ending the war.

His decision to allow food through the crossings is nothing but a PR stunt. Enough flour was let in to have images of bread distributed at a bakery circulating in the media and to reassure the world that we are not starving. But these images do not reflect the reality for us on the ground. My family has not received any bread and neither have the majority of families. Flour – where available – continues to cost \$450 per bag.

While Israel claims that 388 aid trucks have entered since Monday, aid organisations are saying 119 have. An unknown number of these have been looted because the Israeli army continues to target anyone trying to secure aid distribution. This tiny trickle of aid Israel is allowing is nothing compared with the needs of the starving population. At least 500 trucks are required every single day to cover the bare minimum.

Meanwhile, some Western governments have threatened sanctions and made some symbolic gestures to supposedly pressure Israel to stop starving us. Why did they need to wait to see our children dying of hunger before doing this? And why are they only threatening and not taking real action?

Today, our greatest wish is to find a loaf of bread. Our sole concern is how to keep surviving amid this catastrophic famine that has broken our bones and melted our insides. No one among us is healthy any more. We've become skeletons. Our bodies are dead, but they still pulse with hope – yearning for that miraculous day when this nightmare ends. But who will act to support us? Who still has a shred of compassion for us in their heart? And the most important question of all – when will the world finally stop turning a blind eye to our slow, brutal death by hunger?

## Transforming Pakistan's higher education through quality, skilled teaching and global standards

Muhammad Bilal Tahir

**B**ECAUSE knowledge forms the basis for going forward, in today's world, QA ensures the public has confidence in research and education. If it were not present, both science and the good of society would not continue. Quality assurance measures can serve as a bridge for Pakistan, where talent exists, but unresolved issues limit its development.

In universities and research, QA acts not only as a checklist but also as a plan that joins national efforts and supports worldwide collaborations. In Europe and East Asia, QA is being used to bring educational standards together and recognize each other's qualifications. Pakistan needs to look at QA not just for compliance but for a stronger commitment to fairness, creativity and results. If we install well-

defined standards, schedule audits and make reviews transparent, our institutions can join networks worldwide. If we want Pakistani universities to resemble Harvard, Oxford and the like, our teaching and research should meet worldwide standards.

Being good at quality assurance means understanding teaching as a science. Unfortunately, the common practice in class is learning by repetition. What we really need now is to adjust approaches to learning so they focus on students, inquiry and technology. If we train teachers to try project-based learning, and blended courses, flip their classes and conduct formative assessments, our lecture halls will turn into labs for new ideas. If a country introduces new educational practices, it doesn't depend only on new laws; it sup-

ports teachers, develops good courses and provides useful technologies. Teaching quality must be a consequence-free requirement for all educational institutions in Pakistan.

For the sake of Pakistan's industrial and economy, we should adopt an OBE approach in education. This approach encourages us to listen to what students are capable of rather than pay attention to their test results. Across engineering and liberal arts, OBE provides students with work-related, global and social skills. An important part of QA is encouraging industries to participate, looking at statistics for graduates in the job market and always updating the curriculum to meet industry needs. To accomplish this shift, education and industry should work

closely because it will help tackle unemployment and develop new ideas. It is impossible to provide a good education unless you have good educators. Top universities around the world have a National Teaching Excellence Framework, so the same should be adopted in Pakistan. Teachers deserve to be recognized as subject experts who lead with teaching skills, serve as mentors and continue to learn and grow themselves.

To make this change happen, universities should insist that all faculty members have the needed certifications and micro-credentials. Each college should make sure there are teaching excellence centers inside it. Tertiary institutions must offer useful rewards, fellowships and career opportunities for talented educators.

Our teachers should be celebrated because they help build the nation, not only provide services. Organizations like LUMS, GIKI, IBA and several others have proven how much talent Pakistan has when given proper guidance. Even so, most public universities face challenges because of budget cuts, little freedom and old ways of ruling.

We can only make our public universities excellent if we keep academic freedom and institutional independence and also ensure the same QA standards are used across provinces with HEC and QA panels. It is important to make use of new methods such as distance learning, online training and electronic teaching aids. More efforts need to be made to establish international alliances for research, educational exchanges and awards of joint degrees. It

would help to set up Industry Advisory Boards to make sure university programs match up with the needs of employment.

Quality assurance is not something you do by following a list-it is something workers and teams develop together. It is what unites people's trust in institutions with their reputation, serves as a link between students' achievements and the nation's progress and supports schools doing well in the local community and beyond. Pakistan is facing a critical moment now. Achieving this requires deepening quality assurance in how we teach and learn, so we may gain global recognition, help our graduates succeed worldwide and inspire our people. Let us create an education system where having faith is important, quality is necessary and creativity happens naturally.



# Trump in Riyadh: Saudis shift storyline

AS US President Donald Trump's plane descended toward Riyadh on May 13, escorted by Saudi F-15 fighter jets, preparations on the ground evoked a quiet cultural confidence. Across the tarmac stretched the lavender ceremonial carpet, officially adopted in 2021, inspired by the desert khuzama flower and bordered with the geometric patterns of the UNESCO-inscribed traditional sadu weaving. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, "the visionary leader who never sleeps," as Trump described him, welcomed his guest into the reception hall, where Saudi coffee was served in traditional Arabian style. And within two days, perceptions built up over decades began to shift.

Riyadh was once again Trump's first foreign trip in office, this time coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the 1945 Quincy meeting between King Abdulaziz and President Franklin Roosevelt. Back in 2017, Trump's first summit in Riyadh had introduced a new political chemistry between a Saudi leadership with an ambitious vision and an outsider American administration driven more by deal-making than by bureaucratic routine.

The 2025 meeting, however, took place between two well-acquainted partners, at a rare moment of symmetry: an American president returning to power after a sweeping victory, and a young Saudi leader who is the architect of regional transformation and the subject of global fascination, thanks to a vision that repositioned his country as a rising force on the global stage.

While analysts were preoccupied with the headlines of political understandings, investment deals, and bilateral economic agreements, the deeper meaning of this visit lay in how the Saudis chose to present themselves, and how the Americans responded.

For decades, visits by Western, especially American, leaders to the region followed a familiar script: security cooperation in exchange for energy stability, filtered through a

condescending outsider's gaze and quiet assumptions of superiority. But this time, something fundamental had changed. The inspiring Saudi reality on the ground turned old expectations on their head and signaled a new way of seeing.

The visit became an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to reintroduce itself to the world through its most authentic symbols, to reshape the storyline through which it has long been seen — the lavender carpet; dallah pots pouring Saudi coffee into finjan cups; Arabian horses escorting the presidential motorcade through Al-Yamamah Palace; and the samri dance that greeted Trump in At-Turaf, the UNESCO-listed district in Diriyah, birthplace of the Saudi state that restored the Arabian Peninsula's central role after a millennium away from the geopolitical spotlight.

This was a live act of meaning-making from a nation that knows its own cultural weight. On air, in real time, the Kingdom projected a narrative of itself as confident, visionary, ambitious, and economically powerful. A country shaping how it wants to be seen. Western media captured the symbolism with awe, while Saudi digital majlis erupted with pride. The message was unmistakable: Welcome to the new Saudi Arabia, a nation proud of its roots, open to the world, and carrying a heritage unfolding toward the future.

Beyond symbolism, the perception shift was clearest in Trump's own speech. In one of its most striking moments, he delivered a sharp critique of "Western interventionists ... giving you lectures on how to live or how to govern your own affairs ... intervening in complex societies that they did not even understand." Then he declared that "the gleaming marvels of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi were not built by so-called nation-builders, or neocons, or liberal nonprofits. They were built by the people of this region themselves, developing their own sovereign countries, pursuing their own visions, and charting their own destinies."

Dr. Hatem Alzahrani

This echoed Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's 2018 remarks at the Future Investment Initiative, two years after Vision 2030 was launched: "The new Europe is the Middle East" and that achieving this vision is "the Saudis' war, my war personally. I do not want to die without seeing the Middle East at the forefront of the world. This goal will be achieved 100 percent."

Some at the time saw those words as a visionary promise still far from reach. Even Trump acknowledged that: "Critics doubted whether what you achieved at home was even possible." But what once sounded like a distant ambition is now an undeniable reality, and the US leader's remarks were a direct response to that.

Moreover, these remarks marked a shift in how Washington perceives its relationship with the region. They pushed back against the "Western savior" narrative, returned credit to local agency, and acknowledged that real change is now coming from within. The outcomes of the visit reflected this shift as well, culminating in a strategic economic partnership covering vital sectors.

For years, the Middle East figured in American discourse as a problem to fix, a threat to contain, or a place waiting to be saved. These portrayals were largely imagined constructs, shaped by entrenched Western frameworks built on outdated assumptions and ideological baggage. As historian Zachary Lockman reminds us in "Contending Visions of the Middle East," much of the Western scholarly engagement with the region was historically tied to the priorities of foreign powers, rather than a genuine intellectual quest for understanding. The Middle East was treated as the "Other," an object to be studied and explained in service of Western strategy.

Now, the lens is changing. The developmental models taking shape in the wider region are not imported templates, but strategies born from lived experience and cultural depth.

Now reality leads perception, after decades in which perception shaped reality. Thanks to countries like Saudi Arabia, the region is reclaiming its voice as a fully engaged actor, redefining itself from within what was long considered an "exotic" or "mysterious" part of the world.

Saudi Arabia is redrawing its global image with clarity of vision and tangible results. Through self-assessment, data-driven governance, and large-scale reforms, the Kingdom has done in a few years what Trump called "a modern miracle, the Arabian way." This shift echoes a broader global rebalancing. As Fareed Zakaria outlines in "The Age of Revolutions," we are witnessing the rise of "new powers," countries that combine bold economic reform with cultural self-confidence and geopolitical ambition. Saudi Arabia stands as a leading example of these emerging global actors.

With strategic clarity, Saudi Arabia is reclaiming its place in the global imagination, not as a petro-state anomaly, but a civilizational force rooted in the Arabian Peninsula. For centuries, this land served as a crossroads of trade and a hub of cultural exchange. It gave rise to a language that became a global medium of learning and philosophy. From its historic cities, the people of Arabia, alongside peoples from Asia, Africa, and Europe, helped synthesize ancient knowledge and forge new ideas in science, law, literature, and spirituality. Vision 2030 calls back to this legacy as a strategic resource, reinvesting it to forge global partnerships, articulate a confident Saudi identity, and position the Kingdom as a key player in shaping the future.

In that spirit, the 2025 Riyadh Summit marks a new chapter in the Saudi-US story, one defined by mutual respect and a new understanding of the region from within, rather than through borrowed frameworks. "All of humanity will soon be amazed at what they will see right here in this geographic center of the world and the spiritual heart of its greatest faiths," Trump declared in his Riyadh address. It was a shift in

efforts can stabilize hillsides against landslides.

Second, early warning systems must be expanded. Solar-powered radios, multilingual alerts and community-based disaster training can empower Rohingya to respond to threats. Third, renewable energy solutions, like solar microgrids, can reduce reliance on firewood, curbing deforestation and fire risks. These measures, while costly, are far cheaper than the human and economic toll of inaction.

Global powers, particularly wealthy nations with high carbon emissions, bear a moral responsibility. The climate crisis disproportionately harms vulnerable populations like the Rohingya, who contribute negligibly to global emissions. The US, EU and other G20 nations must lead funding efforts, not only through humanitarian aid but also through climate adaptation grants. Regional players, including India and China, should support diplomatic efforts to pressure Myanmar for safe repatriation while contributing to camp resilience. The Rohingya crisis is a litmus test for global solidarity. If the world fails to act, the camps will become death traps, with cyclones, floods and earthquakes claiming countless lives. The Rohingya, already victims of genocide, will face a second injustice as climate refugees in a land not their own. But with concerted international action — combining repatriation advocacy with massive investment in disaster preparedness — their suffering can be mitigated. The clock is ticking. The world must decide whether to let the Rohingya become climate change's first high-profile casualty or to act with the urgency the situation demands.

# EU must make ethical choice on Gaza

THE EU is set to review its association agreement with Israel, a pact that governs its political and economic relations with Tel Aviv. This announcement was made by the EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, last Tuesday. The decision was backed by a majority of 17 of the bloc's 27 member states and was driven by the "catastrophic" situation in Gaza.

Led by Spain and Ireland, several European countries have long been calling for a review of the EU-Israel Association Agreement in response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Israel's disregard for international law. As expected, Israel totally rejected the decision to review the agreement. If the review leads to a suspension or blocking of the agreement, it will have dire consequences for Israel.

In February of last year, the prime ministers of Spain and Ireland reached out to European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen, urging her to review Israel's compliance with the human rights provision of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Of course, their request fell on deaf ears. However, as famine is now looming, more countries joined the call to review the agreement. The Netherlands renewed the call and issued a similar request to Spain and Ireland's. Its initiative received support from Finland, Portugal, Sweden and France.

Revoking the trade agreement would mean Israel would lose its perks with the EU. While the world is amazed by the Israeli economic miracle, it is important to note that Tel Aviv's economic success is no miracle at all. It has been successful economically mainly because of the support it receives from the Western world. The West has been trying to handle its guilt over failing the Jews and humanity during the Holocaust. Israel benefits greatly through its association agreement with the

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

EU. Through this agreement, Israeli products and services have preferential access to the EU market. Many Israeli industrial products benefit from tariff exemption. Article 8 states that customs duties on imports and exports between the European community and Israel are prohibited. Agricultural products also benefit from reduced tariffs. This gives Israel a competitive edge.

But the perks are not limited to customs duties. As part of this agreement, Israeli products align with European standards, which helps attract investment into Israeli companies. Israel also benefits from European funding for its research programs. And Israeli institutions can partner with European institutions.

The EU is Israel's most important trading partner. It accounted for 32 percent of Israel's total trade in goods in 2024. More than 34 percent of Israel's imports came from the EU, while 28.8 percent of its exports went to the bloc. If Israel loses this agreement, it would be a big blow to an already struggling economy. Last year witnessed a decline in the number of small and medium-sized businesses in Israel, while Ultra Finance has warned of a "shock wave" to come in 2025 as owners contend with the fallout of the Gaza war. Israel's economy is also suffering from a shortage of workers, as young men and women are being drafted into the military. Exports have suffered greatly, as more and more people are boycotting Israeli products.

It is time for punitive action. The war on Gaza will only stop when a majority of Israelis realize that it is affecting them negatively and that they would be better off making peace with the Palestinians rather than trying to eliminate them. Israel has not stopped at anything so far. Neither the International Court of Justice's ruling nor the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant for

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have deterred Israel. The country's leaders know they have lost their reputation. They do not care about their image anymore. They know it has already been destroyed.

The only way to coerce them into stopping this genocide is by affecting their economy — i.e., the livelihood of the average Israeli. This is the only way they will realize that the war is backfiring. Otherwise, they will not stop. Beyond empty words of condemnation, the world has taken no real action. Israel has deliberately killed journalists, medics and international aid workers and there have been no consequences.

The Israeli leaders have to realize that the world has something to say. Punitive action is needed. This is the only way to drive the Israeli public to reject the war. As long as they see that the world tolerates the criminality of their state, they will support the war, or at least will not push the government enough to end it. Views on the war are divided; Israeli society is very polarized. There is no decisive majority that wants the war to end. International pressure is needed to prevent the looming famine in Gaza. The average Israeli needs to understand that this barbaric war will make their state a pariah and all the privileges they enjoy can be lost at the stroke of a pen. A suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement would create enough pressure for the war to stop and aid to flow into Gaza.

It is time for Europe to make a moral choice. This is a moment that will haunt the generations to come if Europe does not make the ethical choice. Every European country's leadership should look 30 years into the future and wonder what they will tell their people then. Can they tell them that they could have stopped a famine but did not? History will judge Europe's leaders if they turn a blind eye while Gazans are perishing from famine.

# Rohingya refugees at mercy of climate change

THE Rohingya, a persecuted Muslim minority from Myanmar, face an escalating crisis in Bangladesh's overcrowded refugee camps. More than a million Rohingya have fled genocide and violence in Rakhine State since 2017, seeking refuge in Cox's Bazar, where they live in sprawling, makeshift settlements. These camps, among the most densely populated spaces on earth, are increasingly vulnerable to climate change.

Cyclones, floods and earthquakes threaten the region, while rising sea levels shrink Bangladesh's landmass. Without urgent international investment in disaster preparedness, infrastructure and early warning systems — and without successful repatriation — the Rohingya will be among the first and most devastated victims of climate vulnerability.

Bangladesh, one of the world's most densely populated countries, is on the front lines of climate change. Its low-lying delta geography makes it acutely susceptible to natural disasters. In recent years, the frequency and intensity of cyclones have increased, with storms like Cyclone Amphan (2020) and Cyclone Mora (2017) causing widespread destruction in Cox's Bazar.

Flooding, triggered by monsoon rains and rising sea levels, is a recurring threat. The 2024 monsoon season alone displaced thousands in the camps, with flimsy shelters unable to withstand heavy rains. Adding to the peril, the region lies near tectonic fault lines, with recent earthquakes in the Bay of Bengal signaling growing seismic risks. For the Rohingya, living in bamboo and tarpaulin shelters on steep, deforested hillsides, these hazards are life-threatening.

The camps, home to more than 1.2 million people, are a humanitarian catastrophe waiting to worsen. Designed as temporary shelters, they lack the infrastructure to endure extreme weather. Narrow, muddy pathways become impassable during floods. Poor drainage systems exacerbate waterlogging, breeding disease in overcrowded conditions. Landslides, triggered by heavy rains, have already claimed lives. In 2023, a fire exacerbated by dry conditions and strong winds razed parts of Kutupalong camp, displacing thousands. These disasters expose the camps' fragility, where even moderate climate events can cause disproportionate harm.

Rising sea levels compound the crisis. Bangladesh loses approximately 1 percent of its landmass annually to erosion and inundation, with coastal areas like Cox's Bazar particularly at risk. By 2050, experts estimate that 17 percent of Bangladesh's land could be submerged, displacing millions, including the Rohingya. For a community already confined to shrinking, flood-prone land, this is a death sentence unless drastic measures are taken.

Repatriation to Myanmar remains the preferred long-term solution, but prospects are bleak. Myanmar's junta, responsible for the Rohingya's expulsion, shows no willingness to ensure safe returns. Political instability following the 2021 coup has further dimmed hopes. Two failed repatriation attempts in 2018 and 2019, boycotted by the Rohingya due to fears of continued persecution, underscore the challenge. Without a viable path to return, the Rohingya remain trapped in camps

ill-equipped for the climate realities of the 21st century.

Bangladesh, despite its generosity in hosting the Rohingya, cannot address this crisis alone. The country faces its own climate adaptation challenges, with a gross domestic product per capita of just \$2,800 and a population of 170 million. Resources are stretched thin. The government has invested in some camp improvements, such as concrete drainage channels and cyclone shelters, but these are insufficient for the scale of the threat. With 30,000 children born in the camps annually, the Rohingya population continues to grow. By 2030, the camps could house 1.5 million people, making the need for robust infrastructure urgent.

International support has been inadequate. In 2024, the UN's Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya was only 37 percent funded, leaving critical gaps in food, healthcare and shelter. Disaster preparedness receives even less attention. Early warning systems, which could save lives by alerting residents to impending cyclones or floods, are rudimentary. Many Rohingya lack access to mobile networks or radios, while language barriers hinder communication. Infrastructure upgrades — elevated shelters, reinforced roads and reforestation to prevent landslides — require billions of dollars, far beyond Bangladesh's capacity.

The international community must act swiftly. First, funding must prioritize climate-resilient infrastructure. Elevated, durable shelters can withstand floods and winds. Improved drainage and sanitation systems can mitigate disease outbreaks. Reforestation

Alistair Burt

IN 40 years of being a close observer of, and participant in, UK-Israel relations, in fair weather and foul, I had never heard the strength of official criticism of the Israeli government with which Foreign Secretary David Lammy and Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke last week. Describing Israel's blockade of Gaza as "indefensible and cruel," and "intolerable," while also ending trade talks with Israel and summoning its ambassador to the Foreign Office, the UK's language and actions marked a turning point in the relationship between two allies.

It is important to note what it was not. This is not support for Hamas. This is not a break in the UK's support for the existence and safety of Israel, proved just a few months ago with the launch of aircraft to help defend the country against Iranian missiles — a mission the UK would perform today if asked.

But it was almost a cry of despair at the actions of a friend now risking much more than it appears to realize worldwide, dragging the UK into a position of complicity which its domestic politics demanded could no longer be acceptable.

The catalysts for this change were clear, and none were connected with wanting terror to win, as senior Israeli politicians claimed. There has been rising UK domestic political unease for months, from all parties in Parliament. UN

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs chief Tom Fletcher's speech to the UN, warning the Security Council of its responsibilities in stark terms on May 13; the media coverage of UK medical staff in Gaza and their testimony of the conditions of patients and hospitals under attack; and the pictures of obviously starving children — all counted in the minds of ministers.

But perhaps more than anything else has been the announcements by Israel of action that seemed to suggest no end to the existing catastrophe, but promised more and worse to come, from the recommencement of even more severe ground operations, and an Israeli minister's boast that Gaza would be "cleansed" and its population displaced — described as "extremist" by the UK foreign secretary. For the UK, and importantly France and Canada — also strong and not fair-weather friends of Israel — "enough" was the one-word description.

The Israeli reaction was, I suspect, anticipated, debated in the Foreign Office, and accepted as an inevitable price. The Israeli government is extremely sensitive to any criticism, and could have been expected to denounce what the UK had said and done with a dig at history and the British Mandate and little acknowledgement of continuing and not insignificant UK support.

But, of course, what could not have been predicted was the outrageous murder of two young Israeli officials in Washington, a cruel coincidence of fate, which would conflate issues better kept separate. A hurt and stung Israel has said harsh things in its grief. It is highly unlikely that the foreign policy positions of the UK, France, and Canada will have influenced the murderer in whatever motives he might twistily have possessed, but none of us know. It would be best in my view for the reaction to such remarks to end quickly, respecting the pain of the families involved. Increased bitterness surrounding them adds nothing to the resolution of issues.

It is to that resolution that the UK, and the world, should now turn its attention. There is no going back on what the UK prime minister and foreign secretary have said and what they believe. Israel's declared way forward will not succeed in giving it security or the return of hostages, which may now be incidental to Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, but not to the UK, to families involved or to millions of Israelis. The refusal to negotiate peace by all those on both sides with an interest only in the war continuing will condemn thousands to die now, and if extremist voices are heard, condemn future generations to slaughter. And, as Washington showed, do not expect this to be confined to

the region. The UK should now be demanding that "enough" is the cry of all.

The taboo in the West of governments seriously criticizing an Israeli government has gone, not because these governments are antisemitic, but precisely because they are not. They are rightly, and about time, demonstrating that you can call out the actions of a government when you think it is wrong without denying its right to exist, in the same way that you can support the right of a people to a state, without endorsing terror.

The forthcoming Saudi-French international conference has to tackle more taboos. It must not be a declaratory affair, but one that addresses the questions ducked for too long. How will Arab states that want a relationship with Israel, and a Palestinian state, practically address Israel's security, as suggested at the UN General Assembly back in September? Who will make Israel realize that its security based on denying a Palestinian state has been illusory? Who will ensure that in return for statehood, neither Hamas nor any other ideological force denying Israel's existence will ever have power or authority? What concrete steps will be set out to end violence and terror on the West Bank? Israel's best friends have taken a risk. For the sake of those dying now, and doomed to die in the future, we are running out of time for other friends to talk truth to all protagonists.

# UK in long overdue change of tune on Gaza

FOR the first time in 19 months of genocide in Gaza, a senior British minister, David Lammy, last week channeled some of the anger felt by much of the public at Israeli actions. After 77 days of Israel blockading Gaza, denying water, food, medicine, fuel and all aid to 2.3 million Palestinians under occupation, the British foreign secretary finally spoke out and started to take some action. This followed a tougher joint statement by the UK, France and Canada the day before.

Lammy announced a series of small actions. London is suspending all talks on a future free trade agreement with Israel, even though this was stalled anyhow. The Israeli ambassador was formally summoned to the Foreign Office. And a further three Israeli settlers, two illegal settler outposts and two settler groups were sanctioned.

Lammy's skills as a thespian are unlikely to put him in the running for an Oscar. His furious tirade did not seem faked, but rather the outburst of a man who had been waiting to speak his mind, shaken from his torpor, let off the leash by a nervous Downing Street. No minister had previously used words such as "intolerable," "monstrous," "appalling" or "egregious" to describe Israeli actions.

Hearing the word "condemn" in regard to Israel's conduct was a shock, as the "c" world had not been permissible previously. Lammy lambasted Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich for speaking of Israeli forces "cleansing" Gaza, of "destroying what's left" and of resident Palestinians being "relocated to third countries." "I condemn it in the strongest possible terms," he said. Strangely, other genocidal comments from Israeli ministers over the last 19 months did not receive the same treat-

Chris Doyle

ment.

Back in March, Lammy had been roundly ticked off by No. 10 for daring to suggest that Israel was violating international law. He was forced to backtrack to the nauseating formulation that Israel was "at risk" of violating it. Quite what Israel must do to convince the British government is not clear. Watching the statement with two Palestinian human rights activists, their understandable questions were: Why has this taken so long? Why only now? Is this shift for real or just to assuage the mounting anger in the Labour Party and in the country as a whole?

Why now? As is so often the case, it was probably a congregation of circumstances, not one magic factor. The noncynical view is that the blockade of Gaza and the deliberate starvation of Palestinian men, women and children over 11 weeks was too much. At a public level, Israel does not have even minimal justification for this policy of starvation as a weapon of war. For those who barely follow this conflict, it is blatantly apparent that this is morally wrong.

Perhaps more importantly, the UK may have been emboldened by an awareness that US President Donald Trump had become irritated with Netanyahu on many fronts, from Iran to Syria and the Houthis to Gaza. Some speculate that Washington may have given a diplomatic wink to the European powers.

On a more cynical level, the UK has just agreed a tariff deal with the US. This takes the pressure off Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Just as importantly, parliamentary opinion was fuming. Senior sources informed me that members of the Cabinet had been raising the need to push for a stronger position. Notably, even backbench Conservative MPs

had started speaking out, as well as right-wing commentators in the media, who never normally criticize Israel at all.

Lammy's words contrasted heavily with those of his opposite number, Priti Patel. She once again failed to criticize the blockade, the starvation and the genocidal comments of Israeli ministers. Since becoming shadow foreign secretary last November, Patel has not once expressed any sympathy for Palestinians in Gaza, even those being starved and bombed, or criticized Israeli conduct in any way, shape or form. Lammy saved his most ferocious comments to tear into her — again, the first time Labour has turned its guns on the lamentable Tory position in 19 months. Britain has shifted. It may not be a full U-turn, but a sharpish turn at least. Having taken a condemnatory stance, the pressure will be on the government to do more if Israel does not fully lift the blockade and halt its atrocities. The actions are limited thus far, but more are in the pipeline, including the possible sanctioning of extremist Israeli ministers. Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir. France and the UK are also both considering recognizing a Palestinian state. The European powers will have to stand firmly against the egregious Israeli official pushback — not least from Netanyahu — which blames these critical postures for the awful killing of the two Israeli diplomats in Washington.

The bottom line is that all this is not enough. It is far too late. The genocide continues. All this should have been said and done by the end of October 2023, when Israel was clearly committing war crimes in Gaza and its ministers were promoting genocide. But it is still better than nothing, with the promise of more to come unless Israel stops the mass starvation and ends its genocide.





# Minister urges nation to show unity on economic front like it did against recent aggression

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, here on Monday urged the nation to exhibit the same unity on the economic front as it did in response to India's recent unfounded aggression, stressing that such solidarity was vital for sustainable economic growth.

"We have come together in unity against the unfounded aggression and the unity that the nation has shown, we need the same unity on economic front," the minister said while addressing a conference organized by Karandaaz Pakistan & Pakistan Banks Association (PBA).

He pleaded for that same spirit of cooperation in economic efforts to move forward and become a meaningful part of the comity of nations. He said, to achieve this, there was need to learn how to collaborate effectively, rather than working in isolation. He urged development finance institutions to support scaled-up, horizontally integrated efforts rather than fragmented, vertical initiatives.

The minister said, the way the armed forces and political leadership stood united against the recent aggression was a moment of pride for the entire nation, and it was rightly celebrated.

Without naming India,

the minister said, every possible effort was made to prevent crucial economic meeting with International Monetary Fund (IMF) from taking place—or to ensure that key items, such as the second tranche under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) or the \$1.3 billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) for climate resilience, were kept off the agenda.

However, he said, Pakistan moved past as its case was discussed and decided on merit, adding the government had clearly prioritized key areas, and the international community recognizes that Pakistan urgently needs support in developing human capital

and strengthening climate resilience.

Meanwhile, talking about the upcoming budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, the minister said, in order to promote export-led growth, the government was set to introduce bold measures aimed at fundamentally reshaping the DNA of the economy.

He emphasized that the upcoming budget would not merely be a statement of revenue and expenditure but a strategic document that should reflect the direction in which the economy is heading. "It's not just about the next fiscal year—it should at least signal where we want to take the economy in the long

term," he said.

While acknowledging the importance of budgetary math-work, he stressed that the broader goal was to make the budget a strategic roadmap for sustainable economic transformation.

He said, Pakistan's recent economic performance has been positively received by international partners, foreign investors, and bilateral counterparts during engagements in Washington, London, Karachi, and Lahore. He noted that there was broad appreciation for the country's macroeconomic turnaround and the speed with which stability has been restored.

However, he cautioned that macroeconomic stability was only a means to an end, not the end itself. The consistent message from partners, he said, was clear and that Pakistan must "stay the course" to avoid repeating past cycles of short-lived recoveries followed by crises. "We've had enough of boom-and-bust cycles," Aurangzeb remarked, emphasizing that structural reforms—especially in taxation, energy, and privatization—are now well underway.

He detailed key steps such as the digitization of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) with private sector support, simplification of tax processes for salaried individuals, and

the handover of 24 state-owned enterprises to the Privatization Commission.

On the fiscal side, he said the government has already reduced debt servicing costs by Rs1 trillion this year and will modernize the debt management office next year to align with global best practices. Aurangzeb also highlighted reforms in pensions, public sector downsizing, and a shift toward a defined contribution system for new government hires.

Looking ahead, the finance minister stressed that for Pakistan to evolve into a \$3 trillion economy, it must address challenges related to population growth and climate change.

He noted that during discussions with WB and IMF, Pakistan made it clear that alongside infrastructure, investment in climate and human capital was essential. As part of a 10-year Country Partnership Framework signed with the World Bank on January 15, four out of six key focus areas relate directly to climate and population issues. The agreement includes \$20 billion in funding, with additional private sector investment expected through the IFC.

He urged development finance institutions (DFIs) to support scaled-up, horizontally integrated efforts rather than fragmented, vertical initiatives.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb addressing at Impact Financing event organized by Karandaaz Pakistan and Pakistan Banks Association.

## Govt to help struggling edible oil sector

KARACHI (PPI): In a bid to alleviate the mounting financial pressure on Pakistan's ghee and cooking oil sector, Haroon Akhtar Khan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, has committed to immediate measures aimed at supporting the industry.

Acknowledging the sector's critical role in the national economy, he assured that the government would not impose further burdens on the business community.

During a meeting on Monday with a delegation from the Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association (PVMA), led by Chairman Sheikh Umer Rehan, Khan revealed plans to clear all outstanding dues to the manufacturers without delay. He emphasized the government's dedication to facilitating the sector and proposed recommending the removal of Section 8B of the Sales Tax Act to the Prime Minister.

Sheikh Umer Rehan, voicing the industry's concerns, highlighted the financial challenges exacerbated by delays in bank retirement documents and appealed for eased sales tax regulations.

He also called for the repeal of Section 8B of the Sales Tax Act and the withdrawal of Section 40B of the Amended Tax Ordinance 2025 to provide relief and ensure the sustainability of the edible oil sector.

Rehan underscored the industry's importance to Pakistan's food security and economic framework, urging the government to implement business-friendly policies to benefit consumers and the nation at large.

## PBF proposed Molten Salt Solar Plants — to combat power crisis in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Secretary General of the Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Balochistan, Maqbool Alam Noori on Monday called upon the Government of Balochistan to urgently consider the establishment of solar power plants utilizing molten salt technology to address the province's severe power shortage.

While talking to delegation of Chaman Chamber of Commerce (CCCC), Noori highlighted the critical impact of the current power crisis on both industries and households across Balochistan, said a news release. "The persistent power outages are crippling our industries, hindering economic growth, and causing

immense hardship for ordinary citizens," he stated.

Noori put forth a compelling solution: "Balochistan is blessed with abundant sunshine, receiving more than seven hours of sun daily. We strongly suggest that the Balochistan government invests in solar power plants that incorporate molten salt technology. This innovative system uses molten salt as both a heat transfer fluid and a thermal energy storage medium. This unique capability allows for the generation of electricity and the storage of solar heat for later use, effectively enabling 24-hour power generation."

He emphasized the transformative potential of

such an initiative. "Implementing this technology would not only provide a stable and reliable power supply to our industries, fostering investment and job creation, but also ensure consistent electricity for homes, significantly improving the quality of life for our people," Noori added.

As PBF believes that this long-term, sustainable energy solution is crucial for Balochistan's economic development and prosperity.

"We urge the government to prioritize this forward-thinking approach to energy security and to explore public-private partnerships to expedite the implementation of these vital projects," he added.

## UNISAME calls on PM to address SME's issues

KARACHI (PPI): The Union of Small and Medium Enterprises (UNISAME) has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to address the pressing demands of the SME sector in the upcoming 2025-26 budget to help the sector navigate challenging global conditions.

On, President of UNISAME, Zulfikar Thaver, highlighted the turmoil faced by SME exporters due to increased taxes and soaring freight costs, exacerbated by regional conflicts.

Thaver appealed to the Prime Minister to instruct the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to limit income tax on sector profits to no more than 25%. He stressed that high electricity charges, global inflation-driven raw material costs, and increased freight rates from conflict zones are making SMEs uncompetitive, necessitating immediate relief.

Additionally, the Union Council members have asked for the establishment of an SME export bureau to promote SME products and geographical indication goods, with value addition. They also emphasized the need for budgetary provisions to fund this bureau.

Furthermore, UNISAME underscored the importance of enhancing the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) to support projects involving joint ventures and partnerships with Chinese entrepreneurs.

This includes addressing the technological gap via a new technical institute under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Thaver stressed the need for a robust SMEDA, suggesting that a token authority serves little purpose.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 881.55 points, a negative change of 0.74 percent, closing at 118,221.12 points as compared to 119,102.67 points on the last trading day.

A total of 635,535,311 shares were traded during the day as compared to 338,003,666 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 18.576 billion against Rs 18.511 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 467 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 188 of them recorded gains and 235 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 44 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 246,932,360 shares at Rs 5.72 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 36,720,714 shares at Rs 1.27 per share and Telecard Limited with 30,010,235 shares at Rs 8.22 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 2,006.32 per share closing at Rs22,069.53 whereas runner-up was Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs 190.61 rise in its share price to close at Rs2,096.70

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 72.36 per share price, closing at Rs 10,755.23, whereas the runner-up Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with Rs 36.29 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,216.17.

**Rupee sheds 08 paise against US Dollar:** The Rupee on Monday depreciated by 08 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.05 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.97.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.65 and Rs 284.15, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.60 to close at Rs 321.34 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.74, according to SBP.

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.97, whereas an increase of Rs 2.52 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 382.70 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 380.18.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 02 and 03 paise to close

at Rs 76.79 and Rs 75.20, respectively.

**Gold prices decrease Rs2,600 to Rs351,500 per tola**

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.2,600 on Monday and was sold at Rs.351,500 against its sale at Rs.354,100 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.2,228 to Rs.301,354 from Rs.303,583 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat came down by Rs.2,042 to Rs.276,251 from Rs.278,294.

The rates of per tola silver and ten gram remained unchanged and closed at Rs.3,508 and Rs.3,007 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$26 to \$3,331 from \$3,357 whereas that of silver remained stagnant at \$33.50, the Association reported.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Communications Aleem Khan speaking to media after a meeting with business community at Arif Habib Centre.

## Jawaid expresses grief on passing away Azfar

### F.P. Report

KARACHI: Syed Jawaaid Iqbal, Chairman of the SouthAsia Forum, has expressed deep sorrow and heartfelt condolences on the passing away of veteran politician and former Governor of Sindh, Senator Kamaluddin Azfar, who breathed his last in Karachi on Monday after a prolonged illness.

In his condolence message, Syed Jawaaid Iqbal said: "The passing away of Mr. Kamal Azfar is a profound loss. He was a seasoned and principled politician whose contribu-

tion to the country's democratic evolution and governance will always be remembered. His wisdom, political insight, and dedication to public service left a lasting impact on Sindh's political landscape and on the broader national discourse."

Recalling his personal association with the late Senator Azfar, Syed Jawaaid Iqbal said that he held Mr. Azfar in high regard and would always cherish the memory of being introduced to the former Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, by Mr. Azfar in the 1970s.

A senior member of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Mr. Kamal Azfar played vital roles in Pakistan's political history, having served as Sindh's Governor and as the Federal Finance Minister.

### Documents Lost

My (Sehrish Gul) original diploma certificate of Associate Engineer Electric Technology Roll No # 224247 session 2010 from Government Polytech Institute Kohat Road Peshawar has been lost. If found please contact: Sehrish Gul daughter of Yousaf Gul>Contact No: 0332-9120375& 0316-9385835.

### NAME CORRECTION

My correct name is Muhammad Qasim Jan and my father's correct name is Naem Jan, which have both been incorrectly mentioned/spelled in my educational documents/certificates including SSC, HSSC and B.A degree, DMCs and certificates. I intend to make corrections in the record and if any person or organization has any objection the same may be intimated to Secretary BISE, Peshawar and Registrar University of Peshawar within a period of seven days.

## Experts urge long-term economic vision in upcoming budget

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Economic and policy experts have emphasized the need for long-term strategic planning in the upcoming Federal Budget 2025-26, urging the government to align fiscal priorities with the Uraan Pakistan five-year development plan rather than relying solely on short-term annual budgetary fixes.

Leading economists and policymakers highlighted the importance of inclusive and sustainable economic development in the face of recurring financial challenges and geopolitical uncertainties.

They were speaking at a seminar titled "Federal Budget 2025-26: Strategic Priorities under Uraan Pakistan and the Shadow of Pakistan-India Tensions" organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad here on Monday.

The panelists included Dr Waqar Masood Khan, former federal secretary at the Ministry of Finance; Sakib Sherani, former principal economic advisor to the Government of Pakistan; Zafar ul Hassan Almas, former joint chief economist at the Ministry of Planning,

Development and Special Initiatives; and Khalid Rahman, Chairman of IPS.

The speakers noted that Pakistan is currently navigating its 14th International Monetary Fund (IMF) program since 1988, underscoring a pattern of reliance on short-term external support without implementing deep-rooted structural reforms.

"Each IMF arrangement offers temporary relief, but the real challenge lies in sustaining long-term economic growth," the experts remarked.

Criticizing the traditional

focus on annual budget cycles, the participants called for a forward-looking 5- to 10-year economic vision. They warned that in the absence of comprehensive planning, budgetary decisions risk being reactive, especially amid current tensions with India and unresolved issues such as the Indus Waters Treaty.

They also stressed the need to integrate climate resilience, water resource management, and energy sustainability into fiscal planning, noting these as critical components of both

national security and economic development.

While acknowledging positive trends such as declining inflation, a stronger currency, a stable balance of payments, and a recovering stock market, the panelists cautioned that these gains are largely the result of ad hoc measures rather than systemic reforms. They urged the government to institutionalize changes such as pension reforms and regulatory easing for businesses.

"Stability, not high growth, should be the immediate focus," said one

speaker, while also maintaining that a 4-5% growth target remains achievable if export performance is improved and business conditions are made more favorable.

The experts noted that the Uraan Pakistan strategy provides a sound framework for progress but lamented its lack of visibility in actual policy execution. They called the upcoming federal budget a critical opportunity to give life to Uraan Pakistan's objectives—enhancing exports, developing the IT sector, fostering environmental sustain-

ability, and transitioning to green energy. In his concluding remarks, IPS Chairman Khalid Rahman stressed that Pakistan's economic challenges are rooted in the political economy, particularly the instability of policymaking.

"Policy continuity across governments is vital for creating a stable and investor-friendly environment," he said, adding that recent improvements should be translated into long-term development that addresses the needs of the wider population.





In brief

**Ammad bags PSA Squash Tournament title**  
ISLAMABAD (APP): Muhammad Ammad won the 1st Jansher Khan PSA Squash Tournament title here at the Mushaf Squash Complex on Monday. The tournament which was presented by Sybrid Pvt Ltd and sponsored by Markhor Squash Foundation, concluded on a high note with an electrifying final match. Ammad beat Anas Ali Shah by 3-1 (11-4, 11-6, 7-11, 11-5) in the final which lasted for 38 minutes. This is Ammad's 2nd consecutive PSA Satellite Tournament title.

**England withstand Matthews to claim T20 clean sweep**  
CHELMSFORD (Agencies): England withstood all-rounder Hayley Matthews' brilliance to win the third and final T20 by 17 runs and complete a dominant series clean sweep in Charlotte Edwards and Nat Sciver-Brunt's first series in charge. Matthews was playing a lone hand in West Indies' pursuit of 145 for a consolation win at Chelmsford, but a rain delay with 48 runs required from the last 26 balls disrupted the chase. They slipped from 109-3 to 127-8, with Lauren Bell claiming the game-changing wicket of Matthews for a sublime 71 from 54 balls in the 18th over. Bell finished an exceptional spell with figures of 2-11 while fellow quick Em Arlott and left-arm spinner Linsey Smith also took two wickets each. Matthews claimed 3-32 in England's 144-5, leading West Indies' much-improved bowling performance, but former captain Heather Knight's unbeaten 66 from 47 balls ensured England just had enough runs on the board. After Danni Wyatt-Hodge was bowled from the first ball of the innings by Zaida James' spin for the second match in a row and Sophia Dunkley was caught behind off Matthews for three, Knight and new captain Sciver-Brunt rebuilt the innings from a stuttering powerplay of 24-2. The experienced pair added 48 for the third wicket before Sciver-Brunt fell for 37, and Knight added a further 42 with wicketkeeper Amy Jones, who made a quickfire 22. A three-match one-day international series begins in Derby on Friday, but England will be waiting on Knight's fitness after she could not take the field in the second innings because of a hamstring problem suffered during her knock.

**Coach Phil Simmons eyes competitive series**  
DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh cricket team's head coach Phil Simmons has expressed confidence in his young squad ahead of the upcoming T20I series against Pakistan. Speaking to the media at Gaddafi Stadium on Monday, Simmons vowed that while some key players are missing, the team remains determined to play competitive cricket. "Mustafizur Rahman is one of our key players, but unfortunately, he is not part of the squad for this series," Simmons revealed. "However, this gives us an opportunity to see what our young players can offer. There is a lot of potential in this group," Former West Indies all-rounder Simmons said that Pakistan is never an easy opponent. "We are fully aware of the challenge, and we are preparing accordingly," he said. Simmons acknowledged that several senior players are absent from the squad, but he expressed confidence in the younger players who have stepped up.

## WAPDA athletes win medals in Asian Ju-Jitsu C'ship



LAHORE (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) athletes, representing Pakistan, have won one gold and three bronze medals for the country at the Asian Ju-Jitsu Championship 2025 held at Amman, Jordan. According to the WAPDA spokesman here Monday, WAPDA's Bano Kosar delivered a brilliant performance in the Women's 48kg Contact Ju-Jitsu category, securing Gold for Pakistan after a gripping final bout against India's Richa Sharma. Her triumph not only adds a prestigious medal to the nation's tally but also highlights WAPDA's legacy of excellence in sports. WAPDA athletes also contributed to Pakistan's medal count with strong performances in the Duo categories. WAPDA's M. Ali Rashid won bronze medal in Duo Men category whereas Isra Waseem and Kainat Arif secured bronze in Duo Women category. The 3-day event exhibited the finest martial arts talent across Asia with participation from 27 countries and over 800 top-tier competitors.

It is pertinent to mention that out of the six-member national squad representing Pakistan, four athletes hailed from WAPDA, reflecting the department's unparalleled commitment to the growth and development of martial arts in the country. Chairman WAPDA/ Patron-in-Chief WAPDA Sports Board Engr Lt Gen (Retd.) Sajjad Ghani felicitated WAPDA athletes on their brilliant performance in the Championship. He expressed the hope that WAPDA players would continue to bring laurels for the country in the upcoming events as well. Meanwhile, WAPDA Sports Board also congratulated the athletes on winning medals for the country.

## Towns leads stunning comeback as Knicks beat Pacers



NEW YORK (Agencies): The New York Knicks produced a stunning comeback to claim a first win in their NBA Eastern Conference play-off finals against the Indiana Pacers. Defeat would have left the Knicks 3-0 down in the seven-game series, but New York - who were 20 points down towards the end of the second quarter - now only trail 2-1. Karl-Anthony Towns

starred with 20 points in the fourth quarter to snatch a crucial 106-100 victory. With his side trailing 80-70 at the end of the third quarter, Towns - who played fewer than 28 minutes in game two - scored 15 points in the first four minutes of the quarter before adding a further five. "When I got a chance to do what I do in the

fourth, I was going to make sure I seized the opportunity," Towns said. "I just wanted to go there to give our team a chance to win. I'm just happy I was able to do that." New York survived a late Pacers surge to hold on for a hard-fought win, with Jalen Brunson and Josh Hart securing the victory with scores in the final seconds. "He made some big plays for them," Pacers forward Pascal Siakam said of Towns. "We couldn't get stops when we needed them. And offensively, we didn't have our usual pop. "We didn't have the ball movement that we usually do." Game four will take place in Indianapolis on Tuesday at 20:00 local time (01:00 BST on Wednesday).

## Alcaraz wins Roland Garros opener, Swiatek makes strong start



PARIS (AFP): Carlos Alcaraz powered into the French Open second round on Monday with a resounding win to start his title defence, while three-time defending women's champion Iga Swiatek also eased through at Roland Garros. Four-time Grand Slam champion Alcaraz struck 31 winners in a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Italian qualifier Giulio Zeppieri and will face Hungary's Fabian Marozsan in round two. Alcaraz is now on an eight-match winning streak at the French Open and also took Olympic silver at Roland Garros last year, losing the final to Novak Djokovic. "The first round is never easy, and coming here as a champion is even more difficult," said the Spaniard, who has won both the Monte Carlo Masters and Italian Open titles on clay this year. "But I started well, found my rhythm, and I'm happy with my start." Alcaraz beat world number one Jannik Sinner in straight sets in the Rome final just over a week ago as the Italian returned from a three-month doping ban. Two-time reigning Australian Open champion Sinner takes centre stage in the night session against Frenchman Arthur Rinderknech, who can

expect to enjoy much of the support under the lights on Court Philippe Chatrier. It is the first of two successive potential French opponents for Sinner, who could meet the retiring Richard Gasquet in the second round. Gasquet, 38, takes on another wild card, Terence Atmane, in his 22nd and final Roland Garros. "It's definitely going to be different," Sinner said of the atmosphere that awaits him in Paris after he received a warm welcome back in front of home fans in Italy. Taylor Fritz of the USA became the first high-profile casualty in the men's draw as the fourth seed lost 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 6-1 to German Daniel Altmaier. Norwegian seventh seed Casper Ruud, a two-time French Open runner-up, got his bid for a first Grand Slam title under way with a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win over veteran Spanish qualifier Albert Ramos-Vinolas. Swiatek cruises through the tournament on a near year-long trophy drought but showed signs of form in a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Slovakia's Rebecca Sramkova. Her struggles since the last of her four French Open titles have been well documented, but she broke her 42nd-ranked opponent four

times in a strong display. The five-time Grand Slam champion's remarkable win-loss record in the tournament now stands at 36-2. "I knew I needed to stay proactive and try to use my weapons. I'm happy with my performance and it was a solid match," said Swiatek, who also beat Sramkova in the second round of this year's Australian Open. Swiatek, who has dropped to fifth in the world rankings, will next face former US Open champion Emma Raducanu after the Briton defeated China's Wang Xinyu 7-5, 4-6, 6-3. Raducanu is playing at the French Open for the first time since a second-round exit on her debut in 2022. Four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka, who had a match point against Swiatek in the second round at Roland Garros a year ago, was knocked out by Spanish 10th seed Paula Badosa in a tense three-set battle. Badosa, an Australian Open semi-finalist earlier this year, fought back from a set down to win 6-7 (1/7), 6-1, 6-4. Osaka has still never got past the third round at Roland Garros. Former Wimbledon winner Elena Rybakina battled past Argentinian qualifier Julia Riera 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, two days after lifting her first WTA title since April 2024 in Strasbourg. American ninth seed Emma Navarro suffered an embarrassing 6-0, 6-1 loss to Spanish world number 68 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro in just 57 minutes, only winning a game when her opponent double-faulted to gift her a break when serving for a double-bagel victory.



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool players during the Liverpool Premier League Champions parade.

### Pak team to participate in Asian Masters Weightlifting C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team has departed to Doha, Qatar to feature in the 1st Asian Masters Weightlifting C'ships to be held from May 27 to 29. According to Pakistan Masters Weightlifting Association (PMWLA), Pakistan team left from Karachi airport in the morning. The Asian Masters Weightlifting Championships is being organized by Asian Masters Weightlifting Association (AMW) under the umbrella of International Masters Weightlifting Association (IMWLA). Team Pakistan includes- Pak Women Team: ?Ms. Sybil Sohail: W-30 in 59 Kg; Neelam Raiz W-76kg; Nadia Maqsood W-87kg. Men Team: Rasheed Khan: M-50 in 89 Kg; Abdul Malik: M-50 in 109 Kg; Kashif Rehan: M-45 in 102 Kg; Muhammad Iqbal: M-30 in 102 Kg body weight category. The officials include Syed Munawar Hussain Zaidi (manager) and Umer Javed (assistant manager). The opening ceremony of the championship will be held on Tuesday while closing on May 31.

### Aisam awards shield to President PLTA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) President Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, presented a special shield to Senior Executive Vice President of the Pakistan Lawn Tennis Association (PLTA) Rashid Malik, at the PTF Tennis Complex on Monday. The award recognised PLTA's outstanding performance and organisation of the most number of tournaments in a year among provincial associations, said a press release. Rashid Malik, on behalf of PLTA, thanked the PTF President for the recognition, stating that it would motivate PLTA to conduct more tournaments and provide opportunities for players. Aisam-ul-Haq expressed his delight in presenting the award, acknowledging PLTA's hard work and dedication to promoting tennis. The ceremony was also attended by Aqeel Khan, Col. (R) Zia-ud-din Tufail, Secretary General PTF Col. (R) Gul Rehman, and Sohail Malik Vice President PLTA.

## Shaheen Shah Afridi named PSL X team captain

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, who led Lahore Qalandars to their third title in four years in HBL PSL last night, has been named captain of the Team of HBL PSL X. The team was selected by the esteemed members of the commentary team. The HBL PSL X was played across four cities -Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi from April 11 to May 25. In the final, Qalandars defeated Quetta Gladiators by six wickets at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, said a press release. The 25-year-old Shaheen, not only claimed the Fazal Mahmood Cap for finishing as the highest wicket-taker - 19 dismissals in 13 matches, but also leads a team that features two of his Qalandars teammates. Sikandar Raza (11 matches, 254 runs, 2x50s, 10 wickets) and Fakhar Zaman (13 matches, 439 runs, 4x50s) earned their places on the

back of stellar performances in the tournament. Gladiators - the winners of the 2019 edition of HBL PSL are also represented by three players. 23-year-old Pakistan international Hasan Nawaz, who was also adjudged best batter of the tournament (12 matches, 399 runs, 1x100, 3x50s) is joined by experienced all-rounder Faheem Ashraf (12 matches, 163 runs, 17 wickets) and 27-year-old spinner Abrar Ahmed (12 matches, 17 wickets). Karachi Kings, who secured third place on the points table before losing to Qalandars in Eliminator 1 on May 22 at Gaddafi Stadium, also have three representatives. Captain David Warner (11 matches, 368 runs, 3x50s), opening partner James Vince (378 runs, 1x100, 3x50s) and pacer Hasan Ali (10 matches, 17 wickets) all feature in the XI. Khushdil Shah (11 matches, 253 runs, 1x50, seven wickets) is named as the

12th man. Islamabad United's Sahibzada Farhan, who earned the Hanif Mohammad Cap for leading the run charts with 449 runs in 12 matches (1x100, 3x50s), is the sole representative from his side. Completing the lineup is Peshawar Zalmi's emerging talent, fast bowler Ali Raza, who took 12 wickets in nine matches. **Squad:** Fakhar Zaman (Lahore Qalandars), Sahibzada Farhan (Islamabad United) (wicket-keeper), David Warner (Karachi Kings), James Vince (Karachi Kings), Hasan Nawaz (Quetta Gladiators), Sikandar Raza (Lahore Qalandars), Faheem Ashraf (Quetta Gladiators), Shaheen Shah Afridi (Lahore Qalandars) (captain), Hasan Ali (Karachi Kings), Ali Raza (Peshawar Zalmi) (emerging), Abrar Ahmed (Quetta Gladiators), Khushdil Shah (Karachi Kings) (12th).

## Mbappe wins European Golden Shoe for first time



MADRID (Agencies): Kylian Mbappe has won the European Golden Shoe for the first time after scoring twice in Real Madrid's 2-0 defeat of Real Sociedad on Saturday. The France international scored 31 league goals in his debut season in Spain, meaning he also won La Liga's top scorer prize. A double in Real's final game of the season secured Mbappe top spot in the rankings ahead of Sporting striker Victor Gyokeres (39 goals) and Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah (29 goals).

Though Gyokeres scored eight more league goals than Mbappe, he finished runner-up because a weighted-points based system decides the rankings. Goals scored by players competing in Europe's top five leagues - Premier League, La Liga, Bundesliga, Serie A and Ligue 1 - are worth two points. Goals from those who play in leagues ranked sixth to 22nd in Uefa's coefficient, including the Portuguese Primeira Liga, are worth 1.5 points.

Mohamed Salah needed a hat-trick in Liverpool's final Premier League match against Crystal Palace on Sunday in order to share the prize with Mbappe. The Egypt international scored once in a 1-1 draw. Mbappe is just the third Real player to win the award, after Hugo Sanchez (1989-90) and Cristiano Ronaldo (2010-11, 2013-14 and 2014-15). Gyokeres - who has been heavily linked with a summer move to Arsenal - had no chance of catching Mbappe because Sporting's league campaign ended the previous weekend. After scoring in his side's 3-1 defeat of Lisbon rivals Benfica in the Portuguese Cup final on Sunday, the Sweden international finished the season with 53 goals in 51 games in all competitions. The top five in the rankings were as follows: Mbappe (62 points), Gyokeres (58.5), Salah (58), Robert Lewandowski (54), Harry Kane (52).

## Guardiola refuses to guarantee Man City title challenge next season

LONDON (AFP): Pep Guardiola said he cannot guarantee Manchester City will be back challenging for the Premier League title next season. City will play in the Champions League for a 15th straight season after they salvaged a disappointing campaign with a final-day, 2-0 win away to Fulham on Sunday that saw them finish third in the Premier League and seal their place among European club football's elite. But the club's first season without a trophy in eight years ended their unprecedented run of four successive English top-flight titles, with Guardiola's men finishing 13 points behind the Premier League champions Liverpool. Asked if his side would be in a position to challenge Arne Slot's side next term, Guardiola replied: "I don't know. I never thought we would win six Premier League titles in seven years.

"But if you expect that I am going to tell you now that next season we are going to win the Premier League, you are wrong." The Spaniard added: "Since I have arrived at this club, we have finished with 80-plus points and this season we have finished with 71 so that is miles away from our standards. And it has happened for many reasons. "Sport and football gives you another chance and we will look to prove ourselves. "But we are miles away from Liverpool. That is the reality. I have a feeling next season will be better but I don't know how we will react after the Club World Cup. We will be exhausted without a holiday before next season. "We have to rise and increase our level otherwise we will not compete to fight for the titles. But if we are fit, we will try and we will be closer." With Kevin De Bruyne

leaving City and doubts over the future of Jack Grealish, some believes Guardiola needs to oversee a major rebuild if the club are to mount a title challenge next season. But Guardiola, who has already said he wanted to trim his squad, does not envisage a significant overhaul at the Etihad this summer. "I don't have that feeling," he said. "I have 24 players and I saw them training the other day and I said: 'Oh my gosh, how good are they?' "New faces will come, especially in positions where we are weaker, but I don't think we need a lot. We have a good squad and I don't want a lot of players. "But we will see. The summer is long. There will be players who realise they don't play and want to leave. But that is now not my business. I qualified for the Champions League and the rest belongs to the club."





## In brief

### Death anniversary of Adeeb on Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 19th death anniversary of veteran actor of Urdu and Punjabi films Adeeb is being observed on Monday. He was born in 1926 in Mumbai, British India. Adeeb began his career in theater and scriptwriting before transitioning to acting. He appeared in over 500 films throughout his career, becoming one of the most recognizable faces in Urdu and Punjabi cinema. His powerful performances in films like *Maula Jutt*, *Wehshi Gujjar*, *Ailaan*, *Dil Aur Duniya*, *Naaz*, *Shireen Farhaad*, and *Haider Ali* earned him widespread acclaim. After migrating to Pakistan in 1962, he settled in Lahore and continued his prolific career in film. Adeeb passed away on May 26, 2006, at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology in Lahore.

### IRSA releases 260,726 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 260,726 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 297,584 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.84 feet which was 71.84 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 168,700 cusecs and 155,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1156.00 feet, which was 106.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 41,158 cusecs and 18,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 211,692, 140,453, 105,263 and 32,494 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 41,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 20,579 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### BISE cracks down against cheating mafia

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Rawalpindi has intensified monitoring to ensure fair conduct of Intermediate Part-I examinations. Chairman Muhammad Adnan Khan conducted surprise inspections at exam centers, enforcing strict anti-cheating measures. According to the board spokesman, Controller Examinations Tanveer Asghar Awan caught three students cheating at different centers, and cases forwarded to the Discipline Branch. The board has deployed special monitoring teams and enhanced technological surveillance to maintain exam integrity. "Zero tolerance for malpractice - we're safeguarding education's sanctity," said the Chairman. The crackdown follows Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's directives for transparent examinations.

### 5,400 liters of adulterated milk discarded

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) carried out an operation against substandard milk suppliers in Rawalpindi, setting up special checkpoints at GT Road, Bahria Town, Rawat, and IJP Road. During the crackdown, PFA discarded 5,400 liters of adulterated milk on the spot after it was found to be mixed with water. A fine of Rs 345,000 was also imposed on those involved in supplying low-quality milk, according to a spokesperson.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi met with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malki to discuss matters of mutual interest. —APP Photo

## Kamal launches third national Polio vaccination campaign

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Monday officially launched the third National Polio Campaign of 2025 at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC).

Addressing a press conference, emphasizing the critical importance of immunization, the Minister reiterated the government's firm resolve to eliminate polio from Pakistan.

The nationwide campaign, which begins today, aims to vaccinate approximately 45.4 million children under the age of five.

In a historic move, Pakistan and Afghanistan are conducting synchronized polio campaigns this year—a landmark joint initiative, as both countries remain the only ones in the world where polio persists.

Minister Kamal personally administered polio drops and vitamin A supplements to children at the event, commending the tireless efforts of frontline polio workers.

"These workers are the real heroes of this fight," he stated, while urging parents to ensure their children receive the vaccine without fail. "Vaccination is essential for your child's health and future," the Minister appealed passionately. "Polio is incurable—unlike cancer, which can be treated. Only immunization can protect children from this crippling disease."

Sharing the latest surveillance data, the Minister revealed that poliovirus has been detected in environmental samples from 50 out of 89 districts. "The virus lurks in our surroundings,"

he warned, urging communities to reject misinformation and actively support immunization teams.

"Polio eradication remains one of the top priorities of the Government of Pakistan," Kamal affirmed. "If a child is disabled by this preventable disease, we all bear responsibility. We must unite—just as we have in other national challenges—to end polio once and for all."

He also highlighted positive developments from recent campaigns in Karachi, where community engagement efforts led to a noticeable decline in refusals to polio drops.

The Minister called on every citizen to support this critical health initiative, ensuring a safer, polio-free future for the children of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

## Bandit killed in gunfire exchange

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two armed bandits riding a motorcycle opened fire on a police party and officials of the Crime Control Department (CCD) during a snap checking in the Rawat police station area.

A bandit was killed in the gunfire while the other managed to escape. According to police, the bandit opened fire when the CCD and police team signaled them to stop during routine checking. A weapon was also recovered from his possession.

He had a criminal record, with involvement in multiple cases of robbery, theft, and banditry in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Police also revealed that the bandit had recently shot and killed his own accomplice during a robbery at a fast food outlet. He was also wanted in several petrol pump robberies.

During the gunfire, Constable Obaid Khalid was hit in the chest, but he was unharmed due to his bulletproof jacket. Senior police officers, including SSP Crime Control and SP Saddar, rushed to the scene after the incident. A search operation is underway to track down the absconding suspect.

Commending the police team's bravery, City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani praised the officers for their quick response. "Those who attack the lives and property of citizens will never escape the grip of the law," he stated.

## CDA seals 30 properties

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) launched a major operation against illegal constructions in Islamabad on Monday, sealing 30 commercial and residential units in Pak PWD Employees Cooperative Housing Society, Lohi Bher.

The crackdown, ordered by Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi and CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, targeted buildings violating approval laws, unauthorized commercial use, and non-payment of fines.

The operation was conducted jointly by CDA's Building Control Directorate, Enforcement Wing, ICT Administration, and Islamabad Police.

The sealed properties included shops, arcades, and offices operating without approved building plans, completion certificates, or legal occupancy permits. Notable sealed units were Shahid Fabrics, Samson, Shaheen Chemist, Muslim Cash & Carry, and several others.

"All units sealed were non-compliant despite prior notices, show-cause notices, and final warnings," stated the CDA press release. "Further legal action will be taken against repeat violators."

The operation followed the CDA Ordinance 1960 and Building Control Regulations 2020 (amended 2023). Authorities warned the public against illegal construction, urging them to obtain proper approvals before starting any projects in Islamabad.

## Hanif Abbasi meets KSA envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Monday met with the Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki here.

The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation, investment opportunities and strengthening ties between the two brotherly nations.

During the meeting, both the sides appreciated the deep-rooted historical, religious and economic relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

It was mutually agreed that these ties are vital for the prosperity and development of both nations.

Hanif Abbasi emphasized that Saudi Arabia is a key strategic partner of Pakistan and both the countries must strive to further strength their relationship

to new heights.

The minister acknowledged the significant contribution of millions of Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia, whose remittances play a vital role in Pakistan's economy.

He also highlighted the religious and cultural significance of the annual pilgrimage (Hajj and Umrah) performed by thousands of Pakistanis, which serves as a testament to the strong spiritual bond between the two countries.

The minister placed special emphasis on enhancing cooperation in the railway sector and promoting investment and trade opportunities.

He said that development in railway infrastructure would strengthen both economies and contribute to regional trade connectivity.

The ambassador reaf-

firmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to supporting Pakistan's development and reiterated the kingdom's interest in expanding cooperation across all sectors.

He expressed a desire to boost investment, fortify trade relations and support public welfare initiatives.

Hanif Abbasi said the bond between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia goes beyond traditional diplomatic relations and is based on brotherhood and shared interests.

The minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to deepening cooperation in every field and working towards even stronger ties in the future.

During the meeting various joint ventures and investment opportunities aimed at enhancing mutual development and cooperation between the two nations were also discussed.

## IHC seeks details from NHA on Bhong Interchange fund allocations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought details from National Highway Authority (NHA) regarding issuance of funds for Bhong Interchange project on Multan-Sukkur motorway.

Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz heard the case regarding the completion of the project as per the direction of the Supreme Court. During hearing, the NHA officials assured the court that the construction work would be completed timely as per the orders.

At this, the court inquired that as to what funds the NHA is proposing in the budget for the project in the next financial year.

During the hearing yesterday, petitioner Raees

Munir Ahmed appeared in the court along with his lawyer Waqar Rana and took the stand that the work on the project has not yet started. The contract award was made on December 6, 2023, it is now May 2025, what is the NHA doing to complete this project on time.

He prayed the court that the NHA be asked about the time frame of this project. This project is also a flash point in the context of the security situation in Sindh and Punjab, he argued.

NHA officials told the court that the process of the land acquisition for the project is underway. The case related to the acquisition calculator is pending in court, they said.

The petitioner's lawyer said that there is no stay order regarding land acquisition at this time.

The petitioner's lawyer said that the NHA can contact the Punjab government for this process.

The NHA officials said that an application has been moved to the Land Acquisition Collector since November but there was no response yet.

The lawyer for the petitioner said that the court should pass an order that the NHA should implement the Supreme Court's decision and that the NHA should be ordered to complete the work on the project expeditiously. The court adjourned the further hearing of the case until the third week of June.



ISLAMABAD: Chaudhary Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, addressing the ceremony after MoU being signed between OEC and PVTCL.

## ITP intensify enforcement to curb violations

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on Monday announced a crackdown on traffic law violations, introducing stricter measures including hefty fines and potential arrests.

The decision comes in light of rising road accidents and growing concerns over public safety. As per the new enforcement strategy, vehicles driven without a valid driving license, permit, or by underage drivers will be impounded and taken to the police station.

Additionally, serious traffic offenses such as lane violations, one-wheeling, and overloading will now incur substantial financial penalties.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad, Captain (retd) Syed Zeeshan Haider emphasized the importance of adhering to traffic laws, urging citizens to cooperate for their own safety.

"There will be no leniency. Strict and indiscriminate action will be taken against all violators. These measures are essential to prevent increasing road accidents," he stated.

The Islamabad Traffic Police also plans to launch a public awareness campaign to educate citizens about the updated traffic rules and

penalties. The campaign aims to safeguard lives and reinforce ITP's commitment to road safety.

It may be recalled here that the Lahore Traffic Police has already initiated a strict crackdown on the top 1,000 defaulters of e-challans. Even government vehicles are now subject to enforcement.

According to a report quoting CTO Lahore, Dr Athar Waheed, 12 special recovery teams have been formed that are actively tracing e-challan defaulters across the city using Safe City data, and collecting fines on the spot.

He revealed that over 300 defaulter vehicles have already been impounded during the ongoing operations. In a surprising incident, a motorcycle with 313 unpaid e-challans amounting to Rs335,300 was also seized.

Dr Waheed added that government-owned vehicles are among the defaulters, and a separate list has been prepared to ensure action is taken against them as well. These measures reflect a broader nationwide effort to ensure accountability and discipline on the roads, prioritizing public safety and compliance with traffic regulations.

## Climate change driving extreme weather events

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Punjab, Irfan Ali Kathiya, on Monday said that Pakistan, like the rest of the world, is facing rapidly changing climate patterns, leading to more frequent and intense natural disasters.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that while there was a forecast for rain and storms in Punjab, the intensity of the recent weather events was unexpected.

"Eighteen people lost their lives and over 110 were injured," he said, adding that 80% of the damage was caused by the collapse of improperly installed solar panels.

He urged the public to install solar panels securely to avoid such incidents in the future.

He said that while global temperatures are rising by 1 to 2 degrees, Pakistan is seeing sudden increases of 4 to 5 degrees, causing dangerous heat waves.

He stressed the need for strict measures to tackle rising temperatures. "We need more tree plantations and better control over urban expansion to manage the heat," he added.

## Twin cities abuzz with festive cheer as Eid nears

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad and Rawalpindi have come alive with Eid preparations as enthusiastic shoppers swarm bustling markets, malls, and shopping centers—the air filled with excitement as families, youth, and children hunt for festive deals, transforming the twin cities into a vibrant celebration of colors and joy.

The commercial hubs pulse with activity as vendors showcase dazzling Eid collections, from traditional attire to festive delicacies. Shopkeepers entice customers with special discounts, heightening the anticipation for the grand celebration ahead.

This year, rising tailoring costs make off-the-rack outfits a practical choice offering affordability and diverse fashion options. For many, these pre-stitched options strike the right balance between affordability and trendiness.

Inam-ur-Rehman, a resident of Islamabad, shared his thoughts with APP, saying, "It's overwhelming to witness such massive

crowds yet encouraging for local businesses," he highlighted how ready-made garments have streamlined Eid shopping for many while stressing the need for more discounts.

"Shopkeepers should offer promotions to help more people celebrate Eid with ease," he said, adding that it's essential to support the underprivileged during this time. "As Muslims, we have a duty to remember and support those who are less fortunate." Romana, a shopper from Rawalpindi, echoed similar sentiments.

"This year, I chose ready-to-wear clothes because of their variety and affordability," she said. "I found everything I needed, in line with the latest trends and traditional styles." She urged authorities and business owners to introduce more price cuts on Eid-related items.

"If discounts are offered, lower-income families would be able to participate in the celebrations without financial strain," she added. After spotting the crescent moon of Dhul Hijjah on

coming Wednesday, the shopping frenzy is set to intensify as malls and bazaars extend hours to accommodate surging crowds while traffic congestion and parking challenges mount around commercial hubs, reflecting the festive rush.

While businesses are seeing a seasonal boost, calls for inclusivity and compassion remain strong. Citizens continue to advocate for charitable efforts and broader affordability, aiming to ensure that Eid is a celebration for all—regardless of financial background.

Meanwhile, many people opt to buy sacrificial animals, leading to the emergence of bustling cattle markets across Islamabad and Rawalpindi. These Bakra Mandis offer a diverse selection of goats, cows, and other livestock, catering to the heightened demand for Eid sacrifices. Buyers keenly inspect the animals, negotiate prices, and assess quality, reflecting the festive tradition of choosing the perfect sacrifice for the occasion.



2 killed in Baghlan collisions

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): Two people have been killed and eight others injured in two separate traffic accidents on Monday. A fire truck collided with a Corolla-type vehicle in Baburqol area of Doshi. It said one individual lost his life and a woman was among four people injured in the accident. One person was killed and four others were wounded and one man was missing after a collision between a corolla-type vehicle and a passenger bus in Shamali Salang Mulkhan area of Khenjan.

Work on highway started

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Construction work has begun on hard shoulders of the Kabul-Kandahar main road in southern Ghazni province and the project will cost nearly 200 million afghanis. Public Works Director Maulvi Abdul Qadir Bilal told Pajhwok Afghan News the construction of the Kabul-Kandahar main road was awarded to a private company under a contract. The road's shoulders' construction formally began in Moqor district.

Minister denies disputes within IEA



KABUL (TOLONews): Mohammad Younus Akhundzada, the acting minister of rural rehabilitation and development, denied claims of disagreements within the leadership of the Islamic Emirate, and pledged that the Islamic Emirate would never compromise its principles or concede its authority to international organizations or companies. He made the comments during a ceremony marking the launch of several development projects in Parwan province. He said: "The propaganda spread by some from foreign countries through the media, claiming that there are problems and disagreements within the Islamic Emirate, and which might influence you—do not be influenced. There is not

even a shred of disagreement among the members of the Islamic Emirate." In his speech, the minister said that the caretaker government seeks to establish positive relations with other countries, but under no circumstances will it compromise the country's principles. Akhundzada said: "If there are institutions, companies, or even the United Nations, when they act as a system within the country, we do not need them. This country, this system, and these principles belong to us. We do not give authority over them to anyone, nor do we negotiate them with anyone." Mohammad Idris Anwari, the governor of Parwan, stated during the ceremony: "Government officials think of nothing

other than your well-being, interests, and resolving your problems." The event was held to inaugurate approximately 175 small and large development projects costing more than 245 million afghani in the Shinwari and Salang districts of Parwan. Abdul Samad Sadiq, director of rural development in Parwan, assured the public: "We give you 100 percent assurance that these projects will be implemented exactly as outlined in the design and proposals." The lack of healthcare centers, schools, and standard roads are among the main challenges for residents of remote areas in Parwan. Locals have called on officials to address these problems. Abdul Qadeer, a resident of Darah Kafshan in Shinwari district, told TOLONews: "Our houses and pasturelands cover an area of about 25 square kilometers, and there is only one clinic which cannot serve everyone. We need a clinic and a road." According to officials, these projects include the construction of side roads, bridges, culverts, retaining walls, and irrigation canals, all supported by the World Bank.

Anti-polio drive begins, MoPH urges public help

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Public Health has asked families and religious scholars to cooperate in a successful implementation of a nationwide anti-polio campaign that began on Monday. In a statement, MoPH wrote the ministry in collaboration with relevant international agencies launched the second round of the nationwide anti-polio vaccination campaign from May 26 to 29. It said during the four-day campaign, 11.8 million children under the age of five would be given the drops. In addition to polio vac-

cine, mebendazole tablets would be distributed to all children between the ages of 2 and 5, the report added. Mebendazole tablets are used to treat diseases caused by intestinal parasites (worms). "The MoPH is committed to stopping the wild polio virus in Afghanistan with the cooperation of partners. We are working and continuing polio vaccination campaigns and health supplementation services to achieve the goal of completely eradicating polio virus in the country", the statement quoted Acting Minister Maulvi Noor Jalal Jalali as saying.

"It is important that religious scholars, tribal elders, parents, and other influential figures in society across the country support vaccinators so that they could participate in the fight against polio and protect the health of their children". According to MoPH, polio is a viral disease that cannot be treated or cured and can only be prevented by the vaccine. Children infected with this disease either permanently paralyze or even killed. Currently, the polio virus is circulating in the country, and MoPH is fully prepared to combat it.

Five convicts punished publically

MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): Five people, including a woman, have been publicly punished in eastern Laghman and southeastern Paktia provinces, the Supreme Court (SC) announced on Monday. In a statement, the apex court said two people, including a woman, were punished publically over elopement in Alingar district of Laghman province. According to the Alingar primary court's decision, which the apex court upheld, the man was sentenced one year imprisonment and lashed 30 times, while the woman was sentenced to three years of imprisonment and lashed 30 times. Separately, the apex court said three individuals were punished publically on charges of theft and sodomy in Ahmad Aba district of Paktia province of Afghanistan. Out of these individuals, two were lashed 35 times each and the third individual was lashed 30 times. On Saturday, ten individuals received similar punishment in Laghman province after being convicted of various crimes.

UNESCO pledges support

KABUL (BNA): Patricia McPhillips, UNESCO's Director for Afghanistan, assured Mawlawi Abdullah Sarhadi, the Governor of Bamyan, of the organization's commitment to restore and preserve the region's historical sites and cultural heritage. McPhillips outlined UNESCO's plans to implement sustainable projects aimed at the restoration and maintenance of historical sites, particularly in the ancient cities of Gholghola and Zuhak. She emphasized the importance of these efforts in safeguarding Afghanistan's rich cultural legacy. Governor Sarhadi expressed gratitude for UNESCO's ongoing initiatives but highlighted that current efforts have fallen short of the province's needs.

CCPIT desires expanded trade ties with Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) says it desires strengthening and expanding commercial ties with Afghanistan. Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry Maulvi Ahmadullah Zahid met with Vice Chairman of CCPIT Chen Jianan, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) said in a statement. During the meeting, Chen Jianan said the council served as a bridge between the Chinese government and state-owned enterprises, aiming to connect domestic and international companies with China's commercial opportunities. He stated China maintained deep trade relations with many regional countries and desired to deepen



and expand its trade ties with Afghanistan as well. He emphasised that the council's mission was to create collaboration opportunities for investors and enterprises, identify opportunities and strengthen links with government institutions. For his part, Maulvi Ahmadullah Zahid said that China was one of the

world's leading economic powers and Afghanistan wished to benefit from Chinese expertise in industry, trade, investment and infrastructure development. He added both countries could cooperate with Chinese companies and enterprises to establish industrial parks, special economic zones, export pro-

cessing centres, cold storage facilities and modern industrial and agricultural laboratories across various regions of Afghanistan. According to the ministry, representatives from the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade will soon travel to Kabul to further cooperation and coordination.

Islamic Emirate intensifies crackdown on substandard imports

KABUL (BNA): The Islamic Emirate has escalated its battle against substandard and counterfeit imports, implementing sweeping reforms to purge Afghan markets of dangerous goods that have endangered public health and undermined domestic industries for years. Following a major restructuring of the Afghan National Standards Authority, customs officials now conduct rigorous inspections at all border crossings, airports, and major marketplaces. Over the past year, authorities have intercepted and either returned or destroyed dozens of shipping containers filled with hazardous products. The crackdown has particularly targeted three critical sectors: fraudulent pharmaceuticals, adulterated food items, and substandard construction materials. Public Health Ministry inspectors have shuttered multiple illegal drug manufacturing after conducting

surprise raids across the country, while food safety teams now routinely test imported cooking oils, teas, and other staples. Construction sites face increased scrutiny to prevent the use of dangerous building materials. "These aren't just economic violations – they're threats to human lives," warned an ANSA spokesperson, citing cases where counterfeit medicines caused severe health complications. The government has mobilized religious leaders, media outlets, and trade associations to warn consumers about the dangers of substandard products. Newly estab-

lished complaint centers allow citizens to report suspicious goods directly to authorities. The campaign has yielded concrete results, with numerous importers facing heavy fines, confiscation of merchandise, or legal prosecution. Customs officials report a significant decline in substandard goods since implementing advanced inspection systems at key border crossings like Herat, Nimroz, Torkham, and Islam Qala. While challenges persist in monitoring remote border areas, officials emphasize their commitment to sustaining what they describe as a "long-term

campaign for consumer protection." The Commerce Ministry predicts these measures will gradually create fairer market conditions for legitimate domestic producers while safeguarding public health. The Islamic Emirate's efforts reflect broader governance reforms aimed at combating corruption and establishing effective regulatory systems. Officials stress that continued progress will require sustained investment in inspection infrastructure, professional training for customs staff, and ongoing public awareness campaigns about product safety standards.

Nuristan residents rally to support IEA

NURISTAN (BNA): Nuristan, where local residents, including religious scholars and tribal elders, expressed their strong support for the Islamic governance system. Attendees praised the efforts of Qari Zain-ul Abedin Abed, the governor of Nuristan, for his commitment to strengthening Islamic values, security, and reconstruction within the province. Speakers emphasized that the Islamic system is dedicated to the welfare of the community, operating within the framework of Islamic Sharia. The governor addressed the gathering, outlining his administration's achievements in various sectors, and reconstruction within the province. Participants reaffirmed



including social services, infrastructure, health, education, and telecommunications. He asserted that the current security in the country is a direct result of the leadership of the Islamic Emirate and the unwavering support of the people. Participants reaffirmed

their commitment to the system, pledging cooperation with responsible institutions to ensure the country's progress and stability. The gathering served as a powerful symbol of national unity and popular support for the Islamic governance framework in Nuristan.

Industrialists seek land

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani, the Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing, met with Abdul Jabbar Safi, the head of the Pul-e-Charkhi Industrial Union of Kabul, along with his accompanying delegation. According to a statement from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, during the meeting, the industrialists requested the allocation of land to expand

industrial activities in Kabul. They stated that investors are ready to invest in this sector and help develop the industry. The session involved discussions and exchange of views on existing problems, land allocation, and the suggestions made by the industrialists. Nomani asked the industrialists to submit their proposals through

legal channels and assured them that a delegation will be dispatched to inspect hundreds of acres of land in the New Kabul City area. This delegation will conduct technical surveys and seek appropriate solutions. The meeting emphasized transparency, mutual understanding, and cooperation, with plans to hold more coordination meetings in the future.

Herat exports 25 tonnes of pickle to Europe for first time



HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): A 25-tonne shipment of pickles produced by a private company has been exported from western Herat province to European countries for the first time via Rozank-Khawaf rail-

way line. Herat governor Maulana Noor Ahmad Islamjar considered this export an important step on the path to economic development and emphasized that many facilities have been provided for traders in

the field of exports. He said the local administration is trying to provide more facilities for all traders and producers in terms of exports and imports as soon as possible. On the other hand, Noor

Ahmad Alizai, head of Gulnavaz Food Products Manufacturing Company, explained these pickles are made from agricultural products of local farmers and are packaged and prepared for export in accordance with international standards. This shipment weighs 25 tonnes and the Gulnavaz Company has plans to export more shipments abroad in the future. head of Industry and Commerce Department Maulvi Bashir Mohammad Sirat said. According to Sirat, Herat has diverse agricultural products such as saffron, grapes, honey, cucumbers, pickles, figs, and garlic, which are exported to foreign countries. Previously, various types of food and non-food items have been exported from the Herat Industrial City to European and American markets.

52 Afghans freed from prisons return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) says 52 more Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan. These individuals returned to the country on May 25, the ministry announced in a brief post on its X handle on Monday. 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 23 and 24, about 230 Afghan refugees have been released from Pakistani prisons before being sent to their home country.

Herat miniature artists abandoning profession

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): A number of painters and miniature artists in western Herat province say the lack of a proper market for their artwork has severely impacted their economic situation. Several art galleries have shut down and some artists have been forced to stay away from their artistic pursuits. Artworks such as paintings, illumination (Tahzib), calligraphy and miniature art—once popular in the domestic market—have reportedly seen sales drop by up to 50 percent. Artists warn that this decline poses a serious threat to their professional lives. Akhtar Haidair, a veteran painter in the province,

stands in a corner of his small gallery, gazing at the framed paintings around him. He remarks: "People used to enjoy art, they would buy paintings or at least visit galleries to appreciate the work. Now, hardly anyone visits. When there are no visitors, there are no sales—and for an artist, that means an empty table." He says that declining public interest, lack of regular exhibitions, and indifference from the private sector have caused at least a 50 percent fall in the market for artworks. For those who have dedicated their entire lives to colour, design, and imagination, this stagnation is not just a financial problem but the

loss of a piece of culture. Abdul Qadir Aslamzada, a miniature artist and calligrapher in Herat, shares a similar experience. He explains that there is currently no real market for artwork in the city, despite the significant time, energy, and materials they use in creating each piece. "In the past, people evinced great interest in art and would purchase these works. Now, not only have purchases stopped, but even commissions have come to a complete halt," he adds. "If the authorities do not take action, painting and miniature art will gradually fade into obscurity, and many artists will be com-

pelled to abandon their work. I urge the public to at least buy one piece of art to help preserve this cultural heritage." Alongside artists, cultural experts also stress the need for strong support from both the government and the public. Ahmad Zia Haqshenas, a university lecturer in Herat, says that organising international exhibitions is essential so that Afghan art can access global markets. He also urges the government to provide systematic support to local artists. In a conversation with Pajhwok, Haqshenas highlighted that currently, cheaper foreign artworks are being sold in local mar-

kets, making it harder for domestic artists to compete. Meanwhile, the Information and Culture Department has announced the opening of a permanent exhibition in Qala-e-Ikhtyaruddin to support local artists. Maulvi Hamidullah Ghayasi, head of the Culture and Art section at the department, said that they are working to create an attractive environment for both domestic and international tourists in the province. He noted that a permanent exhibition has been launched at Qala-e-Ikhtyaruddin through their initiative, allowing people to view and purchase artworks directly. He



expressed hope that this would provide financial relief for artists. However, these efforts have yet to make a signifi-

cant impact. Reduced purchasing power and a lack of effective financial support remain major obstacles to preserving and developing

the art in the province. If these challenges persist, the future of traditional art in Herat may face serious jeopardy.





**PESHAWAR:** Police firing tear gas shell towards workers of PPP during a protest in from of KP Assembly building.

## Police crackdown on PPP protest

Kashif Ullah Khalil

PESHAWAR: A protest organized by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) outside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Monday evening faced a severe police crackdown before it could officially begin. The demonstration, which was scheduled to take place between 6:00 PM and 7:00 PM, was part of the PPP's call to raise its voice against what it claims are injustices and undemocratic practices by the provincial government.

Even before the PPP rally could formally commence, police launched an aggressive operation involving baton charges and heavy shelling of tear gas to disperse the gathering of party workers. Eyewitnesses reported scenes of chaos as participants scrambled to escape the unexpected force, resulting in the disruption of the protest before any

speeches or formal proceedings could be carried out.

In sharp contrast, a parallel protest by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was taking place at the Hashtnagri Gate in Peshawar around the same time. The PTI protest, organized against drone strikes, featured party leader Shandana Gulzar delivering a passionate speech against the federal government and in support of national sovereignty. Notably, the PTI demonstration proceeded peacefully and without any intervention from law enforcement.

The disparity between the handling of the two events raised serious concerns among political observers and citizens alike. The images and scenes from the PPP protest highlighted what many are calling a selective and oppressive approach by the KP government—headed by PTI—towards opposition

voices.

Later in the evening, local PPP leaders held a press conference in protest against the incident. Speaking to media personnel, they strongly condemned the provincial government for what they described as an illegal and undemocratic use of force against peaceful protesters. The PPP leadership accused the PTI-led administration of stifling dissent and using the police as a tool for political suppression. "This brutal crackdown is not just an attack on PPP workers but on democracy itself," said one local PPP leader. "Today's actions have exposed the government's double standards and its intolerance toward opposition voices." The PPP has vowed to take the matter to higher forums and announced plans for further demonstrations in protest of the provincial government's authoritarian conduct.

## Ukraine accuses China of supplying Russian arms industry

KYIV: Ukraine has data that confirms China is supplying Russia's arms industry, according to the head of Kyiv's foreign intelligence service. Oleh Ivashchenko said in an interview published by the Ukrinform news agency on Monday that Ukraine can "confirm" that China is providing important materials and equipment to 20 Russian military factories.

Beijing has regularly denied accusations from Kyiv that it is aiding Moscow's war against its neighbour. Last month, Ukraine accused China of direct military assistance to Russia's arms industry. Ivashchenko said that the country's intelligence agency can now confirm those reports. "There is information that China supplies tooling machines, special chemical products, gunpowder, and components specifically to defence manufacturing industries," he said. "We have confirmed data on 20 Russian factories."

Although China has sought to project an image of neutrality and denies any involvement in the war, it has increased trade and economic cooperation with Russia since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Meanwhile, Western countries have imposed sweeping sanctions on Moscow. Ukraine has regularly suggested China is supporting the war, and has said that Beijing has sent soldiers to fight alongside Russian forces. Last month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made his first public accusation that China is supplying gunpowder and materials to Russia's arms manufacturers, while also accusing Chinese citizens of helping in the production of drones.

China rejected the claim as "groundless," but Kyiv has since imposed sanctions on three Chinese entities. Ivashchenko said that Ukrainian intelligence had information on at least five cases of Russian-Chinese cooperation in the aviation sector between 2024 and 2025, including the transfer of equipment, spare parts and technical documentation. He added that there were six cases involving "large shipments" of specialty chemicals, but did not provide further details. — Aljazeera

## Bangladesh rocked by protests

DHAKA (Reuters): Primary school teachers in Bangladesh joined public sector workers in protests against the interim government on Monday amid growing discontent and political uncertainty in the South Asian country.

Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus, 84, took over as interim head of the country of 173 million last August after deadly student-led protests forced then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to flee to India.

Yunus' administration has faced pressure from civil servants, teachers, political parties and the military as the caretaker government attempts to guide the country through a fragile transition before holding a general election.

# PPP respects all political parties, despite past rifts

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that proxies have been activated in recent days as part of conspiracies against Pakistan. Shafi Burfat, the leader of the banned organization JSMM, has called for a protest at the Moro Bypass. Burfat has been living abroad for a long time and has claimed responsibility for several incidents in Sindh, including damaging railway tracks and targeting guests from friendly countries. The police made every effort to peacefully disperse the protest.

They were unarmed, carrying only batons. However, masked individuals armed with sticks also participated in the demonstration. These miscreants threw stones at the police and opened fire, injuring eight police officers and two protesters.

While addressing a press conference in Karachi, he said that police personnel were subjected to violence during the protest. Some individuals involved in the demonstration were seen carrying explosive materials on their backs in nearby settlements. Using these incendiary substances, they set an oil tanker on fire and also torched the residence of Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar. The material was so flammable that even the walls of the house caught fire. The miscreants entered the house with this chemical and deliberately set it ablaze.

He stated that there are videos showing individuals saying, "Let's go, let's go to Lanjar House." Among them were people who were not speaking Sindh or Saraiki, but another unidentified language. The protesters were armed with modern weapons, giving the impression that they were not locals, but foreigners.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, while showing the media footage of the interior minister's house being set on fire, stated that such a blaze could not have occurred without the use of flammable chemicals. He added that when the protesters opened fire, two participants in the procession were injured. Chaos erupted at the hospital, where police personnel were also subjected to violence.

He said that the police requested the protesters to hand over the bodies of the deceased to their families, but the protesters refused and instead spread false claims on social media, alleging that the police had taken the bodies. Despite repeated appeals from the police to collect the bodies, they continued to refuse. Even leaders of nationalist parties urged them to proceed with the burials, but they did not comply. They approached nationalist leader Dr. Niaz Kalani for



support, to which he responded, "You engage in violent politics, we cannot be a part of such actions."

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that a false narrative was spread on social media, claiming that the government was refusing to hand over the bodies. When a delegation of lawyers visited the protesters, they were told that the bodies would not be buried, even if it took a month, until their demands were met. The protesters began blackmailing the government, insisting that they would not proceed with the burials unless the IG and DIG were removed and their other demands were accepted. A delegation of religious scholars also attempted to intervene, but the protesters still refused to bury the bodies.

Later, the same protesters approached the court, falsely alleging that the police had disappeared the bodies. After completing all legal procedures, the court ruled that if the legal heirs refuse to claim the bodies, then SSP Naushahro Feroze is authorized to arrange the burials through a social welfare organization to avoid further complications.

He stated that following the court's orders, the body was kept for 10 to 12 hours. After the post-mortem, MLO recommended that the body be buried without delay, upon which the burial was carried out through social arrangements. This entire incident received significant attention in India, where the media prominently reported that the Home Minister's house had been set on fire.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Pakistan People's Party is a political party that respects all other political parties, despite past differences. However, the group involved in these actions is not a political party, it is misleading the youth, arming them, and using them for its own agenda. He said that

if Shafi Burfat is sincere with his people, he should return to Pakistan. The government will not tolerate any attempts to mislead the country's youth or to incite chaos and violence. He urged young people to remain cautious of such elements that seek to lead them astray.

In response to a question, he said that national assets were targeted on every major occasion. One leader even claimed that the government burned its own house. If that were true, then the people being arrested must also be the government's own, so why the outcry? He added that violating someone's chadar aur chaar deewari (privacy and sanctity of the home) is not part of Sindh's traditions.

In response to another question, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the purpose of the Moro incident was to attract international attention. He emphasized that the people of Sindh are inherently peaceful and followers of Shah Bhittai and Sachal Sarmast. He added that these agitators are rejected by the people of Sindh in every election, as the public does not support them. The people of Sindh seek solutions to their basic problems, and the PPP has never compromised politically on addressing these issues.

In response to another question, he said that one leader is residing in European countries and is misusing his influence to manipulate the minds of innocent youth. He emphasized that problems are solved through dialogue, not through violent actions. In response to another question, he said that Dr. Qadir Magasi is an experienced politician who likely called for the protest based on social media reports claiming the police were withholding the bodies. He urged Dr. Magasi to reconsider and withdraw the call for protest.

## PHC dispose off writ petition in enforced disappearance

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Ijaz Anwar has disposed off writ petition seeking the recovery of Amir Muhammad Khan, who went missing from Katlang tehsil after submission reply by government, on Monday.

PHC found that the missing person was wanted by the police in five cases and a proclaimed offender. The provincial government's report stated that the missing person was wanted by the police in five cases and was the cousin of the terrorist Muhammad Qadir. The federal agencies' report stated that the missing person was not in their cus-

tody. The counsel informed that they did not have a copy of the report and would review it after obtaining it. PHC disposed of the petition after the federal and provincial governments submitted their reports, stating that the missing person was not in their custody.

**ASJ convicted murderer for imprisonment:**

Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Peshawar Amir Ali has sentenced murderer for life imprisonment and a fine of four hundred thousand rupees for killing his stepmother. The court found the accused, Abu Bakar, guilty of the crime and sentenced him to life imprisonment and a fine. The court ordered that the

fine be paid as compensation to the heirs of the deceased.

Assistant Public Prosecutor, Imran Khan, represented the prosecution in the case. According to the prosecution, the accused Abu Bakar got into an argument with his stepmother, and in a fit of rage, he shot her, causing severe injuries. She was taken to the hospital but succumbed to her injuries.

The court sentenced the accused to life imprisonment and a fine of four hundred thousand rupees. The fine is to be paid as compensation to the heirs of the deceased. In case of default, the accused will have to undergo an additional six months of imprisonment.

## Hamas accepts Gaza truce proposal

GAZA CITY (AFP): A Hamas source said the group had accepted a Gaza ceasefire proposal presented by mediators that reportedly involves the releasing of 10 hostages in two batches and a 70-day truce.

The outline of the new potential deal was revealed as Israel ramped up its offensive in the Palestinian territory, and follows previous rounds of talks that have failed to reach a breakthrough ever since a two-month ceasefire fell apart in mid-March. "Hamas has agreed to the new proposal by US envoy Steve Witkoff, which the movement received from mediators," the Hamas source told AFP.

The deal, they added, included "a 70-day truce in exchange for the release of 10 hostages in two batches, and during the truce, negotiations would begin on a permanent ceasefire with American guarantees." Witkoff, US President Donald Trump's special envoy for the Middle East, was involved in the negotiations that led to the last ceasefire deal.

Another Palestinian source close to the negotiations told AFP the new proposal laid out "the release of 10 living Israeli hostages held by Hamas in exchange for a 70-day truce, a partial (Israeli) withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (and) the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners." The source added that mediators presented the proposal "over the past few days."

The United States, Egypt and Qatar have all had a hand in mediating the ceasefire talks throughout the war. The proposal, the second source said, would involve the release of "five living Israeli hostages during the first week of the agreement's implementation, and five others before the end of the truce period."

Israel had said last week that it was recalling its senior Gaza hostage negotiators from talks in Doha "for consultation," while leaving some lower-level members of its team in the Qatari capital. Israel has recently intensified its campaign in Gaza, calling it an "expansion of the battle" against Hamas.

## Gaza rescuers say 52 killed in Israeli strikes

GAZA CITY (AFP): Rescuers said Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip killed at least 52 people on Monday, 33 of them in a school-turned-shelter, as European allies ramped up their criticism of Israel. While the war raged on, mediators presented a proposal for a 70-day ceasefire and hostage-release deal to Israel and Hamas, a Palestinian source said.

The territory's civil defense agency said many of the casualties at the school in Gaza City were children, while the Israeli military said the site was housing "key terrorists." Israel has stepped up a renewed offensive to destroy Hamas, drawing international condemnation as aid trickles in following a blockade since early March that has sparked severe food and medical shortages.

It has also triggered international criticism, with European and Arab leaders meeting in Spain calling for an end to the "inhumane" and "senseless" war, while humanitarian groups said the trickle of aid was not nearly enough. In Germany, Chancellor Friedrich Merz voiced unusually strong criticism of Israel, saying: "I no

longer understand what the Israeli army is now doing in the Gaza Strip, with what goal."

The impact on Gazan civilians "can no longer be justified," he added. Nevertheless, German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl said Berlin would continue selling weapons to Israel. In Gaza City, civil defense agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that an early-morning Israeli strike on the Fahmi Al-Jarjawi school, where displaced people were sheltering, killed "at least 33, with dozens injured, mostly children."

The Israeli military said it had "struck key terrorists who were operating within a Hamas and Islamic Jihad command and control center embedded in an area," adding that "numerous steps were taken to mitigate the risk of harming civilians."

Another strike killed at least 19 people in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip, Bassal said. A Palestinian source meanwhile said that mediators proposed a 70-day ceasefire and the release of 10 Israeli hostages alongside some Palestinian prisoners. A Hamas source said shortly after that the group had

accepted the proposal for what would be the war's third truce, saying it came from US envoy Steve Witkoff.

The Israeli military said on Monday that over "the past 48 hours, the (air force) struck over 200 targets throughout the Gaza Strip." It also said it had detected three projectiles launched from Gaza toward communities in Israel Monday, as the country prepared to celebrate Jerusalem Day, an annual event marking its capture of the city's eastern sector in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. "Two projectiles fell in the Gaza Strip and one additional projectile was intercepted," it said.

Later on Monday, it issued an evacuation order for areas of Khan Yunis, saying they had been the site of rocket launches. The same day, as Arab and European nations gathered to seek an end to the war, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares called for an arms embargo on Israel. He also called for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza "massively, without conditions and without limits, and not controlled by Israel," describing the territory as humanity's "open wound."

## Ready to talk with India

(Continued from Page 1)

During the meeting, the two sides discussed expansion of bilateral relations in different areas including politics, economy and international cooperation and agreed to continue implementing already signed agreements, he explained. The Iranian President said the two countries should cooperate on making their borders secure from the activities of terrorists and criminal groups.

"Peace and stability in Pakistan is in the interest of Iran. We believe that sustaining security and maintaining friendly and peaceful relations with neighbouring countries is in the interest of the two countries," he continued. He said Iran welcomed the ceasefire between Pakistan and India, adding settling issues through dialogue was essential for stability in the region. "We believe that for ensuring security and stability in the region, neighbouring countries should hold dialogue and have positive consultations among each other and with the international partners."

He said the two sides discussed issues facing the Islamic world and the top priority was the issue of Palestine. "As always we support the cause of Palestine and condemn the atrocities carried out by Israel," he added. Earlier on his arrival, the Iranian

President warmly received the Prime Minister and his delegation. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant to Prime Minister Tariq Fatimi accompanied the Prime Minister.

**Pakistan, Iran eye \$10b bilateral trade in next few years:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran which stood at \$3 billion, would be taken to \$10 billion volume in the next few years, as there was immense potential of growth.

In an interview with IRNA, prior to his visit to Tehran on Monday, the prime minister said the bilateral trade between the two countries had witnessed a significant increase in the past three to four years. "We want to take it up to \$10 billion in the next few years, but I think the potential is much larger than that as well. We are discussing signing a free trade agreement (FTA). I think in the next ten years, the trade volume between the two countries will expand a great deal. The need is to have sustained economic engagements for the long term between Pakistan and Iran," the Iranian news wire quoted the prime minister as say-

ing.

The prime minister, to a query, replied that he strongly believed that the economic destiny of both countries was interlinked as they shared a border of about 900 kilometers. "I personally believe that strong economic linkage between Pakistan's Balochistan and Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan can be good for the entire region. It can also be very effective in dealing with terrorism," he added.

He further mentioned that the two countries had signed memoranda of understanding about developing projects between these provinces. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif further underscored the need of sustained economic engagement between Iran and Pakistan. To a question regarding his Iran's visit, the prime minister said that he was undertaking the visit at the invitation of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"The principal objective of my visit is to thank Iran for supporting and standing by us during our conflict with India. India, as you know, imposed war on us, which we repulsed through a decisive but measured and well-calibrated response consistent with international humanitarian law. So, I want to thank Iranian leadership for its support and its offer for mediation, which we accepted but India rejected," he added.