

**Terrorists loot rations**  
PESHAWAR (APP): In a rare act of sabotage, terrorists in Bannu district looted rations worth millions of rupees from a petroleum company, police informed on Sunday. The act is being described as a new form of crime by militants, who have now turned to robbery as well. The incident occurred in the Gangi Khel area of Wazir sub-division, where terrorists intercepted two vehicles carrying rations for a petroleum company.



**KARACHI:** Turkish Naval Ship TCG BÜYÜKADA being welcomed upon its arrival at Karachi port on a goodwill visit.

## Turkish naval ship visits Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Turkish Naval Ship TCG BÜYÜKADA arrived at Karachi Port on a goodwill visit.

Upon arrival, the ship was warmly welcomed by officials from both the Turkish and Pakistan Navies, said a press release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy) on

Sunday.

During its stay in Karachi, the crew of TCG BÜYÜKADA will engage in a series of professional interactions with Pakistan Navy personnel.

The visit aims to enhance mutual understanding and strengthen maritime cooperation between the two navies, it further said.

The goodwill visit of TCG BÜYÜKADA stands as a testament to the ever-strengthening maritime collaboration between Pakistan and Türkiye.

It reflects the deep-rooted mutual trust and strategic partnership between the two brotherly nations, anchored in centuries-old historical and cultural ties, the press release said.

## Pakistan decides to brief UNSC on regional situation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday directed Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations to take immediate steps for convening the session of United Nations Security Council.

According to the Foreign Office spokesperson, Pakistan has decided to formally brief the UN Security Council on the latest situation in the region.

Pakistan will apprise the UN Security Council about the aggressive acts of India and its provocation and inflammatory statements.

Pakistan will especially highlight the illegal steps of India to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance.

Pakistan will highlight the fact that India's aggressive actions are endangering the peace and security of South Asia and beyond the region.

This important diplomatic measure of Pakistan is part of its efforts to put correct facts before the international community.

## Ministers get 140 percent salary raise

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The salaries of federal ministers and ministers of state in Pakistan have been increased by more than 140 percent, effective from January 1, 2025.

As per details, the monthly salary of federal ministers has been raised from Rs218,000 to Rs519,000, aligning their pay with that of Members of Parliament.

The President of Pakistan has issued an ordinance amending the Salaries, Allowances, and Privileges Act of 1975.

It is worth mentioning here that in January 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has approved a salary increase for parliamentarians, effective January 1, 2025.

One parliament member reportedly received approximately Rs. 519,000 in their account, following the salary increase.

However, the Speaker of the National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq, will continue to receive around Rs 218,000, with no increase. Similarly, the Deputy Speaker's salary remains unchanged.

According to sources, the Finance Committee, authorised to make changes to the parliamentarians' salaries, approved the increment on January 25. The committee has now implemented the salary hike, after the prime minister's approval which has been reflected in the members' accounts.

The sources revealed that the Finance Committee does not have the authority to increase the salaries of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

## Govt to promote responsible journalism: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Sunday that the government fully believed in press freedom and it was committed to promoting a responsible, independent and professional journalism together with all stakeholders.

He said this in a congratulatory message to the newly elected office bearers of the Council of Pakistan Newspaper

Editors (CPNE).

The Federal Information Minister congratulated CPNE's newly elected President Kazim Khan, Secretary General Ghulam Nabi Chandio, Senior Vice President Ayaz Khan and Deputy Secretary General Tanveer Shaukat.

The minister said that the success of the newly elected leadership of CPNE was a reflection of the confidence of the journalistic community.

He hoped that the new leadership of CPNE would play a positive role in protecting the rights of journalists, promoting professional standards and safeguarding national interests.

The Ministry of Information was in touch with all journalistic organizations, Attaullah Tarar said, adding it will provide all possible support to resolve the challenges faced by journalistic institutions.

## Iran FM to arrives in Islamabad tomorrow

ISLAMABAD (INP): Foreign Minister of Iran Seyyed Abbas Araghchi will undertake an official visit to Pakistan tomorrow (Monday).

This high-level visit reflects the deep-rooted and strong relationship between Pakistan and the brotherly nation of Iran. It also underscores the two countries' shared commit-

ment to strengthening bilateral cooperation across all areas of mutual interest.

The two sides will also exchange views on regional and global developments.

During the visit, Foreign Minister Araghchi will call on President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime

Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Pakistan and Iran enjoy close bilateral relations rooted in shared history, culture, and religion. The visit of Foreign Minister Araghchi is expected to further strengthen the existing ties and enhance cooperation between the two countries.

## Trump says 'I don't know' if must uphold US

NEW YORK (AFP): United States President Donald Trump said in a television interview airing on Sunday that he does not know whether he must uphold the US Constitution.

He also said he is not seriously considering running for a third White House term, after musing publicly over an idea clearly barred by the nation's founding legal document.

"I don't know," Trump responded when the host of NBC News programme 'Meet the Press', Kristen Welker, asked directly whether he believes he needs to uphold the supreme law of the land.

Asked specifically whether American citizens and non-citizens alike deserve the due process of law, as the US Constitution states, Trump said: "I'm not a lawyer. I don't know."

The president's aggressive moves to deport undocumented migrants — some without the benefit of a court hearing — have drawn widespread criticism, but Trump insists it is necessary in the face of what he has declared to be a "national emergency".

The suggestion of possi-

bly seeking a third term in office has been sharply questioned by legal and constitutional scholars.

The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution states that "no person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice."

But Trump said in March he was "not joking" about seeking a third term, adding without elaboration that there are "methods" that would allow it to happen.

Changing the Constitution to allow a third term would be a heavy lift, requiring a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress and ratification by at least 38 of the 50 US state legislatures.

But "this is not something I'm looking to do", Trump told NBC's Welker, adding: "I'm looking to have four great years and turn it over to somebody, ideally a great Republican, a great Republican to carry it forward."

Asked who that might be, he mentioned Vice President JD Vance — calling him a "fantastic, brilliant guy" — and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, while adding that "we have a lot of good people in this party."

**NY cardinal says Trump AI pope image 'wasn't good'**

Reuters add: U.S. Cardinal Timothy Dolan said on Sunday that President Donald Trump's posting of an AI-generated photo showing himself as the pope "wasn't good" but declined to say whether the White House should apologise to offended Catholics.

Dolan, the archbishop of New York, was asked about the post on the sidelines of a Mass he celebrated at a Rome church ahead Wednesday's start of a conclave where he and other cardinals under the age of 80 will elect a successor to Pope Francis.

Trump, who is not a Catholic and does not attend church regularly, posted the image on his Truth Social platform late on Friday, less than a week after attending the funeral of Pope Francis, who died at 88 last month.

The White House then reposted it on its official X account.

"It wasn't good," Dolan said before the Mass in response to a reporter's question, adding: "I hope he didn't have anything to do with that."

# The Frontier Post

## PM felicitates Lawrence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday congratulated Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and his party on their victory in elections in Singapore. On X account, the prime minister said, "I wish them success in advancing Singapore's progress and prosperity. Pakistan looks forward to deepening its longstanding partnership with Singapore in all important areas of mutual interest."

## Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday held a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

During the call, the Prime Minister shared Pakistan's serious concerns over the prevailing tensions in South Asia as a result of India's provocative behavior since the Pahalgam incident.

He categorically rejected any attempts to link Pakistan to the incident, without sharing any evidence and reiterated

Pakistan's offer for an international, transparent, credible and neutral investigation to be carried out to ascertain the facts behind this incident.

He said Pakistan would welcome Malaysia's participation in this investigation.

While stressing that Pakistan had always condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the Prime Minister highlighted Pakistan's role as a front line state in the war against terror and its tremendous sacrifices in this effort.

India's actions are distracting Pakistan from its counter-terrorism efforts on its western border, he added.

He emphasized that it was unthinkable for Pakistan to get involved in such a controversy particularly at a time when the country had just emerged out of a serious economic crisis and was back on the path to economic stability.

The two Prime Ministers also exchanged views on Pakistan-Malaysia relations, reaffirming their shared com-

mitment to strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing cooperation in various fields, including trade, investment and cultural exchanges.

In this context, the Prime Minister conveyed that he looked forward to paying an official visit to Malaysia later this year.

The telephone call underscored the close friendship and mutual understanding between Pakistan and Malaysia and both leaders agreed to remain in touch on regional and international developments.

## PCC positions Pakistan as rising force in global crypto diplomacy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC), in just 50 days since its launch on March 14, 2025, has achieved what few believed possible, positioning Pakistan as a rising force in global crypto diplomacy, infrastructure and regulatory leadership

This is not just an institutional win; it's a case study in how government-backed initiatives can move fast, think big, and deliver results. "While most state institutions take years to move past roundtables and MOUs, PCC has executed, signed,

and scaled, placing Pakistan at the center of one of the fastest-growing industries of the century," said a news release here Sunday.

Within weeks of its launch, the PCC appointed Changpeng Zhao (CZ) the founder of Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange valued at over \$60 billion, as a strategic advisor.

CZ, whose personal net worth has previously crossed \$100 billion, according to sources, brought unmatched expertise in crypto infrastructure, global compliance,

and blockchain adoption.

No comparable country in the region, including India, has secured such a high-level crypto advisor at a national level.

In another major breakthrough, the PCC signed a Letter of Intent with World Liberty Financial (WLF), a blockchain project backed by US President Donald Trump.

The WLF delegation included Zachary Witkoff, son of US real estate mogul and former envoy Steve Witkoff, who was part of President Trump's Middle

East peace team.

The collaboration aims to drive the use of stablecoins, DeFi protocols, and cross-border blockchain infrastructure in Pakistan. It is the first time a US-backed blockchain initiative has signed such an agreement with any institution in Pakistan.

The timing could not be more significant. Just days after cross-border tensions flared, this Trump-backed strategic agreement has captured the attention of global and regional media.

*Continued on Back Page*

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# Massive crackdown, safety measures implemented to control traffic violations

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the directives of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, the Karachi traffic police have intensified their crackdown on vehicles violating traffic laws.

This initiative is part of the government's broader effort to bring discipline to the roads and reduce accidents caused by heavy traffic and unauthorized vehicles.

Since April 9, 2025, authorities have detained 31,677 motorbikes, while action has been taken against 2,719 vehicles for violations such as fancy number plates and tinted

windows. A total of 515 Heavy and Light Traffic Vehicles (HTVs/LTVs) have been impounded. Furthermore, 25 registrations have been recommended for cancellation, and 491 registrations have been suggested for temporary suspension with conditional release by Motor Vehicle Inspectors.

A parallel operation targeting Qingqi rickshaws (MCRs), launched on April 16, has resulted in 104 FIRs under Section 188 PPC, 33 FIRs under Section 341 PPC, and 1 FIR for rash driving. 311 MCRs have been seized and marked as court prop-

erty, with 311 drivers arrested. Additionally, 7,069 fine tickets have been issued, and 32 illegal LPG/CNG kits confiscated.

In a significant development aimed at preventing heavy traffic accidents, the Sindh government has made concrete progress in implementing its policy to install mandatory GPS trackers in heavy vehicles such as dumpers and water tankers.

As of May 4, 3,391 water tankers operating in the city have been equipped with GPS trackers. Additionally, 28 dumpers, 82 oil tankers, 214 passenger buses, and 214 small trucks have had trackers installed.

The system also covers 2,763 large trucks and 137 trailers operating within the city. The CM said that the installation of GPS trackers will assist in monitoring and managing heavy vehicle movements, thereby playing a key role in reducing accidents on Karachi's busy roads.

The CM has reiterated its firm stance on enforcing road safety regulations and has called on all vehicle owners to comply with legal requirements. The crackdown and safety enforcement measures are expected to continue with increased vigilance in the coming weeks.

# Kisan March held against Indian water aggression

LAHORE (APP): The Markazi Kisan League (MKL) organised a massive Kisan March on Sunday to express solidarity with the Pakistan Army and the nation in response to India's water aggression.

Thousands of farmers from across the country gathered on Lahore's The Mall road (Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam), voicing strong support for Pakistan's armed forces and national sovereignty.

The march began at Istanbul Chowk and culminated outside the Punjab Assembly, with participants arriving on tractors, trolleys, and motorcycles. Many wore traditional white turbans and carried symbolic farming tools such as spades and shovels. Protesters held banners and

placards condemning Indian actions and affirming their unflinching support for Pakistan's military.

Addressing the charged crowd, Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) President Khalid Masood Sindh issued a stern warning to the Indian government. "Modi must understand that controlling the flow of water is beyond his power. If such a mistake is made, Pakistan's farmers stand ready to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Pakistan Army," he declared.

He praised the resolve of Pakistan's armed forces, stating that their bravery has deterred Indian military provocations so far. He emphasized that the country's farmers would not remain silent in

the face of alleged violations of the Indus Waters Treaty.

Speakers at the rally went further, vowing to "take control of India's controversial dams" and reiterating Pakistan's stance on Kashmir, calling it the "jugular vein" of the nation. They pledged to support efforts to "liberate" the region and called for international institutions to initiate war crimes proceedings against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The march underscored the rising tensions over water rights between Pakistan and India and highlighted the deep concern and emotional response of Pakistan's agricultural community over the issue.

# Salam Sindh Train March honors struggle against controversial canals

KARACHI (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh on Sunday held the "Salam Sindh Train March" from Karachi to Daharki, led by its provincial president Haleem Adil Sheikh, to commend the public and legal community for their defiance against contentious canal projects on the Indus River.

The journey, spanning over 30 cities, culminated in a public assembly at Ghotki. Key stations on the route included Karachi Cantt Station, Drigh Road,

Landhi, and several others, with attendees receiving enthusiastic receptions along the way. Prominent figures such as PTI Sindh General Secretary Dr Masroor Sial and Karachi President Raja Azhar were among the participants.

During the march, Haleem addressed gatherings, emphasizing the march as a mark of respect for those opposing the canal ventures. He accused the "Zardari mafia" of attempting to misappropriate Sindh's water resources

and labeled the canal projects as existential threats to the region's 60 million residents. He asserted that Sindh's agricultural vitality is crucial for Pakistan's economy and vowed to prevent any canal construction on the Indus River.

Haleem also highlighted the leadership of PTI Chairman Imran Khan, portraying him as a pivotal figure for navigating Pakistan through current challenges.

He criticized the existing administration for

undermining civil liberties and the judiciary, while also condemning Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's actions as "water terrorism."

Dr Masroor Sial remarked that the march signified unity and praised the public's role in halting the canal projects. Karachi PTI President Raja Azhar reiterated the mission to preserve Sindh's interests, emphasizing the necessity of Imran Khan's leadership for the nation's progress.

# Pakistan united against Indian threats: Humayun

LAHORE (PPI): Former Federal Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan stated that the unity of the Pakistani nation in response to Indian threats serves as a source of strength for our armed forces. He mentioned that as heirs to the martyrs who defeated a superpower like Russia in Afghanistan and changed the world map, we will

uphold our family traditions by standing shoulder to shoulder with our forces against any aggression.

During an extensive tour of NA-97, Humayun Akhtar Khan met with community leaders, farmers, and traders. He discussed ongoing efforts to resolve long-standing issues in the constituency and initiate new develop-

ment projects, assuring that the public will soon hear more good news.

Humayun Akhtar Khan also visited the homes of those who passed away in the constituency to offer condolences and prayers. He emphasized that efforts are being made with sincerity and dedication to resolve the constituency's issues, and successes have been

granted by the grace of God. Three political offices have been established in the constituency to assist the public comprehensively. During meetings, a strong expression of solidarity with the Pakistani Armed Forces was made, reaffirming the commitment that if India commits aggression, the entire nation will fight alongside its forces.

# Shakoor emphasizes necessity of domestic medical infrastructure

KARACHI (PPI): The Pasban Democratic Party's Chairman, Altaf Shakoor, on Sunday urged the urgent enhancement of Pakistan's healthcare facilities to prevent citizens from needing to seek treatment in India.

In a statement, Shakoor criticized the recent expulsion of Pakistani patients from Indian hospitals amid escalating tensions between the two nations, labeling the act as both unethical and inhumane.

Shakoor emphasized the necessity of advancing domestic medical infrastructure, particularly by establishing centers of excellence in surgery. He pointed out that despite having a population of 250 million, Pakistan's healthcare services lag

behind those of many smaller countries. He called on national policymakers to prioritize health in their agendas, stressing that the availability of top-tier medical services could conserve foreign exchange, which is often spent on treatment abroad.

Highlighting the economic and human benefits, Shakoor proposed the government offer interest-free loans to enhance sophisticated medical surgeries. He criticized policymakers for seeking medical care overseas instead of focusing on national interests. Additionally, he noted that improved medical services could attract affluent Asians, including Arabs, for treatment, boosting medical tourism.

Shakoor also pointed out the

high tuition fees for medical students, which exceed ten million Rupees, suggesting a reduction to make education more accessible. He proposed that better medical facilities could also draw students for study and training, thereby fostering growth in the biomedical and pharmaceutical sectors.

He called on federal and provincial health ministers to establish at least one teaching hospital in every district, improving access to quality care. Shakoor advocated for enhancing existing medical colleges and introducing new programs to cultivate a team of experts in various medical and surgical disciplines, ultimately boosting both the manufacturing and service sectors of the industry.

# MQM Pakistan organizes graduate forum at Burns Road Town

KARACHI (PPI): Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Pakistan organized a Graduate Forum at Burns Road Town, marking a significant gathering for graduates to express their views and suggestions.

The event was attended by key figures from the central leadership of the Graduate Forum, including its President Abdul Qadir Khanzada, and members Mazhar Khan, Rehana Saif, Dr. Faheem Amir, Khan Arsalan, Dr. Ghulam Dastgir, and Dr. Fauzia Hameed, who is also a member of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh.

Graduates present at the forum expressed gratitude to MQM Pakistan for providing a platform to voice their ideas and proposals. The forum leaders addressed various questions posed by the attendees.

Town in-charge Irfanullah Khan, joint leaders Jabir Khan and Howard John, along with other town officials, UC in-charges, and committee members, participated in the event. The gathering also saw the presence of professionals such as doctors, engineers, academics, lawyers, and pharmacists, along with Asif Gulfam, president of the Aram Bagh Alliance, Asif Salat from the central election cell, and joint member Nasir Timori.



LAHORE: LESCO personnel is busy repairing an electric transformer at Australia Chowk. —APP Photo

## Two more bodies of Libya boat tragedy arrive

LAHORE (APP): Another two bodies of Pakistan nationals who lost their lives in a tragic boat accident off the eastern coast of Libya, arrived at Lahore Airport on Sunday.

The incident occurred during the night between April 12 and 13, when a migrant boat capsized near Libya's eastern shoreline.

The victims were identified as Sufyan and Nadeem Ahmed, residents of Gujranwala. State Minister for Public Affairs Rana Mubashir Hussain and Member Punjab Assembly Mian Imran Javed received the bodies at the Lahore Airport cargo department. Later, bodies were handed over to the grieving families. Prayers were also offered for the departed souls.

Speaking on the occasion, Rana Mubashir Hussain expressed deep sorrow and grief, and expressed solidarity with the bereaved families. He said: "We are making strict laws against those who play with the lives of people. Some culprits had been arrested while the rest have yet to be caught, he added.

## CM pays tribute to firefighters

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has paid glowing tribute to the courage and dedication of firefighters, acknowledging their selfless service in the face of life-threatening dangers.

In her message on International Firefighters' Day, the CM said, "We salute the brave and selfless firefighters who stand tall against fire and danger. When most step back in times of crisis, these guardians step into the flames, fulfilling their oath to serve humanity."

CM Maryam Nawaz said that firefighters are not just responders who extinguish fires, but symbols of hope and resilience during the darkest moments. "Firefighters become a light of hope in times of adversity. Their service is not just a duty, it is a profound act of humanity."

Highlighting the Punjab government's commitment to strengthening emergency response services, the CM said that the capacity of Rescue 1122's firefighting teams has been significantly enhanced. "Modern equipment and tools have been provided to ensure the safety and efficiency of our firefighters. We are investing in their training, resources, and working conditions so they can respond effectively and safely in emergencies."

She added that the Punjab government remains dedicated to ensure the welfare of all Rescue 1122 personnel, including firefighters. "Our administration stands firmly behind every rescue official. Their well-being is a top priority, and we will continue to take measures that support their mission and protect their lives."

# Pakistan desires lasting peace in region: PA Speaker

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has said that Pakistan possesses full capabilities to respond decisively to any sort of Indian aggression.

He said this while addressing a seminar titled "Pakistan-India Issues, the Role of the Armed Forces, Kashmir, Terrorism, Water Disputes and the Role of the United Nations" held at a local hotel on Sunday.

The speaker said, "I am someone who has always advocated for dialogue, but when your fundamental rights are denied, negotiations become meaningless."

Regrading the Kashmir issue, Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan said

plebiscite was the only viable solution, adding that through constitutional amendments, India had unleashed severe oppression on innocent and unarmed people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He expressed regret that despite widespread stateled violence, extrajudicial killings and terrorism by Indian forces, the global powers remained silent. Can India hide all its crimes under the veil of its economy and trade, he questioned. Speaking on the water crisis, he said, "Pakistan's rights over its water resources are recognized internationally."

"If India attempts to block water or engages in water aggression, it will be

considered an act of war as such actions violate the Indus Waters Treaty and international law," he added. The speaker said, "Pakistan has sacrificed more than 80,000 precious lives in the fight against terrorism."

Pakistan remained a consistent victim of Indian state-sponsored terrorism. If India chooses the path of war, it alone will be responsible for the consequences."

He said that Pakistan desired lasting peace in the region, but there would be no compromise on sovereignty, national honor or security. The United Nations must intervene for a fair resolution of the Kashmir issue and prevent Indian hostility, he added.

# Zero tolerance for corruption, says Liaquat

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Population Welfare, Malik Liaquat Ali Khan, conducted an inspection of ongoing development projects in his constituency in Dir, where he expressed serious concern over the use of substandard construction materials.

He ordered an immediate inquiry into the matter and directed strict action against the contractors responsible. He emphasized that no compromise on quality would be tolerated and instructed officials to ensure all projects are completed on time.

Speaking to media, Malik Liaquat said the PTI-led government had approved billions of rupees for development in Dir to uplift the region. "We are committed to making this constituency a model of progress. The people's trust in PTI will not be betrayed," he stated.

He also announced that local monitoring committees have been activated to oversee project implementation and report any irregularities. "There is zero tolerance for corruption, and anyone involved will be held accountable," he warned.

The Special Assistant reiterated that development is a public right funded by taxpayers, not a political favor. He pledged to provide all basic facilities at the people's doorstep and to continue personally monitoring the pace and quality of work.

# 3,000 illegal setups removed, 91 properties sealed

LAHORE (APP): A large-scale anti-encroachment operation, led by Deputy Commissioner Lahore Syed Musa Raza, was carried out across major areas of the city, resulting in the removal of 3,100 temporary and 91 permanent encroachments.

During the crackdown, a total of 39 truckloads of confiscated material were seized, while 91 properties were sealed and over 7,000 banners, posters, and visually polluting items were taken down.

The crackdown, part of a sustained campaign to restore public spaces and improve urban accessibility, was executed in multiple key zones including Mozang, Chauburji, Islam Park, Multan Road, Shah Alam Market, Azam Cloth Market, and areas around Mayo Hospital. Further operations extended to College Road, Ameer Chowk, Missile Chowk, Garden Town, Green Town, and Township.

The campaign was spearheaded by the Regulation Wing of the Metropolitan Corporation Lahore under the supervision of Chief Officer Shahid Abbas Kathia. Anti-encroachment teams, led by MO Regulation Kashif Jaleel, took part in demol-

ishing illegal structures, clearing footpaths, and removing materials blocking public movement.

DC Syed Musa Raza personally monitored the operations on-ground, ensuring transparency and impartial action against all violators. "Our mission is to make Lahore encroachment-free, enhance its beauty, and ensure smooth traffic and access to public infrastructure," he said.

Two FIRs were also registered for serious violations, while several other encroachers were issued warnings and legal notices. The district administration reaffirmed its commitment to continue the operation in the coming days with full force and zero tolerance for illegal occupation of public spaces.

Meanwhile, the district administration has taken strict action against profiteers and hoarders across the city to stabilize fruit and vegetable prices. A fine of Rs. 50,000 was imposed for violating the official rate list, and ten warnings were issued.

Assistant Commissioners and Price Control Magistrates are actively enforcing the price regulations. Prices of essential vegetables and fruits remain stable, with no significant hikes reported.

# DC vows timely completion of LDP projects

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza has reaffirmed the administration's commitment to complete all development projects under the Lahore Development Programme (LDP) Phase-I by June 30, 2025, in strict accordance with the directives of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

Chairing a review meeting at his office on Sunday, the DC emphasized that the ongoing development work across Lahore must reflect transparency, quality, and timely execution.

"There will be no compromise on timelines, transparency, or construction standards," he asserted, adding that the projects must be sustainable and serve long-term urban needs.

The meeting involved detailed briefings from Assistant Commissioners on the progress of infrastructure, sewerage, and road development schemes in their respective jurisdictions. The DC specifically instructed WASA to expedite the completion of sewerage system upgrades, which are central to the success of the LDP.

He also ordered the immediate removal of encroachments in construction areas to ensure that work proceeds without obstruction.



# Culture Department celebrates Dir White Cap Cultural Day

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A vibrant celebration of Dir White Cap Cultural Day was held in Peshawar under the auspices of the Tourism & Culture department and Dir Welfare Organization, attended by a large number of Dir natives residing in the city.

The event aimed to highlight the white Dir cap as a cultural heritage and to instill in the younger generation a sense of pride and attachment with their traditions.

Speaking as the chief guest, Advisor to the Chief Minister KP on Population Welfare, Malik Liaqat Ali Khan, lauded the efforts of the Culture Department and Dir Welfare Organization for organizing the event and pledged to advocate for its recognition at the provincial level. He resolved to convince the Chief Minister to officially

observe May 2nd each year as Cultural Day and include the significance of the Dir white cap in the educational curriculum. He emphasized that the Dir cap is not just a part of attire but a symbol of Pashtun honor, dignity and cultural pride. Addressing the Dir community, he urged them to preserve their rich religious and cultural traditions and to "uphold the honor of the white Dir cap" by passing on their identity and golden heritage to future generations.

Malik Liaqat Ali Khan also eulogized the contributions of Dir natives nationally and globally, noting that they earned recognition due to their God-gifted talents and integrity. He highlighted that both Lower and Upper Dir are endowed with abundant natural resources and tourism potential, and it is encouraging that the Department of Tourism and Culture is

actively working to promote these assets internationally. He further said that attention is being given to improving infrastructure in both the Dir districts to open new vistas of tourism and uplift the local economy. A major step in this direction, he added, is the imminent launch of the Chakdara-Lowari Tunnel 30-kilometer motorway project, under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, with an estimated cost of Rs. 60 billion, which includes a six-kilometer Laram Tunnel extension up to Rabat. He also announced progress on the establishment of Dir University and equipment installation at the Timergara Medical College. Reaffirming his dedication, the advisor stated that the doors of his office remain open to the people of Dir and that his mission is public service beyond political interests.

Speakers at the event included SP Police Faqirabad Circle Arshad Khan, Chairman of Dir Welfare Organization Haji Muhammad Saeed, President Haji Sultan Yousaf Dir Lala Ji, Senior Vice President Ghulam Hussain Ghazi, General Secretary Master Zahir Shah, Chairman Dir National Front Charsadda Shams Sherpao and former General Secretary Prof Shireen Rehman Roghani. Speakers highlighted the cultural and symbolic importance of the white Dir cap. They thanked the advisor and the Culture Department for their support and expressed commitment to promoting tourism and culture in the province. The ceremony featured a large number of Dir natives wearing the iconic white cap, with cultural tableaux and a skit performed to celebrate Pashtun identity and heritage.



PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Riaz Khan Mehsud walking on the newly built Hayatabad Jogging Track

## KP positioned as key corridor to Central Asia, says Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, has emphasized the province's strategic importance as a trade gateway to Central Asian countries via Afghanistan, highlighting its potential as a regional hub under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The Governor made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation from the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, led by Senator Fida Muhammad and Haider the Director General for Medical and Pharmaceutical.

The delegation also included Fu Zhang Ying the Director General of Logistics and Tourism, along with other prominent Chinese business representatives.

Governor Kundi invited Chinese and other foreign investors to explore the natural wealth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, pointing to enhanced trade and investment prospects created through CPEC.

"We warmly welcome Chinese investors to engage in trade and investment across Pakistan,

especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he said. The meeting focused on exploring opportunities in sectors including health-care, energy, education, and pharmaceuticals.

The Governor said that a recent overseas investment conference on mines and minerals demonstrated growing global interest in Pakistan's resource-rich sectors.

"Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is home to some of the world's best marble and granite reserves. There are also vast opportunities in the energy and tourism sectors," Kundi said.

He lamented that past and current provincial administrations have not effectively promoted the province's natural resources to international investors.

He further said that CPEC would usher in an industrial revolution not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but throughout Pakistan, terming it a monumental project symbolizing Pakistan-China friendship.

"It is a collective responsibility to ensure its success," he concluded.

KP positioned as key

corridor to Central Asia, says Governor

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, has emphasized the province's strategic importance as a trade gateway to Central Asian countries via Afghanistan, highlighting its potential as a regional hub under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The Governor made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation from the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, led by Senator Fida Muhammad and Haider, the Director General for Medical and Pharmaceutical.

The delegation also included Fu Zhang Ying, the Director General of Logistics and Tourism, along with other prominent Chinese business representatives.

Governor Kundi invited Chinese and other foreign investors to explore the natural wealth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, pointing to enhanced trade and investment prospects created through CPEC.

"We warmly welcome Chinese investors to engage in trade and invest-

ment across Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he said. The meeting focused on exploring opportunities in sectors including health-care, energy, education, and pharmaceuticals.

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## Qasim pays surprise Visit to Shaheen Colony; Resolves public issues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah paid a surprise visit to Shaheen Colony, Peshawar.

Accompanied by Chairman Ejaz Sarraf, Umar Farooq, and Azmatullah Jan, the minister inspected the cleanliness condition, transformers, and streets in the area during the visit.

Local elders informed the minister about the problems faced by the residents of the colony.

The minister ordered the immediate repair and reconstruction of four streets, installation of a new tube well for Masjid Aqsa, urgent repair of faulty transformers, and the restoration of the road affected by gas pipeline.

The minister also directed the Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) to immediately install a

garbage container near the tube well and to improve the sanitation arrangements in the colony.

Qasim Ali Shah said the current government prioritizes the public welfare and development projects in line with their expectations.

He added that all essential projects will be completed within their stipulated time frame and no compromise will be made on quality.

The residents and local elders of Shaheen Colony thanked the minister and lauded his efforts for timely resolution of issues faced by the public.

**Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf stages powerful protest outside Election Commission Peshawar — "Return the public mandate, release Imran Khan" says Syed Qasim Ali Shah**

Under the leadership of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, a large number of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and workers from PK-81 held a massive protest outside the Election Commission office in Peshawar.

During his speech at the protest, the provincial minister stated that alleged rigging was carried out in Form 47 on February 8, stealing PTI's public mandate. He demanded that the injustice be rectified and the rightful mandate of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf be restored.

He emphasized that Imran Khan is their leader, and the Election Commission must return his mandate immediately by accepting the public opinion expressed on February 8 and restoring their democratic rights.

He further said that Imran Khan is the true leader of the Pakistani people, and his mandate

cannot be forcibly taken away.

He called on the Election Commission and other relevant institutions to return the rights of PTI and the public, and to immediately release Imran Khan.

He asserted that the current illegitimate government has no justification or evidence to keep Imran Khan imprisoned. He has been unjustly detained for two years. The fake rulers are afraid of Imran Khan's popularity and are panicking, fearing that his release would mark the end of their political career.

On this occasion, the workers held a passionate protest in front of the Election Commission, chanting slogans such as "Return the mandate" and "Free Khan Sahib."

The protesters also announced their commitment to continue the struggle for democratic rights in the future.



PESHAWAR: A view of rush at Bacha Khan Chowk as people buying animals from the Sunday Market. — INP photo

## Primary teachers should not be forced to protest and sit-in

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Upgradation is our right which we have achieved after a long struggle, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur should allocate funds in the budget for the upgradation of the deprived and oppressed primary teachers of his province and take the prayers of millions of families for the rest of their lives.

The meeting of All Primary Teachers Association Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa was held under the chairmanship of Provincial President Azizullah Khan in Peshawar Cantt. The meeting was attended by District Presidents, General Secretaries, Chairman and Provincial Office bearers of all districts from DI Khan to Chitral.

Syed Meraj Ali Shah, Provincial General Secretary, conducted the proceedings of the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Azizullah Khan, the spirit of APTA Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, said that primary teachers run the enrollment campaign and make it successful and meet the target every year, but primary teachers are always ignored. Primary schools with better enrollment performance at the primary level and more enrollment Schools should be given honorary certificates to encourage them.

And along with this, the shortage of books in schools should be removed and books should be provided immediately so that enroll-

ment is not affected.

Azizullah Khan appealed to the Chief Minister and said that the upgradation of primary teachers should be included in the upcoming provincial budget and we should not be forced to hold protests and sit-ins anymore.

The issue of forced promotion in districts should be immediately ended. When a provincial-level officer announces in front of thousands of participants of the sit-in that forced promotion has ended.

## DIG Prisons ensures welfare of inmates in Central Jail

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: DIG Prisons, Sahibzada Muhammad Qaiser visited Central Jail Peshawar and interacted with inmates, assuring them of his commitment to providing facilities and addressing their grievances. He emphasized that no kind of excess will be tolerated within the prison premises and that anyone violating the law will face strict action. During his visit to Central Jail Peshawar the DIG Prisons inspected various facilities, including shops, food storage and the langar (community kitchen), and directed the prison administration to ensure the welfare of inmates. He highlighted the importance of rehabilitating prisoners and providing them with useful skills to secure respectable employment after their release. The DIG Prisons emphasized that prison conditions have improved due to strict adherence to the law and warned that drug trafficking and other illicit activities will not be tolerated within the prison premises. He assured the inmates that their issues would be addressed on priority basis.

# The Crisis of Good Governance in Pakistan - I

Hanif Khan

**T**HE former secretary General of the united nation, Kofi Anan says "Good governance is not a fire-fighting or crisis management. It is about promoting the rule of law, transparency, accountability and investing in people". It is a stark that all nations that are developed exercise good governance. The dream of development cannot be materialized without having good governance.

The case of Pakistan is different as it has been experiencing the crisis of good governance since its inception due to multiple reasons. Consequently, it has brought Pakistan to the brink of collapse. However, still there are multiple steps due to which good governance in Pakistan can be revived. There are various factors, which are responsible for the crisis of good governance in Pakistan. Delayed constitution, continuous military interventions and weak state

institutions have kept Pakistan on back foot in case of good governance. Moreover, poor law enforcement, rampant corruption and low literacy rate are another major causes behind the crisis of good governance in Pakistan. Resultantly, the crisis of good governance in Pakistan has adversely affected the country in various ways. Political instability, economic meltdown and skyrocketed poverty and inequality are the direct product of bad governance in Pakistan.

Furthermore, Pakistan experiences high brain drain, trust deficit of people in democracy and worse law and order situation due to the crisis of good governance. However, by taking certain measure, Pakistan can smoothly cruise on the road to good governance. It includes political stability, strengthening institutions and prioritizing local governance. Furthermore, ensuring rule of law and embracing technology are same of the suggested remedies that

can be proved helpful in the recovery of ill-health of governance in Pakistan.

One of the prime factors behind the crisis of good governance in Pakistan is delay constitution making. The early years of Pakistan were marked by administrative issues, political instability and a lack of clear direction which led to delayed constitution. As a result, the crisis of good governance started.

The delay in constitution making undermined the democratic process and institutions, which later on, eroded good governance. Dr. Ishrat Hussain writes in his famous book, "Governing the ungovernable," "The absence of a constitutional framework allowed undemocratic forces to grow stronger, setting a precedent for political instability and authoritarian rule in the decades to follow." The delay in constitution framing allowed the military to intervene and derail democratic process and consequently, it further increased the crisis of

good governance in Pakistan.

The crisis of good governance in Pakistan further exacerbated due to continuous military interventions. The foundations of good governance were shackled by military institutions in Pakistan. The military establishment has side-lined the civilian governments in 1958, 1977 and 1999 and resultantly, it weakened civilian institutions, press and judiciary. As a result, good governance in Pakistan could not be experienced in its true spirit. Furthermore, during military rules, governance became more centralized, short-sighted and disconnected from the people, which created bad governance in Pakistan. In his Book, "Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military", Hassan Abbas notes, "Military rule has created a culture where decisions are taken without public debate, weakening democratic accountability and long term planning". Due to military interventions, institution

started weakened, which added fuel to the crisis of good governance in Pakistan.

Weak institutions further worsened the crisis of good governance in Pakistan. The institutional decay in Pakistan has led to inefficiency and poor service delivery. Moreover, weak institutions in Pakistan also impacted all indications of governance negatively. As a result of weak institutions, the formulation and implementations lose their essence which lead to the crisis of good governance. The former president of the United States of America, Barraka Obama said, "Strong institutions are the key to good governance and sustainable development". Hence, it is analysed that weaker institutions in Pakistan played significant role in the crises of good governance.

Moreover, good governance in Pakistan could not flourish due to poor law enforcement. Scholars argue that the crisis of good gover-

nance has strong and deep co relation with poor law enforcement in Pakistan. It is been noticed that poor law enforcement in Pakistan to rise in corruption, violation of meritocracy, economic meltdown, political interference, etc., which threatens good governance. The world Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2023 reveals that Pakistan ranks 129 of 140 countries which shows weakness of law enforcement and accountability. Hence, it is observed that the crisis of good governance in Pakistan is exacerbated further weak law enforcement.

It is also been noticed that poor law enforcement leads to corruption, which further adds to the crisis of good governance in Pakistan.

Corruption is another crucial responsible for the crisis of good governance in Pakistan. It increases the crises of good governance by eroding public trust in national institutions, weakening of institutions and increasing the socio economic gap between rich and

poor. The famous professor, Anatol Lieven writes in his books, "Pakistan: A hard country". "The informal patronage networks often override state institutions, making corruption a survival tool in the dysfunctional system". Scholars are of the opinion that states resources are widely captured by the narrow elite class and by practicing different corruption practices, the crises of good governance increased in Pakistan.

It has also been noted that corruption prevails in almost every state institution ranging from Judiciary to police and other key institutions. "The International Commission of Justice notes that corruption in judiciary compromises justice and as a result, the poor class is adversely affected." Hence, it is analysed that corruption has added to the crisis of good governance in Pakistan.

Moreover, low literacy rate and lack of awareness among masses in Pakistan has worsened the crisis of

good governance in Pakistan. Low literacy rate and lack of awareness among people leads lack of understanding of democratic process and active participation of citizens in decision-making which is a crucial component of good governance. Unlike, well-educated and socially aware citizen can question rulers, demand their accountability and resist unfair means in governance.

"According to 2023 report, the overall literacy rate of Pakistan stands at 60 per cent which is significantly lower than that of the developed countries. Consequently, the participation of citizens in democratic process and other key decision-making has been considerably lower which adversely affect good governance in Pakistan."

*The author is an Mphil scholar in Agricultural Sciences and currently, he serves at the Directorate of Prosecution, Government of KP*

Continued



**In brief****Peace Football League ends F.P. Report**

KOHAT: The 1st Deputy Commissioner Peace Football League which lasted for about 4 months under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Program "Awami Agenda" has concluded in the Tribal Tehsil Darra Adam Khel of Kohat district, in a colorful ceremony. Local teams and players actively participated in the League. It not only promoted sports in the area and interest of the youth in positive activities, but also spread the message of peace. This event was organized on the special directions of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur, Provincial Sports Minister Fakhar Jahan, Secretary Sports Zia-ul-Haq, Director General Sports Tashfeen Haider and Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali. Chief Guest of the closing ceremony of the Football League was Commandant Officer of the Frontier Task Force Colonel Saadat Anwar who distributed trophies, shields and cash prizes among the best teams and players. On this occasion, besides the elders of the area and football fans, Sports Officer Darra Adamkhel Sajid Afridi was also present, who played a key role in the successful holding of the tournament. The Chief Guest also awarded Rs.70,000 and Rs.35,000 to the runner-up and runner-up teams respectively. Colonel Saadat Anwar in his address said that such tournaments not only attract the youth towards positive activities but also play an important role in promoting peace, unity and brotherhood in the area. He while terming the holding of positive activities as need of the hour, stressed for organizing such events in future also. He also appreciated the excellent arrangements made by the league organizers.

**Husband kills wife**

MINGORA (APP): A 70-year-old man allegedly shot and killed his 50-year-old wife following a domestic dispute in Nusrat area of Tehsil Kabal, Swat, on Sunday, police reported. The man then reportedly attempted to take his own life. Police identified the man as Muhammad Zada. Upon receiving information about the incident, a police team arrived at the scene in Nusrat area. They transported the deceased woman's body and the injured Muhammad Zada to Civil Hospital Kabal. After receiving initial treatment, Muhammad Zada was transferred to Central Hospital Saidu Sharif for further care while the body was handed over to the heirs. Police have registered a case, and an investigation into the incident is underway.

**Two die in accident**

ABBOTABAD (APP): At least two people lost their lives in a traffic accident on Hazara Motorway near Jhary Kas Interchange in Haripur District on Sunday, police said. According to police, a speeding car lost control and plunged off a bridge. As a result, two people were killed and another seriously injured. Emergency responders quickly transported the deceased and the injured to the Trauma Center. Preliminary police reports indicate that the cause of the accident was over speeding, which led the driver to lose control of the vehicle.



QUETTA: Indian flag is being set on fire during anti-Indian protest organized by Joint Tribal Federation outside Quetta Press Club.

## ANP warns India against escalation

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Awami National Party (ANP) provincial president Mian Iftikhar Hussain has cautioned India against making hasty accusations and escalating tensions with Pakistan, emphasizing that both nations are nuclear-armed and any conflict would have catastrophic consequences.

Speaking to the media in Malakabad, Balambat here the other day, Hussain stated, "India should act responsibly and avoid blaming Pakistan for incidents in Kashmir without proper investigation. Any aggression could lead to irreversible damage for both countries."

He further criticized the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government's proposed Mines and Minerals Bill, labeling it a "black law" aimed at usurping the province's resources. Hussain alleged that the bill undermines provincial autonomy as enshrined in the 18th Constitutional Amendment and accused the federal government of

attempting to seize control over KP's mineral wealth.

"The bill is a direct attack on the rights of the people of KP," he asserted, vowing that the ANP would launch a province-wide movement to oppose the legislation.

Hussain also paid tribute to the late ANP leader Jamal Shah, describing him as a dedicated servant of the party and a follower of Bacha Khan's philosophy.

The press briefing was attended by ANP central general secretary Brigadier (Retd) Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Lower Dir president Haji Bahadar Khan, general secretary Malik Muhammad Zaib, and senior vice president Malik Sajjad Khan Yousafzai.

**HSSC EXAMINATIONS:** The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Malakand is set to begin the annual Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) examinations on May 7. Over 75,000 candidates are expected to participate across 235 examination centers established

throughout the region.

In a press briefing, Chairman Muhammad Naseem Khan and Deputy Controller of Examinations Naeemullah emphasized the board's commitment to conducting fair and transparent examinations. To ensure this, examination staff appointments were made through a computerized draw to eliminate bias, and approximately 2,000 invigilators have been deployed.

Additionally, CCTV cameras have been installed in all examination halls, and the use of mobile phones within examination centers is strictly prohibited.

In compliance with directives from the Chief Secretary, private colleges will not serve as examination centers this year. Special committees have been formed to prevent cheating, and measures have been implemented to prevent premature paper leaks. The board has urged all examination staff to maintain a conducive environment for students during the exam period.

## PTI Balochistan President seriously injured

QUETTA (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Balochistan President Dawood Shah Kakar sustained serious injuries in a road accident while traveling to Zhob.

According to sources, the accident occurred en route to Zhob when Kakar's vehicle met with a crash.

Alongside the provincial president, several other PTI workers were also injured. All the injured individuals were immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Dawood Kakar, a prominent youth leader of PTI from Quetta, rose through the party ranks as a dedicated member of the PTI Youth Wing.

He was appointed Central Deputy General Secretary of the youth wing in both 2020 and 2022. In the

2024 PTI intra-party elections, Kakar won the position of Provincial President by securing 445 votes—just 10 more than his rival—earning the formal approval of party founder Imran Khan.

He also contested from PB-40 Quetta-III in the 2024 Balochistan provincial elections. Known for his vocal stance on human rights and freedom of expression, Dawood Kakar has long supported the rights of the Baloch people and adhered to Chairman Imran Khan's vision of a just and united Pakistan.

## 3,000 animals distributed under PHCIP

LODHRAN (APP): As many as 3,000 cattle including buffalo, cow and goats distributed among beneficiaries under Punjab Human Capital Investment Project (PHCIP) in the district.

National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Regional Coordinator Mushtaq Toor said that animals were being provided to households especially young couples hav-

ing age 18 to 35 years for their livelihood.

The Punjab government through Punjab social protection authority (PSPA) was implementing the PHCIP project. He said that 6822 animals would be given across the district by June 2025.

He stated that the project was executed in three districts of South Punjab including DG Khan, Rajanpur and Lodhran in

third phase. He said that NRSP was implementing the PHCIP project in Lodhran with the liaison of PSPA.

Each beneficiary would be given cattle worth Rs 150,000 after one week training. The beneficiaries would be able to sell the animals after three years while the livestock department would provide guidance and vaccination to the animals, he added.

## Parents, students expose book distribution crisis

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

Open Court held at Kassoki Police Station

HAFIZABAD: Claims by CEO Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf regarding the distribution of free textbooks in government schools have come under serious scrutiny as students across the district raise alarm over the non-availability of new books. Despite the Punjab government's promise to provide free textbooks to all students, the situation in Hafizabad paints a different picture.

According to students and local sources, more than 70% of the students in government schools have not yet received their textbooks, even though one month has passed since the beginning of the academic session. In contrast, only 30% of students have reportedly been provided books, leaving the majority of learners without essential academic resources.

Students, expressing frustration during protests, shared that their studies are being significantly disrupted. "How are we expected to learn without books?" one student questioned during a media interaction.

District Chairman of Muttahida Mahaaz Asatiza, Riaz Ahmad Tamar, warned of the grave implications of this crisis. "With summer vacations fast approaching, delaying the distribution of books is effectively sabotaging the students' academic progress. This negligence could have long-term consequences on their future," he stated, demanding immediate provision of textbooks to all affected students.

In contrast, CEO Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf has denied the allegations, claiming that books have been distributed to all schools and no institution is lacking resources. However, this statement starkly contradicts the ground reality reported by students, teachers, and parents alike.

Parents, deeply concerned about their children's education, have called for an independent investigation. Many are urging intelligence agencies to conduct a transparent inquiry and take strict action against those responsible for the apparent mismanagement.

The situation has sparked widespread outrage and is raising questions about the transparency and efficiency of the education administration in Hafizabad. As the academic year progresses, the demand for immediate corrective action continues to intensify.

## Beekeeping offers new economic path for women

MULTAN (APP): Beekeeping is emerging as a profitable and eco-friendly enterprise in Pakistan, and institutions like Muhammad Nawaz Sharif (MNS) University of Agriculture, Multan, are playing a crucial role in nurturing this potential.

Each year, the university trains over 100 students and farmers in scientific beekeeping techniques, encouraging sustainable practices and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Mudassar Ali, Assistant Professor of Entomology at MNS University, said the university had registered two companies — Alishbah Honey and Honey World—to support honey production and expand its commercial potential. While the university itself remains focused on research and education, these companies aim to promote quality honey exports and modern beekeeping methods.

Pakistan's honey is widely appreciated in the

Middle East for its unique taste and superior quality.

According to experts, around 4,000 tons of honey are exported to Arab countries annually. The industry supports nearly 27,000 families and has the capacity to significantly boost national exports if modern techniques are adopted.

Dr. Mudassar explained that a single hive can produce up to 25 kilograms of honey annually, earning between PKR 15,000 to 25,000.

He added that honey was not just a natural sweetener but a nutrient-rich product containing calcium, zinc, magnesium, and vitamins. Its antibacterial properties help with wound healing, sore throats, and immune system support.

He emphasized the ecological role of honeybees, which aid in pollination and contribute to higher yields of fruits and vegetables. However, climate change, chemical sprays, and temperature shifts are

harming bee populations and their productivity. Bees thrive best in spring, with optimal temperatures between 20 to 30 degrees Celsius.

Women can also play a vital role in honey production by maintaining hives at homes or on rooftops, contributing to household income and local economies. There are over 20,000 bee species globally, with four—European, wild, small, and Asian bees—being most common in commercial use.

Dr. Mudassar urged the government to provide interest-free loans to beekeepers, establish quality control labs, and develop export facilitation centers. He warned that declining bee populations pose a threat to environmental balance and food security.

Through technical training, workshops, and public awareness, MNS University continues to lead efforts in strengthening Pakistan's honey sector while promoting environmental sustainability.



MULTAN: A shepherd leads herd of goats. The sale of sacrificial animals is growing momentum as the Eidul Azha to be celebrated next month.

## Rain magic at Mahodand lake enchants tourists on weekend in Upper Swat

KALAM (APP): As rain unfurls its charm across the snow-kissed peaks of Upper Kalam, Mahodand lake—nestled in the heart of Osho Valley—has transformed into a breathtaking spectacle of nature, pulling in a surge of eager domestic tourists from across Pakistan especially on weekend.

Cradled at an altitude of 9,400 feet and stretching over two kilometers, Mahodand lake is witnessing a vibrant revival after rain lashed upper parts of Swat.

A delicate dance between sunlight and snowfall has blanketed the

lake in a magical blend of bluish-white waters, lush greenery, and vibrant floral blooms.

Families and adventurers, lured by the promise of serenity and scenic grandeur, are arriving in droves to experience its unique seasonal beauty.

"I came to Mahudhand lake with my family after 10 years to enjoy its mesmerizing natural beauty and snowfall," said Samad Khan, a tourist of Peshawar.

"Every snowdrop adds to the magic, enhancing the lush surroundings and the lake's emerald glow," he said, savoring a freshly

grilled trout as his children played nearby.

Mahodand's growing appeal lies not just in its picturesque allure but also in its accessibility. The development of the Swat Motorway and improved local infrastructure have significantly shortened travel times and made the area more approachable for tourists from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a bid to further promote sustainable tourism, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government through its Tourism and Culture Authority has introduced a range of initiatives under its Ecotourism

Development Project (ETP).

These include the installation of over a dozen eco-friendly camping pods across popular destinations such as Mahodand, Gabeen Jabba, Sharan, and Chitral, providing affordable lodging options ranging from Rs 3,500 to Rs 5,000 per night far less than commercial hotel rates.

"Our camping pods come equipped with two to four beds, bathrooms, small kitchens, and round-the-clock security managed by the Tourism Police," said spokesman for the Tourism and

Culture Authority.

The tourism force, trained in multiple languages including English, ensures both security and comfort for tourists, further aided by a dedicated "Tourist Safety App".

In tandem with these measures, the government is also investing in developing lesser-known waterfalls and jeep tracks in Haripur, Abbottabad, Dir, and Swat to ease the tourist burden on well-established spots like Malam Jabba, Galiyat, and Naran.

Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager of the Tourism Authority, highlighted the development of

scenic sites such as Lamchar and Sajkot waterfalls, alongwith new jeepable tracks aimed at diversifying tourist access.

Meanwhile, the ambitious Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs)—in collaboration with the World Bank—promise long-term growth. Zones in Mankiyal, Ghanool, Madaklasht, and Thandiyan are expected to generate \$2.8 billion in investment and create 200,000 jobs.

Projects like the Dir-Madaklasht cable car and restoration of colonial-era trails further aim to enhance the province's

tourism appeal.

"The revival of Mahodand Lake is not just a celebration of nature, but also of opportunity," said Omair Khattak, GM Investment, KP Tourism Authority.

"We're opening doors for local economies, promoting eco-conscious travel, and showcasing Pakistan's natural splendor to the world."

As the summer season progresses, Mahodand Lake stands not only as a serene retreat but as a beacon of Pakistan's blossoming tourism potential—a perfect blend of nature, culture, and careful planning.





# Brazil police foil bomb plot targeting packed Lady Gaga concert in Rio



BRASILIA (Reuters): Brazilian police said on Sunday that they had thwarted a bomb attack planned for Lady Gaga's historic concert that drew over 2 million people to Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro.

The Civil Police of Rio de Janeiro state, working in coordination with the Justice Ministry, said the plot was orchestrated by a group promoting hate speech and the radicalization of teenagers, including self-harm and violent content as a form of social belonging.

According to the Rio city hall, 2.1 million people attended the concert of the American pop icon. "The suspects were recruiting participants, including minors, to carry out coordinated attacks using improvised explosives and Molotov cock-

tails," the police said in a statement. The Justice Ministry said the recruiters identified themselves as members of Gaga's global fan base, known as the "Little Monsters." The operation was based on a report by the ministry's Cyber Operations Lab following a tip-off from Rio state police intelligence, which uncovered digital cells encouraging violent behavior among teenagers using coded language and extremist symbolism. A man described as the group's leader was arrested in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul for illegal possession of a firearm, while a teenager in Rio de Janeiro was detained for storing child pornography. Authorities carried out over a dozen search and seizure warrants across the states of Rio de Janeiro, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul and Sao Paulo.



ASWAN, EGYPT: A man stands in front of a handicraft exhibition for tourists on Sunday in Aswan, Egypt.

# Lebanon holds local polls in first vote since Israel-Hezbollah war

BEIRUT (AFP): Lebanon on Sunday began the first stage of long-delayed municipal elections, the first vote since a devastating war between Israel and Hezbollah and after a new national government was formed. Polls opened at 7:00 am (0400 GMT) for voters in the Mount Lebanon district, a heavily populated area with mixed political and religious affiliations that includes Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold that was heavily damaged by Israeli strikes. "We have come to exercise our right and have our voices heard," said Hashem Shamas, 39, a Hezbollah supporter, after voting in south Beirut's Shiyah neighborhood. According to the interior ministry, 9,321 candidates including 1,179 women are running in the Mount Lebanon district. Lebanon is supposed to hold municipal elections every six years, but cash-strapped authorities last

held a local ballot in 2016. President Joseph Aoun emphasized the vote's importance to "give confidence to the people and internationally that Lebanon is rebuilding its institutions and is back on the right track." Aoun was elected in January and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam formed a government the following month, ending a more than two-year vacuum as Lebanon's balance of power shifted following the Israel-Hezbollah war. The new authorities have promised reforms in order to gain the trust of the international community, as well as unlock billions in bail-out funds amid a five-year economic crisis. They have also vowed a state monopoly on bearing arms. Hezbollah was left badly weakened in more than a year of hostilities with Israel, with a slew of commanders including the group's long-time chief, Hassan Nasrallah, killed and its strongholds pumelled in the south and east and in south

Beirut. Israel has continued to strike targets in Lebanon despite a ceasefire and still has troops in five areas it considers "strategic." In April 2024, the municipal polls were postponed amid the hostilities, which escalated in September into a major Israeli bombing campaign and ground incursion before the ceasefire about two months later. Aoun urged voters not to let sectarian, "partisan or financial factors" impact their vote. Religious and political affiliations are usually key electoral considerations in multi-confessional Lebanon, where power is shared along sectarian lines. Municipal ballots however provide a greater margin for local community dynamics to play a role. Areas of northern Lebanon will vote on May 11, with Beirut and the country's eastern Bekaa Valley area set to go to the polls on May 18, while voters in the heavily damaged south will cast ballots on May 24.

# Australia's reelected government says US-China tussle a top priority

SYDNEY, Australia (Reuters): Australia's Labor government will prioritize dealing with the "dark shadow" of the US-China trade war following its resounding re-election victory, Treasurer Jim Chalmers said on Sunday, after a campaign that highlighted concerns over US trade policy and the global economy. Labour Party leader Anthony Albanese, Australia's first prime minister to win a second consecutive term in two decades, promised in remarks on Sunday that he would run a disciplined and orderly government, stressing that Australians had voted for unity. The center-left Labour Party appeared likely to expand its majority in parliament to at least 86 seats from 77, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. projected, after most polls had suggested it would struggle to keep its slim hold on the 150-seat lower house. About three-quarters of votes have been tallied, with counting to resume on Monday. Echoing an election in Canada less than a week earlier, Australia's conservative opposition leader, Peter Dutton, lost his seat as voters, who initially focused on cost-of-living pressures, grew increasingly concerned over US President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs and other policies. "We will be a disciplined, orderly government in our second term, just like we



have been in our first," Albanese told reporters while visiting a coffee shop in his Sydney electorate where he said his late mother took him as a child. "The Australian people voted for unity rather than division," Albanese added in brief public comments. Polls had shown Labor trailing the opposition conservative coalition for nine months until March, amid widespread angst about the government's handling of inflation. But the polls flipped when the conservatives unveiled a proposal to slash the federal workforce, which was compared to the Trump administration's moves to cut back government agencies. A proposal to force federal workers back to the office five days a week was also criticized as unfair to women. Trump's April 2 tariff

announcement added to voters' unease as it sent shockwaves through global markets and raised concerns about the impact on their pension funds. "The immediate focus is on global economic uncertainty, US and China, and what it means for us," Treasurer Jim Chalmers told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "What's happening, particularly between the US and China, does cast a dark shadow over the global economy ... We need to have the ability, and we will have the ability, to manage that uncertainty." Representatives of the US and China joined leaders from around the world congratulating Albanese and his party. The US "looks forward to deepening its relationship with Australia to advance our common interests and promote freedom

and stability in the Indo-Pacific and globally," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement. A spokesperson for China's foreign ministry said the country "stands ready to work with the new Australian government (to) continue advancing a more mature, stable, and productive comprehensive strategic partnership." Senior figures in Australia's conservative coalition meanwhile began apportioning blame for the loss as it begins the search for a new leader. Mark Speakman, leader of the coalition's main Liberal party for the state of New South Wales, said the party needed to connect its values of "aspiration, innovation and opportunity" to "modern day NSW, including for women and people from non-English speaking backgrounds."

# Singapore ruling party wins election in landslide

SINGAPORE (AFP): Singapore's ruling party has won a resounding win in general elections, official results have shown, giving the prime minister, Lawrence Wong, the clear mandate he sought from voters. Wong's long-ruling People's Action party crossed the threshold of 49 seats early on Sunday to form a majority government in the wealthy city-state's 97-seat unicameral legislature, with sample counts earlier showing the PAP winning all but 10 seats. "We are grateful once again for your strong mandate, and we will honour it," a broadly smiling Wong said shortly after

winning his ward, thanking supporters gathered at Yio Chu Kang stadium. Wong was facing his first major test against a rejuvenated opposition and had urged voters to offer him a strong show of support as he navigates the trade-oriented nation through global economic uncertainties brought by US tariffs. The PAP, which has steered the south-east Asian country to prosperity while being criticised for suppressing dissent, was always expected to easily retain a clear majority in the legislature. However, its dominance has been increasingly challenged by a more vocal electorate over the

years. Popular after leading Singapore's Covid task force, Wong took over last year from his predecessor Lee Hsien Loong, the son of founding premier Lee Kuan Yew who ruled the island state after its bitter breakup with Malaysia in 1965. Wong had warned Singapore would be hit hard if the US president, Donald Trump, went ahead with the tariffs he announced and then paused for most countries, and that it needed to stay open and competitive to counter their effects. He has also said the ructions caused could require a major restructuring of Singapore's economy. "The intense campaigning by PM Lawrence Wong and former PM Lee Hsien Loong in the hot seats must have helped a lot and the fear of Trump's tariffs must have worried voters as well," political observer and veteran former editor PN Balji told AFP. The overwhelming PAP majority has become a norm in Singapore's political landscape. But in the runup to the latest polls, the PAP had faced a series of controversies. Lee Hsien Loong is locked in a bitter feud with his brother Lee Hsien Yang, who vehemently supports the opposition and who has sought political asylum in Britain.

# Protesters want Morocco to sever ties with Israel

TANGIER, Morocco (AP): More than a year of protests over Morocco's decision to normalize ties with Israel has emboldened activists and widened a gap between the decisions of the government and the sentiments of the governed. The fury has spilled into the country's strategic ports. Amid shipping cranes and stacked containers, 34-year-old agricultural engineer Ismail Lghazaoui marched recently through a sea of Palestinian flags and joined protesters carrying signs that read "Reject the ship," in reference to a vessel transporting fighter jet components from Houston, Texas. Activists are urging Moroccan port officials to try to block ships carrying military cargo to Israel, much like Spain did last year. Protests often target Danish shipping company Maersk, which helps transport components used to make Lockheed Martin's F-35 as part of the U.S. Defense Department's Security Cooperative Participant Program that facilitates weapons sales to allies including Israel. A similar boycott campaign landed Lghazaoui in prison last year, but that didn't deter him from turning out again for

resurgent protests last month, after his release. Lghazaoui is one of more than a dozen activists pursued by Moroccan authorities for criticizing the government's ties with Israel. During a rally in November in Casablanca where Lghazaoui spoke, plainclothes officers beat him and others to prevent them from advancing toward the U.S. Consulate, he said. He later posted about Maersk on social media and was arrested and charged with incitement. Originally sentenced to a year, he served two months in prison and two on parole after the term was reduced. "They try to silence people," Lghazaoui told The Associated Press. "They were using me to dissuade people or to push people away from what they were doing." Morocco is one of four countries that normalized ties with Israel in 2020. That year, Donald Trump brokered the Abraham Accords, which offered incentives for Arab states to establish diplomatic relations with Israel even as its peace talks with the Palestinians remained stalled. The deal delivered something Moroccan diplomats had chased for years: U.S. support for



Morocco's claims over the disputed Western Sahara. But its cost — growing public resentment toward normalization — has ballooned throughout the Israel-Hamas war. "I've rarely seen such a chasm between public opinion and the monarchy," said Aboubakr Jamaï, dean of the Madrid Center at the American College of the Mediterranean. Tens of thousands have

taken to the streets of Morocco since the war began. While largely made up of families, students, Islamists, leftists and union members, the protests have also drawn more radical voices. Some have burned Israeli flags or chanted against royal adviser André Azoulay, a Jewish Moroccan. Clad in riot gear, security forces have stood by and watched as protesters denounce "normalization" and Morocco's expanding trade and military ties with Israel. But authorities have

shown that their tolerance for dissent only goes so far. Morocco's constitution generally allows for freedom of expression, although it is illegal to criticize the monarchy or King Mohammed VI and those who do can face prosecution. Throughout the war, activists who have implicated the monarchy on social media or protested businesses targeted by boycotts due to their operations in Israel have received prison sentences. The constraints mirror Egypt and Jordan, which

like Morocco have publicly sympathized with the Palestinians, maintained ties with Israel and imprisoned activists who direct their ire toward the government. However, unlike in those countries, the arrests in Morocco have done little to quell public anger or activists' demands. In recent weeks, protesters have set their sights on a new target: the country's strategic ports and the companies using them to move military cargo. Activists and port workers recently demanded that two vessels crossing the Atlantic carrying fighter jet parts that they suspected would end up in Israel be blocked from docking in Morocco. Port protests gained momentum last month when Morocco's largest labor union backed the call to block the two ships, and dozens of religious scholars and preachers, many affiliated with the anti-monarchy Islamist movement Al Adl wal Ihsan, issued an edict with a similar message. While not officially allowed to participate in politics, Al Adl wal Ihsan has mobilized large crowds and helped lead pro-Palestinian activism throughout the Israel-Hamas war, drawing in young people who feel

official parties don't speak to them. On a recent Friday, the group said Moroccans took part in 110 demonstrations across 66 cities in support of Palestinians in Gaza. Both Al Adl wal Ihsan and union members marched portside in Tangier and Casablanca, where the vessels eventually docked April 20. In a statement, Maersk acknowledged that ships that passed through the two Moroccan ports carried parts used in the fighter jet. But it denied activists' claims of directly shipping weapons to conflict zones, stating that they require end-use certificates to verify the final destination of military cargo. A port official in Tangier who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak on the matter said that while cargo docked and unloaded in Morocco undergoes examination, ships docking en route to other destinations do not. The Israeli military did not respond to questions about the shipments. F-35s are typically assembled in the United States, using components sourced throughout the world, including outer wings and display systems manufactured in Israel. Morocco's Foreign Ministry did not respond to questions about normalization or its port policies, though diplomats have previously argued that relations with Israel allow them to press for a two-state solution and facilitate aid delivery to Gaza. Some observers in Morocco have questioned whether the focus on Gaza has diverted attention from pressing domestic struggles. Voices from Moroccan nationalist circles on social media have instead highlighted the marginalization of the Indigenous Amazigh population and the dispute over Western Sahara, which they argue are more central to national identity and sovereignty. For others, the prolonged war has prompted clear shifts. The Islamist Justice and Development Party, which once backed normalization with Israel while in power, recently invited senior Hamas officials to its congress in Rabat. However, the officials were unable to obtain visas to enter Morocco. "Palestine will remain our primary cause," said Abdelilah Benkirane, a former prime minister and general secretary of the Justice and Development Party.



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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

Email: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

## Evidence indicates tariffs ‘unsustainable’

CHINA'S long history means there have been no shortage of lessons learned from experience, and there is a saying to the effect that those who act unjustly for a long time will surely bring about their own downfall.

It seems that this is a lesson that the current US administration is being schooled in.

Realizing that it would be foolish for it to deny that its tariff policy is adding to the hardships of ordinary people in the United States, the administration started claiming that China was feeling the pain more, shortly after it was reported that Americans had given the US president the worst approval rating of any US leader in the past 80 years during their first 100 days in office.

The administration is also well aware that it would be foolish to deny that its tariff policy is triggering a recession in the United States. The latest data released by the US Department of Commerce on Wednesday showed that the nation's GDP shrank by 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter in the first quarter, a sharp drop from the 2.4 percent quarter-on-quarter growth in the fourth quarter of 2024.

The country's economic performance is below market expectations, evidence that the uncertainty caused by the US government continues to dampen corporate and consumer confidence. This is supported by the findings of an ABC News/Washington Post/Ipsos poll last week, in which 73 percent of respondents said the economy is in bad shape, 53 percent said it's gotten worse since the president took office and 41 percent said their own finances have worsened. Sixty-four percent of those polled said they disapprove of the administration's tariff policy.

The US administration's abrupt switch from bragging about the "endless wins" its tariff policy has brought to exaggerating other countries' suffering to prove its tariff policy is working represents a big change in its messaging. But it is still a lot of thunder without rain. It is just trying to reassure a nervous country that its tariffs will not provoke a recession.

Knowing that there are those that will not swallow its line that things may be bad for the US but they are worse for China — given that the Chinese economy has once again demonstrated its remarkable resilience, growing 5.4 percent in the first quarter year-on-year — the administration has put forward its Democratic predecessor as its nominated fall guy.

After the stock market fell again on Wednesday in response to data reported by the US Commerce Department, the US president claimed in a social media post, "Our Country will boom, but we have to get rid of the Biden 'Overhang.' This will take a while, has NOTHING TO DO WITH TARIFFS".

Yet quite clearly everyone knows it has everything to do with tariffs. The domestic impact and the mounting pressure at home, have prompted the administration to make overtures to China to start talks, having previously sought to create the impression that negotiations were already underway.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce acknowledged on Friday that senior US officials have reached out recently "through relevant parties multiple times", hoping to start negotiations with China on tariffs, and that these overtures are currently being assessed. But it also reaffirmed that China's position hasn't changed: It is open to talks, but the US needs to show its sincerity by revoking its punitive tariffs on China.

There is a Chinese saying that untying the bell requires the one who tied it, meaning it is up to the person who created the problem to resolve it. The US started the tariff war, and it is the one that can end it. But to do so, it should discard any illusion it may have that China will give in to the US' blackmail and coercion. Saying one thing and doing another will be to no avail. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent effectively acknowledged this by saying that the first priority is to de-escalate the situation, and then over time, start focusing on a larger trade deal.

The way to de-escalate the situation is for the US to start showing that it understands the necessity of matching its words with deeds. Even hearing something 100 times is not as good as seeing it once.

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## We must not let memory and value of solidarity with refugees be erased

Efi Latsoudi

I moved to Lesbos in 2001. This was nearly 80 years after my grandmother had arrived from Ayvalik on this same island as a nine-year-old refugee. She had stayed there for two years before moving to Piraeus. My grandmother was among the nearly 1.5 million Greeks forced to flee Asia Minor in the 1920s.

By 2001, the history of Lesbos as a place of refuge had been almost forgotten by the public, and yet the island continued to serve as a temporary stop for people crossing the Eastern Mediterranean, seeking protection in Europe.

In 2015, Lesbos found itself at the heart of a big refugee story once again. Wars and instability pushed millions to flee across the sea. Almost half of those trying to reach Greek territory arrived on the island.

Lesbos residents found themselves at the centre of a humanitarian response that gained global recognition. It was a time when the world began to talk about the solidarity shown by Greeks towards refugees and migrants, even as the country was mired in an economic crisis.

When I think of the solidarity that flourished during those days, I see outstretched hands along the shores of Lesbos. Countless moving stories emerged of locals helping with whatever they could, carrying food, clothes, and blankets from their homes to feed and dress the newcomers.

As newly arrived people filled the roads of the island, walking towards registration points, not a day went by without the locals giving a lift to a pregnant woman, a child, or a person with a disability we encountered on the way to work. The looks of gratitude, the smiles, the tears, and the endless thank-yous were unforgettable. Solidarity became a badge of honour, and triumphant stories of humanity and hope filled the media.

The island was transformed — its streets and squares filled with locals and newcomers mingling, a scene of human connection and shared humanity.

One day, a refugee family knocked on my door asking to wash their hands and have a little water. They had been on the road for days, sleeping in the park, waiting for a boat to continue their journey. I opened my door and 16 people came inside — among them, eight small children, a newborn, and a paraplegic girl. My small living room filled up; they sat on chairs, the sofa, even on the floor. Before I could bring them water, the children had already fallen asleep, and the adults, exhausted, closed their eyes, their bodies giving in to the weight of their fatigue.

Quietly, I left the room, leaving them to rest. The next morning, they said their goodbyes and boarded the ferry. They left behind a "Thank you" note with a hand-drawn flower and 16 names.

When I think of those days, my mind fills with images: People in the rain, people in the cold, people celebrating, and others mourning their dead. That summer, we attended burial after burial for those who hadn't survived the dangerous sea journey.

A Palestinian volunteer once told me, "There's nothing worse than dying in a foreign land and being buried without your loved ones." When their loved ones weren't there, we were. The strangers were not strangers to us; they became our people.

In October 2015, a wooden boat carrying more than 300 people sank off the western coast of Lesbos. As the tragedy unfolded, acts of humanity shone through. Locals and volunteers alike, fishermen included, rushed to help, pulling people from the sea and offering whatever comfort they could. Bodies washed ashore in the days that followed, and the morgue filled up.

A local woman held the body of a dead child in her arms. It was a little girl whose body had been found on the beach in front of her house. She wrapped her in a sheet and held her as she would her child — as anyone would hold any child.

Yet, even as the island's shores became a symbol of solidarity, the shifting tides

described as a graveyard for human rights — became a ticking time bomb for the island's residents. At its peak, it devolved into a vast settlement of tents and shacks, with no access to potable water, hygiene, or basic necessities.

One afternoon in October 2016, I found myself in Moria, waiting for my interpreter so we could inform a family about their asylum interview date. As time passed, dark clouds gathered. Around me, people carried their belongings, children played in the dirt with whatever they could find, and young men hauled cardboard and plastic to shield themselves from the coming rain.

Standing there in the midst of it all, I watched a struggle for survival in conditions none of us would accept to endure for even an hour. Yet, every so often, someone would approach me — offering water, tea, or a piece of cardboard to sit on so I "wouldn't have to stand". The smiles of refugees made me feel so safe and so cared for, their humanity steadfast despite everything.

As the clouds thickened, I moved to help a woman secure her tent with stones. I bent down to add a few myself and saw that the tent was filled with small children. How could so many children fit into such a tiny tent? I admired her courage and determination to protect them. I smiled at her, and there, in the middle of nowhere, standing before a tent that the rain could wash away at any moment, she took my hand and invited me to share their meal.

How could such extremes fit into a single moment? The squalor, the inhumanity of the conditions, and yet, the hospitality, the need for one another, and the strength they gave even in the harshest of circumstances. How could one moment capture both need and dignity, desperation and generosity — the stones they used to anchor their tents also anchoring our shared humanity?

Back in town, where the voices against refugees and migrants were growing louder, I went to the supermarket. As I was standing in line, the woman in front of me turned to me and complained, "We're over-run with foreigners. They're everywhere. What's going to happen with them?" She gestured towards a young African woman at the checkout counter.

The other customers nodded grimly. I thought about how to respond as I watched the young refugee woman place her few items on the counter. She then realised she didn't have enough money and started to put back the few apples in her basket.

I looked at the woman in front of me watching the scene unfold. Fearing she would start shouting, I held my breath. Instead, with a decisive motion, she picked up the apples. "I'll pay for these, my girl," she said to the young woman, who looked at her in confusion. "Take them, don't leave them."

The young woman thanked her, hugged her, and left. And I heard the older woman mutter to herself, "What can they do? Who knows what they've been through? But what can we do, too?"

## NATO's potentially constructive role in Syria

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

More than two decades after the launch of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, NATO and its partners are assessing the progress they have made and looking for new ways to solidify their partnership and encourage new members to join.

To attract new partners, NATO needs to become more relevant to the region's concerns. One of those concerns is the fragile situation in Syria, and NATO is well suited to play an effective role there. Success in the country will have positive spillover effects throughout the region.

NATO has taken a number of steps to strengthen its ties to the region. At its Vilnius summit in 2023, the organization launched a comprehensive reflection on threats, challenges, and opportunities in the South.

At its 2024 summit in Washington, during which NATO celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding in 1949, it went further by adding more depth and a wider scope to its southern neighborhood policy, to "foster greater security and stability in the Middle East and Africa, contributing to peace and prosperity in the region." It adopted an action plan for a "stronger, more strategic and result-oriented approach" toward its southern neighbors, and said this would be regularly updated.

To implement this more active approach, NATO's secretary-general appointed a special representative for the southern neighborhood, who serves as the organization's focal point for the region. It said this would "reinforce our dialogue, outreach, visibility and our existing instruments for cooperation, such as the Defense Capacity Building Initiative, the Hub for the South and the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Regional Center in Kuwait." As part of this focus, NATO opened a liaison office in Amman and broadened the scope of its cooperation with Iraq's security institutions, building on the efforts of its mission in Iraq.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was established in 2004 during NATO's summit in the Turkish city, hence the name, to "promote security cooperation on a bilateral basis between NATO and partner countries in the broader Middle East region."

In 2017, the organization established a regional center in Kuwait to coordinate Istanbul Cooperation Initiative activities, including training, capacity building, defense planning, defense budgeting, combating terrorism, and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Four Gulf Cooperation Council member states have joined the initiative, and others take part in some of its activities without joining. Despite its name, Türkiye is not a member of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

Most countries around the world have welcomed the new government in Syria, which appears determined to restore peace and security internally and play a positive role regionally. It is working to reestablish the rule of law in most parts of the country, and disband unlawful armed groups or integrate them into formal security forces with clear controls and chains of command. It has cracked down on drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and other malign activities that were quite common under the previous Assad regime.

However, the new authority in Damascus faces formidable challenges which NATO is well positioned to help, starting with restoration of government authority throughout Syria. The challenge in the northeastern part of the country is complicated by the presence of Turkish and American forces, who support opposing sides in that region. Replacing them with a neutral force, such as NATO, should be acceptable to Türkiye and the US, both of whom are key members of the alliance.

A NATO deployment

would have to be negotiated with Damascus, which might consider this solution better than the current chaos in which the Syrian Democratic Forces, the main militia for Syrian Kurds, is reluctant to allow government forces into the area, while Turkish-Kurdish group PKK roams freely there, causing understandable security anxieties for Ankara.

There is mutual mistrust between Türkiye and the Syrian Democratic Forces, whose tolerance of the PKK presence has caused tensions between Ankara and Washington, the SDF's patron. Damascus might find that a NATO presence would make it easier to implement agreements with the SDF on integrating northeastern Syria with the rest of the country, and the militia with the Syrian Armed Forces.

The SDF might also welcome NATO's role in the face of uncertainty regarding the continued American presence in the area.

Fighting terrorism is the second challenge with which NATO could help. It could coordinate counterterrorism efforts in the area, which is one of the main areas cited by the organization for its engagement with the wider Middle East region.

Concerns about a resurgence of Daesh are shared by most countries, and the new Syrian government appears determined to prevent this from happening. Stopping Daesh from regrouping is the main reason for the presence of US troops in the area and is also cited by the SDF as one of its main functions, together with guarding camps holding former Daesh fighters and their families.

The Global Coalition Against Daesh is obviously there as well but it needs support. NATO could help pave the way for the Syrian government to take on the job of fighting terrorism and guarding the camps until the fate of their inhabitants is decided.

The third way in which NATO can provide assistance is by helping the new government to rebuild Syria's security forces. They need training and equipment. Gulf Cooperation Council countries have started this process and NATO could help recruits acquire the skills they need, building on the organization's long experience in this area.

Capacity building is one of the main functions of NATO and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. In the case of Syria, which has experienced decades of despotic rule during which security forces were trained to violate the human rights of citizens, killing hundreds of thousands of innocents and jailing and torturing others for exercising their basic rights of freedom of expression and association. The security apparatus in Syria needs to be restructured along new principles.

The organization is gearing up for its annual summit next month in the Hague. The issue of enhanced engagement with the Middle East is likely to be on the agenda, although the uncertainty about US President Donald Trump's approach to the organization will likely dominate discussions, given the testy relationship NATO had with him during his first term.

Experts expect both sides to be more realistic this time around, however, insofar as NATO members have accepted that they need to up their defense spending, while the Trump administration appreciates the useful role the organization fulfills.

Washington might find it is to its advantage that NATO plays a greater role in the Middle East, including Syria. This would be another example of the burden sharing that Trump is keen on. His administration has already been engaged with the Syrian government and given it a list of asks, including efforts to fight terrorism and destroy chemical weapons. NATO could engage with Damascus and help it deal with such demands.



# A chronicle of collapse and international neglect in Sudan

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Two years into a war that has gutted a nation and scattered its people across borders, Sudan has become the scene of the world's largest humanitarian crisis — and perhaps its most ignored.

What began as a power struggle between two generals has metastasized into a devastating civil war marked by ethnic massacres and the deliberate destruction of urban centers. As the dust settles over the ruins of Khartoum, and famine tightens its grip on Darfur, one thing is clear: Sudan is bleeding while the world watches in silence.

In 2019, the ouster of President Omar Bashir after three decades of autocracy offered Sudan a brief glimmer of hope for the ascent of democracy. Those hopes were extinguished in 2021 when Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, respectively the leaders of the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, hijacked the transition and seized power for themselves. In April 2023, their uneasy alliance collapsed into open warfare. What followed was not just a military conflict but the systematic unraveling of a country of 46 million people.

The statistics read like a catalog of human catastrophe. More than 15 million people have been forcibly displaced, a figure that dwarfs the effects of the civil war in Syria and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. More than half of Sudan's population, 30.4 million people, now requires humanitarian assistance. At least 25 million are facing a food crisis, with 750,000 on the edge of famine. In a camp outside Al-Fasher, 13 children die every day from hunger and disease.

These numbers are not projections or worst-case estimates. They are today's

reality, unfolding in real time.

The RSF, originally spawned from the Janjaweed militias that ravaged Darfur in the 2000s, has revived its genocidal tactics, with chilling precision. In West Darfur entire towns have been emptied. Men and boys, infants included, have been murdered on ethnic grounds.

Women have been sys-

tematically targeted, with survivors reporting that their attackers jeered at them, using slurs and threats of forced pregnancies to produce "enemy" children. The rampant use of gender-based violence has not been incidental; it is a tactical choice, deployed to humiliate, destabilize, and ethnically reengineer.

If the RSF has committed war crimes, the SAF has not emerged with a clean reputation either. Its strategy of recapturing territory has relied heavily on scorched-earth tactics. In Khartoum, artillery and airstrikes have reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble. The capital's airport is unusable, hospitals have been flattened, and cultural institutions looted. In its efforts to claim control, the army effectively annihilat-

ed the very infrastructure that once made Khartoum a functioning metropolis. Now, 80 percent of health facilities in conflict zones are out of service. At least 100 attacks on medical centers have been documented. Sudan's health system, once one of the most developed in the region, has collapsed entirely. Water and electricity infrastructure has disin-

tegrated. In major cities, residents go months without running water, drawing instead from the Nile or shallow wells contaminated by disease. Cholera, malaria, dengue fever, and measles are spreading unchecked. More than 15 million people now have no access to basic healthcare.

The children of Sudan are being raised in this furnace. Nearly every school in the country has shut down. At the peak of the war, 19 million children were out of school. Before the conflict, 7 million were already missing from classrooms. Now, an entire generation has been severed from education and structure, which are key defenses against radicalization, recruitment, and despair. These children have witnessed atrocities, lost par-

ents, and fled burning homes. They are traumatized, uneducated, and unmoored — conditions that will haunt Sudan for decades to come. In Darfur, Kordofan, and other provinces, mass displacement has emptied towns and cities. A slow exodus continues toward Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. The camps for the homeless grow by

the day, yet the funding for them shrinks. Last year, the UN requested \$2.6 billion in international aid for Sudan. Barely 48 percent of that amount materialized. No peacekeeping forces have been deployed. No airlifts of food or medicine have captured international attention. The silence has been deafening.

The global response has been not only inadequate but shamefully indifferent. Sudan is not without geopolitical relevance — it has gold, oil, and access to the Red Sea — but its crisis lacks the immediacy of those that stir the Western conscience.

There is no threat to NATO, no terror group making headlines, no ideological foe to defeat. When Russia invades Ukraine or war erupts in Gaza, diplo-

matic corridors spring to life and resources flow overnight. In Sudan, they trickle. If they arrive at all.

International diplomacy has become a theater of impotence. Multiple ceasefire agreements collapse within days. African-led peace plans were ignored, while the UN hosted meetings devoid of Sudanese representatives. A recent summit in London featured 20 foreign ministers but neither of the warring factions. Everyone is talking about Sudan but no one is talking to the men with guns.

Sudan's descent is not only a moral failure, it is a strategic one. A collapsed Sudan could ignite a chain reaction across an already brittle region: more refugees, more arms trafficking, more radicalization. The longer the war drags on, the more it will cost to repair, not only in dollars but in social cohesion, institutional viability, and human potential.

Rebuilding a hospital is hard. Rebuilding trust between neighbors who participated in mutual atrocities could very well prove impossible.

And yet, still, no meaningful international mobilization has occurred. No coalition has emerged to enforce peace or protect civilians. Western capitals issue statements and impose boutique sanctions on individuals. There is outrage, but it is performative devoid of any follow-through, devoid of resolve.

What does this say about the international order? About lofty commitments to "never again"? If a nation of 46 million people can implode amid ethnic cleansing and famine, with hardly a diplomatic ripple, what principles are we defending?

Sudan is not invisible. It has been forgotten by choice.

than just compliance; it must become an engine of innovation and competitive advantage. Companies with board-level sustainability oversight are approximately 2.7 times more likely to drive product innovation with environmental benefits than those without it.

Just as regulatory frameworks following accounting scandals in the early 2000s mandated financial expertise on boards, regulatory bodies should now require ESG competence. This shift is necessary to ensure boards are equipped to navigate the evolving business landscape.

Despite agreeing that financial capital remains the primary tool for meeting business objectives, companies lacking sound sustainability governance can face up to 30 percent higher costs than their more sustainable peers. This is a material financial impact that boards can no longer afford to ignore.

Ultimately, sustainability governance is essential for long-term value creation. In 2024, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink positioned climate risk as investment risk.

Boards that fail to lead on sustainability neglect their fiduciary duty to protect and enhance shareholder value in a rapidly evolving environment marked by environmental and social transformation.

# Brexiteer Nigel Farage seeks to reshape UK politics — again

Andrew Hammond

Reform UK party leader Nigel Farage's biggest success so far in UK politics came in 2016 when he helped lead the "Leave" campaign to victory in the Brexit referendum on whether or not the UK should remain in the EU.

A decade later, he has reemerged as a political force with grand ambitions to reshape the nation's polity once again.

In elections in England on Thursday, Reform scored some big victories, with perhaps the stand-out success being a parliamentary by-election win in Runcorn and Helsby. However, the party also enjoyed big wins in several other key contests, including the first-ever Greater Lincolnshire mayoral election.

The ruling Labour Party suffered some significant setbacks, mainly at the hands of Reform. However, it held onto power in several important contests, including mayoral races in North Tyneside, the West of England, and Doncaster. Reform finished second in all three.

While Labour, which replaced the previous Conservative Party government after the general election in July last year, is suffering from a decline in popularity that many incumbent authorities around the world are facing, Thursday's election results also dealt a big blow to the Conservatives, who have historically been the most successful UK party. Following the landslide loss to Labour in the 2024 general election, they were once again the biggest single losers on Thursday, in terms of number of seats lost.

Much of the electorate clearly has still not forgiven the Conservatives for the party's internal troubles while it was in government between 2010 and 2024. Moreover, the last time that these English council seats were up for grabs was in 2021, when the prime minister at the time, Boris Johnson, was at the height of his popularity after the so-called "vaccine bounce" during the pandemic.

There is no question, therefore, that Reform has the political "wind in its sails," so to speak. The ambition of Farage, an ally of US President Donald Trump, is big: victory at the next general election, which will probably be in 2028 or 2029.

Yet, while such a possibility cannot be dismissed, there is an even bigger, macro story taking place within the increasingly volatile world of UK politics, and it means that any predictions about what might happen almost half a decade hence are held hugely hostage to fortune.

For more than a century, British politics has tended to be dominated by the two main parties: Labour and Conservatives. Between 1945 and 1970, they collectively averaged in excess of 90 percent of the vote, and the seats won, in the eight UK general elections that took place during that period.

Since then, this two-party system has slowly but surely decayed. Since 1974, their collective average share of the vote at general elections dropped significantly, although there were some national ballots during that time, most recently in 2019, in which the so-called "two-party vote" experienced a resurgence.

However, several parties

political system include the fact that the collective share of the vote for Labour and the Conservatives is currently at one of the lowest levels in living memory. We might therefore be witnessing the entrenchment of a multiparty system of the kind seen in numerous continental European countries, rather than any new form of a two-party system.

This change is creating a more unpredictable and uncertain political landscape. Such fragmentation will make it harder for any single party to secure a majority government in a UK general election. This despite the fact that the so-called "first past the post" voting system in Britain tends to provide the leading party with a significantly larger number of seats in

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Since 1974, their collective average share of the vote at general elections dropped significantly, although there were some national ballots during that time, most recently in 2019, in which the so-called "two-party vote" experienced a resurgence. However, several parties now challenge this long-standing two-party system, and not only relative newcomers Reform UK. Others include longer-established parties such as the Liberal Democrats and the Greens, both of whom picked up council seats in England on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Scottish National Party has governed the devolved Holyrood legislature in Edinburgh since 2007 and is currently favorite to win again at next year's Scottish Parliament election. In Wales, the nationalist Plaid Cymru has become a very significant political force, too.

The old two-party system has been on the decline for some time, and there are signs it might be nearing a pivotal point. To understand this fully requires some historical background to contextualize the current state of the UK political landscape.

Labour's massive victory at the 2024 general election was the second consecutive general election landslide result, but the result went in the opposite direction to the huge Conservative win in 2019. Historically, such a large swing is a rare phenomenon, which potentially highlights a high degree of political disequilibrium.

The last time a similar pair of back-to-back results happened was more than a century ago: a Conservative win in 1900 followed by a big Liberal landslide in 1906. Back then, the huge Liberal victory helped bring about the political realignment that led to the modern British electoral system. Indeed, 1906 was the last time the Liberals won an absolute majority in the House of Commons, and the last general election at which neither Labour nor the Conservatives won the popular vote.

Almost 120 years later, the signs of deep-rooted disequilibrium in the UK's

the House of Commons than would be the case under an electoral system based on proportional representation.

Certainly, coalitions and power-sharing agreements have long been a feature of local government in the UK, and in devolved parliaments and assemblies outside Westminster. However, this same pattern might now become a more regular feature at the heart of the UK government itself in London, as we saw in the 2010 and 2017 general elections, at which no one party won an absolute majority. The last time that had happened before then was in 1974.

Taking all of this together, parties such as Reform UK, the Lib Dems, the Greens, Plaid Cymru, and the SNP might increasingly be forging a new multiparty UK political system, potentially akin to those we can see in numerous continental European countries.

Thursday's results are just the latest sign that Britain's long standing two-party system might be giving way to a potentially much more unpredictable political landscape.

# Why boards must take the lead on sustainability to ensure long-term success

Majed Al-Qatari

Environmental, social and governance considerations have evolved from peripheral corporate concerns to central elements of business strategy. However, in some cases, a significant governance gap persists between commitments to sustainability and accountability at the board level.

Boards that continue to delegate sustainability to operational committees fail to fulfill their fiduciary duty to oversee it effectively. This gap in accountability at the highest levels is increasingly recognized as a key challenge for corporate governance.

A 2023 PwC survey found that 64 percent of directors recognize climate change as a significant business risk, yet only 38 percent report that their boards possess expertise in ESG matters. This gap exists despite growing investor demands for climate accountability.

Corporate sustainability pledges are often ambitious, but they are not always met. Board oversight remains insufficient. According to recent research, 71 percent of institutional investors believe most companies overstate their ESG progress, reflecting a lack of credibility in corporate sustainability governance.

Further illustrating this point, a 2024 study

revealed that only 23 percent of S&P 500 companies link executive compensation to ESG metrics, and just 17 percent have a board member with significant ESG expertise. Without proper accountability at the highest levels, sustainability measures risk becoming mere greenwashing.

In response to these

Companies with strong ESG practices outperform financially, with top ESG performers posting annual shareholder returns 10 percent higher than bottom performers. This performance premium underscores that the role of sustainability governance extends beyond risk mitigation to creating strategic opportunities. This shift in perspective reveals sustainability as not just a defensive measure, but a driver of business growth. Unilever's board-level sustainability leadership, exemplified by its Corporate Responsibility Committee, oversees the company's Sustainable Living Plan.

challenges, shareholder activism on ESG issues has surged, with climate-related proposals at S&P 500 companies increasing by 88 percent since 2020. Regulatory pressures are also mounting, with the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the SEC's climate disclosure rules reshaping corporate reporting obligations.

As these pressures increase, forward-thinking

boards are responding by integrating sustainability into core governance structures. High-performing companies tend to have boards with dedicated sustainability panels, mandate ESG literacy as a qualification, and incorporate climate considerations into enterprise risk-management frameworks.

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reveals sustainability as not just a defensive measure, but a driver of business growth.

Unilever's board-level sustainability leadership, exemplified by its Corporate Responsibility Committee, oversees the company's Sustainable Living Plan. This governance structure has helped

Unilever reduce carbon emissions per unit of production by 56 percent, while maintaining consistent shareholder returns. Similarly, Orsted, a Danish energy company, has seen its board-driven green transition cut carbon emissions by 87 percent and increase profits by 22 percent annually.

Given these examples, it is clear that sustainability must be viewed as more

Luke Coffey

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in London late last month to discuss the future of UK-EU relations. The main purpose of the meeting was to prepare for a larger summit between London and Brussels this month that will focus on formalizing cooperation on security and defense.

Since the historic 2016 referendum that led to the UK formally leaving the EU four years later, there has been an ongoing political debate about what the future relationship between the UK and the EU should look like. Starmer last year campaigned on aligning the UK more closely with the EU, but he has so far acted cautiously, aware that many Labour voters supported Brexit. At the same time, he has sought to distinguish himself from his

Conservative predecessors, who were widely seen as presiding over chaotic and unproductive negotiations with Brussels.

In the Labour Party's 2024 election manifesto, a clear commitment was made to establish a new security pact with the EU. Both sides hope this agreement will be finalized later this month.

Both London and Brussels want a security agreement, but for different reasons. For Starmer, it is an opportunity to demonstrate that he represents a clean break from the past and can reset the UK's relationship with Europe. That the first major agreement focuses on defense and security is no coincidence — this is a policy area where the UK has significant strengths and can bring a great deal to the table. The UK has one of the largest defense budgets in

Europe, a global military presence and extensive intelligence and cybersecurity capabilities.

From the EU's perspective, a deal is also urgent. The bloc recently announced a €euro:150 billion (\$169 billion) initiative to invest in the European defense industry. But without a formal agreement with the UK, British defense companies will be largely excluded from participating. Cooperation with the UK would enhance Europe's capabilities and bolster transatlantic security.

Despite lingering Brexit-related bitterness in some corners of Brussels, the geopolitical reality is that the EU can never be fully secure without close cooperation with Britain. The UK has been a major European power for centuries and this will remain the case regardless of its EU membership status. EU

officials hope that success in forging a defense agreement this month could create momentum for deeper cooperation in other areas — especially fishing.

Few issues are as contentious in the EU as fishing rights. Determining which country can fish where, and how much, remains deeply political. In fact, it is one of the key reasons countries like Norway have opted to stay out of the EU. Currently, the UK and EU are in a transitional phase until June 2026, during which EU coastal states may still fish in British waters. Some EU officials have hinted off the record that progress on defense cooperation may hinge on the UK offering assurances about future fishing access. At the very least, Brussels hopes that accommodating the UK on defense — an

UK-EU security arrangements.

Second is the return of Donald Trump to the White House. During his first term, Trump criticized European allies for under-investing in their own defense — criticism that many Europeans acknowledged as fair. In response, European states have begun increasing military spending. However, Trump's second term has brought an even sharper tone, with Washington openly declaring a trade war on the EU and signaling a pivot to East Asia in its defense planning. This has further galvanized European leaders to look inward and strengthen their collective defense capabilities.

Still, there is a risk that closer UK-EU cooperation could come at the expense of the UK's special relationship with the US or NATO's primacy in

European security. That risk must be managed carefully. The UK has historically been one of NATO's strongest supporters and has often acted in Brussels to block EU defense initiatives perceived as duplicative of NATO. Any new pact with the EU must preserve NATO's central role in European defense, while allowing for collaboration in areas where the EU can play a complementary role — such as cyber threats, hybrid warfare, energy security, infrastructure protection and combating disinformation.

While it was still in the EU, the UK pursued bilateral defense agreements with European countries — most notably the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties with France. These agreements were intended to demonstrate that Britain could take a leadership role

in European defense outside EU structures. Now, having left the bloc, the UK is naturally seeking to complement these bilateral relationships with a formal agreement with Brussels — without undermining NATO's essential role.

There will no doubt be skepticism from some Brexit supporters and euroskeptical commentators in the UK about any formal defense cooperation with the EU. But as long as it is done in a way that prioritizes NATO and makes the continent of Europe safer, it could represent a win-win for all sides. The EU gets a stronger, more capable partner on defense and the UK reasserts its leadership role in European security — while ensuring that its alliances with both Washington and Brussels are fit for today's geopolitical challenges.





137th Canton Fair:

## Pakistan explores trade opportunities

BEIJING (INP): A 14-member trade delegation from the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), led by Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry represents Pakistan at the 137th Canton Fair's third phase in southern Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou being held from May 1 to May 5.

This landmark participation underscores Pakistan's commitment to strengthening economic ties with China while exploring new avenues for trade and technological collaboration in the consumer goods sector.

The delegation's visit comes at a strategic time as Pakistan seeks to diversify its import sources while identifying opportunities for technology transfer and joint ventures with Chinese manufacturers, stated the Vice President, according to Gwadar Pro.

The 137th Canton Fair,

which runs from April 15 to May 5, has achieved record-breaking participation, with more than 220,000 overseas buyers from 219 countries and regions attending the first two phases, which focus on advanced manufacturing and home furnishings.

The current phase continues this momentum with a sprawling 515,000 square meters of exhibition space featuring 24,560 booths from 12,043 enterprises, reflecting China's manufacturing prowess in creating increasingly sophisticated and customized consumer goods.

The "Better Life"-themed third phase has emerged as a global showcase for lifestyle products, featuring cutting-edge offerings across toys, children's and maternity care, fashion apparel, home textiles, stationery, and health and recreation segments.

Industry observers have noted particular innovation in niche segments like eco-friendly infant products, smart home textiles, and tech-integrated leisure goods - areas that hold significant potential for Pakistani importers and manufacturers.

The fair's digital complement has further expanded its global reach, with exhibitors uploading approximately 890,000 products to the online platform by April 24, enabling continued engagement with international buyers beyond the physical event.

International pavilions have added a distinctive multicultural dimension to the event, with 284 enterprises from 30 countries and regions, including 10 dedicated sections from Turkey, Russia, Pakistan, South Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, India, etc. This global engage-

ment creates unique opportunities for comparative analysis and cross-border collaboration.

Shkil Ahmed, a member of the ICCI delegation, expressed strong enthusiasm about the fair's dynamism and opportunities, noting, "the product variety here is exceptionally rich, and the exhibition atmosphere is vibrant.

We look forward to sustained collaboration with Chinese partners across these key sectors." Ahmed added that Pakistani businesses see strong potential in adapting many of these product concepts for domestic and regional markets.

As the Canton Fair continues through May 5, the Pakistani delegation plans to conduct targeted B2B meetings with potential partners while gathering market intelligence that could inform Pakistan's trade policy direction.



HYDERABAD: Labourers sorting good quality chicoo fruit at Fruit Market.

### LCCI urges govt to address issues

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has urged the Federal Board of Revenue to review the recently issued SRO 578(I)/2025, citing severe operational challenges for industries, particularly cement dealers and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs).

Talking to a delegation of All Pakistan Cement Dealers Association (APCDA) here Sunday, LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad said that Lahore Chamber appreciates the government's intent to enhance tax papers but abrupt implementation and complex compliance requirements of SRO 578(I)/2025 (dated April 8, 2025), risk disrupting business operations.

LCCI former presidents Mian Anjum Nisar and Muhammad Ali Mian and former vice president Fahim ur Rehman Saigol also spoke on the occasion. Muneer Chaudhry was leading the delegation comprising Abdul Majeed Sheikh, Zohaib Nasir Butt, Ashraf Saeed Malik, Chaudhry Sajid Ali, Nauman Ahmad, Malik Waheed, Muhammad Asif Saeed, Rana Shair Ali, Asim Muneer, Tahir Hameed, Tariq Mahmood and Azhar Abbas also expressed their views.

The LCCI President said that businesses must now submit exhaustive details of domestic purchases and sales in revised Annex-A and Annex-C formats. A newly introduced Annex-CI requires taxpayers to reconcile each sales invoice with its corresponding payment—a provision that places burden on SMEs lacking digital accounting infrastructure.

Mian Abuzar Shad said that business community was already grappling with persistent technical glitches in FBR's electronic filing system, including frequent system crashes leading to data loss during return filings. Mismatched HS Codes and fixed Units of Measurement causing input errors, failures in uploading sales invoices in Annexure-C and inconsistencies across annexures and unresolved issues from February 2025's sales tax return filings, compounding delays.

He said that without transitional relief, the SRO could harm legitimate input tax claims due to procedural errors, trigger unnecessary audits and penalties for minor discrepancies, strain working capital cycles and especially for cement dealers and SMEs.

## Implementation plan of SMEDA revamping approved

LAHORE (APP): Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) Board of Directors, in its 30th meeting here Sunday, approved the Implementation Plan of SMEDA Revamping.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) for Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan chaired the meeting that was also attended by Saif Anjum, Federal Secretary Industries and Production and Socrat Aman Rana, CEO of SMEDA, besides the Board members.

During the meeting, Haroon Akhtar Khan referred to the PM vision on SME development and expressed satisfaction over

fast track working of SMEDA in line with the PM vision.

He reiterated that future of Pakistan's economy lies with growth and development of SMEs and the Prime Minister is determined to raise Pakistan's SMEs at par with the international standards, for which they are hiring services of the international SME experts.

The board noted that the Prime Minister had constituted a committee to study existing structure of SMEDA and proposed changes for revamping the organization and making it a catalyst for growth of SME sector in the country. In line with the directions

of the Prime Minister, implementation plan of revamping to align existing SMEDA employees with the new outsourcing activities initiatives were presented before the Board.

It is notable that the revamping plan, earlier, was presented by the revamping Committee to the Prime Minister on April 9, 2025, along with the detailed deliberations and discussions.

The restructuring option with the "Outsourcing" was permitted by the Prime Minister for restructuring of SMEDA, which has also been approved by SMEDA Board of Directors in the current meeting.

## SNGPL disconnects 387 illegal gas connections

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Continuing its rigorous crackdown against gas theft, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has disconnected 387 illegal connections across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad. The company has also imposed fines amounting to Rs 4.2 million on gas pilferers.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 124 connections due to illegal gas usage and 2 more for compressor usage, imposing a fine of Rs 1.93 million. In Faisalabad, 43 illegal connections were severed, with Rs 0.47 million recovered in penalties.

The Sheikhpura team disconnected 7 illegal connections and imposed Rs 0.31 million in fines. In Multan, 79 connections were disconnected for illegal gas use and 37 for compressor use.

Meanwhile, the Bahawalpur team disconnected 10 connections for illegal usage and another 79 for compressor use. In Gujranwala, 1 illegal connection was severed and a Rs 0.25 million fine was imposed. Lastly, the Sahiwal team disconnected 5 illegal connections and imposed Rs 1.26 million in penalties.

## CTI calls for effort to revolutionize industry

LAHORE (PPI): In a bold move to bridge the gap between academia and the carpet industry, the Chairperson of the Carpet Training Institute (CTI), Ejaz-ur-Rehman, has urged carpet manufacturers, exporters, and academic luminaries from the National College of Arts (NCA) to actively engage in the institute's innovative training programs. Rehman believes that their collaboration is crucial to bolstering the carpet sector's competitiveness in the global market.

During a recent gathering, Rehman extended an earnest invitation to all parties, underscoring the

potential benefits of their involvement in elevating existing business models to align with dynamic market trends. He assured participants of a hospitable environment replete with comprehensive support and access to essential business resources.

Rehman stressed the importance of this partnership in expanding the institute's current initiatives and exploring new avenues within the industry. He highlighted how this collaboration stands to enrich both the carpet sector and the academic community, providing invaluable experiences for students and educators alike.

Expressing his enthusiasm, Rehman stated, "We are honored to welcome such distinguished professionals into the Carpet Training Institute family." He proudly noted that CTI is Pakistan's sole institution offering continuous training in this specialized field since 2008.

The chairperson further emphasized that this alliance between industry and academia is pivotal for national advancement, promising to infuse quality and innovation into carpet manufacturing. CTI remains committed to nurturing these partnerships to propel the sector to unprecedented heights.

## PIAF urges MoF to focus on small industries in budget 2025-26

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has called on the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to give top priority to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the upcoming Federal Budget 2025-26, stressing that meaningful reforms and targeted support for small industries are essential to revive economic growth and safeguard the livelihoods of millions of workers.

PIAF Chairman Faheem Saigol, along with Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal and Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry, gave these proposals during a joint meeting with representatives of various trade and industrial sectors held here at PIAF office in Lahore to finalize budget recommendations. The leadership urged the government to shift focus from temporary relief to long-term strategies that strengthen the industrial base—particularly the SME sector, which remains the backbone of Pakistan's economy.

"The government must demonstrate its commitment to industrial growth in the 2025-26 budget through solid actions, not

mere announcements," said Chairman Faheem Saigol. "This includes substantial reductions in fuel prices, a cut in the key policy rate, regionally competitive energy tariffs, and swift tax refunds. The government also needs to ease the burden of duties and taxes, especially for SMEs, if we want to stimulate investment and job creation."

Saigol noted that Pakistan needs to create millions of new jobs annually, and only a vibrant SME sector can meet this challenge. He urged the Ministry of Finance to offer strong, targeted incentives that can spur domestic investment, expand industrial production, and integrate SMEs into national and global value chains.

The PIAF chief stated that his organization has submitted comprehensive and inclusive budget proposals, developed after thorough consultation with stakeholders across Pakistan's business spectrum. These proposals prioritize liberal investment policies, infrastructure development, a broadened tax base, and job creation through sustainable industrialization.

Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal recommended that tax rates

should be rationalized to expand the tax net while also curbing the undocumented economy. He emphasized that lower tax rates would improve compliance and make Pakistani goods more competitive in international markets, helping to narrow the trade deficit.

Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry added that SMEs remain the worst-hit segment of the economy and continue to face structural challenges. "The government must now provide special relief to these enterprises through easier access to finance, tax exemptions, and capacity-building support," he said.

Chaudhry highlighted that only 5-7 percent of private sector credit is currently allocated to SMEs, with fewer than 200,000 active SME borrowers. This figure is alarmingly low for a sector that contributes nearly 40 percent to GDP and employs over 80 percent of the non-agricultural labor force. He proposed the introduction of new lending programs that allow SMEs to access affordable credit without collateral, along with dedicated SME desks in banks and simplified approval processes.

Faheem Saigol also reit-

erated his call for a five-year tax holiday and audit exemption for newly registered SMEs to encourage formalization and business growth. "If we want to build a resilient economy, we must support the sector that represents over 90 percent of Pakistan's 3.2 million business enterprises," he stressed.

He further proposed that the government announce special incentive packages for the SME sector in the upcoming budget, including reduced energy tariffs, easier access to export markets, and skill development programs. These measures, he said, will allow small enterprises to scale up operations and contribute more significantly to exports, where SMEs already account for around 25 percent of total earnings.

The PIAF leadership also urged the government to revisit its tax structure to favor production and exports. Among the key recommendations were the reduction of sales tax to a single-digit rate, lowering corporate tax, and shifting the tax system toward direct taxation. They also called for reviving investor confidence through consistent economic policies and support for local industry.

## Pakistan-China industrial entrepreneur bridge established

ISLAMABAD, (INP): In a landmark move to strengthen industrial and business ties between Pakistan and China, Precise Development (Hong Kong) Limited, China and The University of Lahore (UOL) have jointly established "Pakistan-China Industrial Entrepreneur Bridge".

This Center of Excellence will serve as a crucial gateway for industry and business communities in both nations, fostering collaboration and economic growth. Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday.

Through this initiative, Pakistani industries will gain direct access to key Chinese trade bodies,

including: All China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC), Chamber of Commerce for High Technology and Equipment Industry, New Energy Operations Committee of the China, Electricity Equipment Management Association and China Jinhua (Yiwu) Wenzhou General Chamber of Commerce.

The newly established center will facilitate partnerships between enterprises and institutions from both countries in vital sectors, including New and Renewable Energy, Agriculture and Agri-Tech, Mineral and Natural Resources, Healthcare and Pharmaceu-

tical, Technical and Vocational Education, Digital Economy, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Industries and Human Resource Development.

The agreement was formally signed by David Chu, CEO of Precise Development Limited, China, and Awais Raof, Chairman of the Board of Governors at The University of Lahore. Speaking to Gwadar Pro, Khalid Taimur Akram, Director (Eurasian Region) of Precise Development emphasized that the newly established Pakistan-China Industrial Entrepreneur Bridge represents a major leap forward in bilateral relations.

He stated that the initiative will strengthen industrial cooperation, create new trade and investment opportunities, and serve as a catalyst for innovation, technology transfer, and sustainable development in both countries.

Akram also revealed that earlier this week, the Hong Kong-based asset management firm signed MoU with Bank Makramah Limited to streamline Chinese investments in Pakistan.

This agreement is set to provide seamless financial solutions for businesses from both nations, further boosting economic collaboration under CPEC framework.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's (FPCCI) Businessmen Panel (BMP) has voiced strong criticism against the federal government's abrupt and unilateral move to shift the tax system from the Final Tax Regime (FTR) to the Normal Tax Regime (NTR) for exporters, terming it a regressive policy decision that will deeply harm Pakistan's fragile export sector.

Mian Anjum Nisar, Chairman of the BMP and former President of the FPCCI, expressed serious reservations about the sudden and non-consultative transition, stating that it has introduced a wave of uncertainty and confusion among the business community. He emphasized that this

decision will adversely affect industrial operations, create obstacles for exporters, and undermine the country's efforts to expand its export base.

He noted that the FTR had been a relatively efficient and predictable taxation system, especially designed to facilitate exporters, traders, and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs).

It allowed them to pay a fixed percentage of their income or turnover as tax, which was then treated as their final liability. This simplicity eliminated the fear of audits, notices, and excessive scrutiny, enabling exporters to focus their energies on production, expansion, and tapping international markets.

"The sudden shift from FTR to NTR, which has been imposed without any

meaningful consultation with stakeholders, has badly shaken the confidence of exporters and industrialists," Nisar said. "This move has disrupted the financial planning of exporters, as they now face complex and uncertain tax calculations, along with additional documentation requirements and exposure to audits. It is a direct blow to the predictability and stability that exporters depend on for long-term planning."

He warned that this policy shift will act as a barrier to export growth, dragging exporters into a bureaucratic web of tax red tape. Instead of enabling them to concentrate on increasing exports, the government has now burdened them with excessive compliance requirements, time-consuming procedures, and the

looming threat of tax-related harassment.

Mian Anjum Nisar stressed that the export sector is already operating under extremely challenging conditions, including high production costs, volatile exchange rates, increasing freight charges, and global competition. In such an environment, he said, the government should be introducing facilitative policies, not adding new administrative and financial burdens. According to him, the shift to the NTR will not only reduce export competitiveness but may also result in many small exporters exiting the formal sector altogether.

"Exporters were expecting incentives, relief measures, and market access strategies," he remarked. "But instead, they have been handed an unre-

dictable and non-transparent tax regime that will severely undermine their operational efficiency and profitability."

He also pointed out that under the FTR, the government was still able to collect a substantial and steady stream of revenue while maintaining a business-friendly tax culture. With the shift to the NTR, however, the risk of revenue leakage, disputes, and litigation is likely to rise due to the complexity and discretionary powers involved.

The BMP chairman criticized the lack of clarity in the implementation process, saying that exporters are confused about how their income will now be assessed. He warned that this confusion will increase reliance on tax consultants, add to compliance costs, and potentially expose

exporters to exploitation by corrupt elements within the system.

"This change opens the door to arbitrary decisions by tax authorities, which increases the likelihood of harassment," he said. "It also discourages formalization, as businesses that have only recently entered the tax net under FTR may now feel incentivized to go underground again."

Nisar further argued that this move is inconsistent with the government's own stated objectives of ease of doing business, digitalization, and export-led growth.

"The Normal Tax Regime may make sense in theory, but in Pakistan's current economic and administrative environment, it is highly impractical for exporters who need quick decision-making, low compliance burdens, and a level play-

ing field in the international market," he added.

He advised that instead of dismantling the FTR entirely, the government should have sought to improve and digitize it further, possibly combining transparency with simplicity. "There was room for reform, not for abolition," Nisar said. "If revenue collection was a concern, the government should have broadened the tax base and improved enforcement, rather than burdening the compliant segment of society."

The BMP urged the Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to hold immediate consultations with trade bodies, chambers of commerce, and export associations to understand their concerns and re-evaluate the decision. Nisar said that

the Businessmen Panel stands ready to provide input for a more balanced and practical tax regime that protects the interest of exporters and ensures steady revenue for the state.

He reiterated that a hasty, non-consultative, and opaque shift in tax policy is damaging not only in terms of business operations but also in terms of national economic direction.

The BMP has committed to raising this issue at every relevant forum and will push for the reversal of this policy. Leading business voices from across the country are aligning in opposition to the shift, underscoring the need for a tax system that encourages exports, supports economic stability, and fosters a cooperative relationship between the government and the private sector.





In brief

Alvarez to face Crawford

LAS VEGAS (Agencies): Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez will face Terence Crawford in a Las Vegas super-fight in September after outpointing William Scull to regain the undisputed super-middleweight title. Scull danced around for 12 rounds and frustrated Alvarez with potshots, as the Mexican superstar struggled to cut off the ring in a dull contest in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Ultimately, Alvarez's power punches to the body won him the bout with scores of 115-113, 116-112 and 119-109. "It was a boring fight. A fighter not trying to win and just trying to survive. I hate those kind of fighters," Alvarez, 34, said. Crawford entered the ring post-fight and two of the sport's biggest names posed for a face-off. They will meet at the 65,000-seater Allegiant Stadium on 12 September. Crawford, 37, is a four-division and two-weight undisputed champion but will be moving up from lightweight. "Everything happens for a reason and there's a reason why I'm here. In September I'll show the world what greatness looks like," he said. 'He just came to survive' - Alvarez frustrated in points win Fighting outside of Mexico or America for the first time as a professional, Alvarez made his ring walk at the unusually early 06:20 local time to cater for audiences back home. As he often does, Alvarez started slowly to feel out his opponent. He landed right and left hooks to the body in the second round and Scull sneaked an uppercut through Alvarez's guard in the third. But Alvarez was unable to apply any real pressure and was being made to miss by 32-year-old Cuban Scull's movement. Scull walked back to the corner smiling after the seventh, as if he felt he was on course for the upset. With little action happening inside the ring, the cameras panned to a bored-looking Crawford at ringside.

Hanif Muhammad ground opened

KARACHI (PPI) Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday inaugurated the Hanif Mohammad Cricket Ground at Hill Park, highlighting his administration's dedication to restoring public areas and providing quality recreational facilities for residents. During the event, the mayor emphasized the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's ongoing efforts to improve the city's parks, playgrounds, and public zones, aiming to make them healthy and inclusive spaces. "Karachi's historic buildings and public spaces are being returned to the people," Mayor Wahab declared. He mentioned that Frere Hall, Khaliq Dina Hall, and soon Denso Hall would be accessible to the public. Renovations at Empress Market are underway, with plans to create a cultural activity zone. The Mayor invited creative individuals to host events at these heritage sites and announced the rehabilitation of 50 parks city-wide in 2025, with two inaugurations set for later this week in District West and District South. The newly opened cricket ground, named after Pakistan's cricket icon Hanif Mohammad, is a green space developed on a former lake. It includes facilities for cricket, football, and walking tracks for women and seniors. "This project aligns with the Pakistan Peoples Party's vision to offer high-quality public amenities," the mayor stated. He suggested dedicating large parks to families on weekends and urged the media to gather public feedback on the proposal.



BRENTFORD: Kevin Schade of Brentford celebrates scoring their 3rd goal during the Premier League match between Brentford FC and Manchester United FC.

Brentford beat Man Utd in thriller to boost Europe hopes

LONDON (Agencies): Brentford kept their hopes of European qualification alive by coming from behind to beat Manchester United in a 4-3 thriller at the Gtech Community Stadium. Mason Mount gave the visitors the lead with just his second goal for the club, finishing off a fine cross from winger Alejandro Garnacho. Brentford equalised when captain Mikkel Damsgaard saw his cross deflect in off defender Luke Shaw, who was captaining a much-changed United side. The Bees took the lead six minutes later in controversial fashion, when Kevin Schade towered over United defender Tyler Fredricson to power in his 10th goal of the season with a superb header. However, United were furious when play wasn't stopped after defender Matthijs de Ligt went down with an injury earlier in the move. Schade wrapped up the three points 20 minutes from time, heading in his second of the day from close range from a Bryan Mbeumo cross. But

Brentford were not done there, with the Bees cutting through United's defence to allow Michael Kayode to slip in Yoane Wissa for a fourth of the afternoon. Argentina international Garnacho scored a stunning long-range effort eight minutes from time to give United a sliver of hope. United then ensured it was a nervy finish for Brentford when second half substitute Amad Diallo scored five minutes into seven added minutes of injury time, but the Bees saw out the win. The defeat leaves United in 15th, on 39 points from 35 matches, while Brentford move into ninth, one point behind eighth-placed Bournemouth. United rue De Ligt injury Publicly, Ruben Amorim said the trip to Brentford was about getting the three points to end a run of six matches without a win in the Premier League. Privately, he would have confessed that coming through the game unscathed and without any injury wor-

ries was all that mattered before Thursday's Europa League semi-final second leg against Athletic Bilbao. The Portuguese coach made eight changes to his side from the team that beat Bilbao 3-0 on Thursday, with Patrick Dorgu, Manuel Ugarte and Garnacho the only players to retain their spots. If Schade putting Brentford ahead with their second goal in six minutes was tough to watch, then the image of De Ligt clutching his hamstring and asking to be substituted was even worse. The Dutchman pulled up in the move that led to Brentford's winner and remained on the ground as Schade exploited United's lack of aerial presence at the back. The 25-year-old was making his first start since missing six matches throughout April with an ankle injury. With Bilbao on Thursday and a possible Europa League final on the horizon, Amorim was counting on the experience and physicality of De Ligt for the run-in.

Ledecky breaks first world record in seven years



FLORIDA (Agencies): American swimming great Katie Ledecky has set her first world record in seven years. The 28-year-old won the 800m freestyle at the Tyr Pro Series meet in Florida in eight minutes and 4.12 seconds, beating a record she posted nine years ago. The time bettered the previous mark of 8:04.79, which the nine-time Olympic champion set while winning gold at the Rio 2016 Games. It is the sixth time that Ledecky has set a new

mark in the event since taking the record from Great Britain's two-time Olympic champion Rebecca Adlington in 2013. Before her latest feat, Ledecky's most recent world record had come in the 1500m freestyle in May 2018 and she holds four in total - for long and short course in both the 800m and 1500m freestyle. Ledecky, who swept both titles at both the Paris 2024 and Tokyo 2020 Games, has hit some fine form over the past week. She posted her second-

fastest 400m freestyle time on Thursday - her best in nine years - and the second-fastest 1500m freestyle time in history on Wednesday. Earlier on Saturday, compatriot Gretchen Walsh beat her own 100m butterfly world record, clocking 55.09 seconds. The 22-year-old holds the most current world records with nine - five individual and four relays. Both Walsh and Ledecky be looking to add to their tallies of World Championship medals at the 2025 edition in Singapore from 11 July-3 August.

Mbappe maintains Real Madrid Liga dream in Celta thriller

MADRID (AFP): Kylian Mbappe struck twice as Real Madrid held off Celta Vigo with a thrilling 3-2 win to stay within sight of La Liga leaders Barcelona. After the Catalans scraped a comeback win at Valladolid on Saturday, Madrid survived a late Celta fightback to maintain the four-point gap ahead of next Sunday's Clasico. Defending champions Madrid, second, took a three-goal lead but were left clinging on at the Santiago Bernabeu against a Celta side seventh and hoping to qualify for European football next season. "The game seemed finished... you have to remember we're without six defenders and we're not always capable of solving these things," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. "Yes it could have been dealt with better, we suffered a bit, but it's a nice victory."

Madrid's Champions League defence crumbled and Los Blancos were also beaten in the Copa del Rey final against Barcelona last week, but Los Blancos are still hopeful of overhauling Hansi Flick's side in La Liga. "We had a very good first half (but)... we fell apart, these things can't happen, it's happened to us a lot," admitted Real Madrid midfielder Fede Valverde on the club's television channel. "We left a lot of minutes for them to get comfortable and they are a great team and they put us in a tough spot."

Ancelotti's side came into the game with a spate of defensive injuries but after riding out an early wave of Celta chances took control, with Turkish 20-year-old Arda Guler pulling the strings. With Rodrygo Goes out with illness the youngster started in his stead and took full advantage. Guler directed a spectacular overhead effort wide of goal in the opening stages, showing his ambition has no limits. Former Barcelona defender Marcos Alonso headed just over and then forced a fine save from Thibaut Courtois, as Celta threatened.

Aurelien Tchouameni headed over when well-placed at the other end, as Madrid stifled the visitors. 'Last chance' Madrid opened the scoring through Guler after 33 minutes, when the playmaker cleverly worked some space in the box and then brilliantly curled a strike past the reach of Vicente Guaita. Mbappe doubled Madrid's lead after 39 minutes at the sharp end of a rapid breakaway. Courtois saved well from Borja Iglesias and immediately Madrid thrust forward, with Bellingham setting Mbappe free down the right. The French superstar ruthlessly lashed past Guaita from just inside the area. Just three minutes into the second half, Mbappe struck again for his 24th league goal of the season, putting him one behind the top scorer, Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski.

Guler was the creator, playing in the striker with a perfectly-weighted ball and Mbappe finished low with a stroke of his left boot. It seemed the game was won for Madrid but Javier Rodriguez pulled Celta back into it with a finish from close range after a corner was wrongly awarded to Celta. Lucas Vazquez blocked Pablo Duran's backheeled effort on the line but Rodriguez was on hand to pounce.

Shadab set to miss United's game against Gladiators

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Islamabad United captain Shadab Khan is expected to miss at least one more game as he recovers from a groin injury. The full impact of the injury is yet to be determined, and United have consulted a doctor from the UK for a complete diagnosis. It is their game at home - against Quetta Gladiators in Rawalpindi - which looks set to come too soon for the United captain. ESPNcricinfo understands United are confident of Shadab's availability during the later stages of the season, with the side on the brink of making the play-offs after winning the first five games of the season. Shadab picked up the

injury during United's game against Peshawar Zalmi on Friday while batting. An official statement from United said that Shadab had experienced discomfort in his groin during his innings. He subsequently did not bowl or take the field in the second innings, with United ultimately falling short. Shadab then missed his side's game on Saturday against Quetta Gladiators, with Salman Agha deputising in his absence. United lost a thrilling contest in Lahore in the final over to slump to their third defeat of the season, consequently relinquishing the top spot to the Gladiators. Shadab's form has been a vital component of United's

success in the first half of their campaign, playing a number of handy cameos in the middle order. However, it is the return of his bowling form that has been the brightest spark. His nine wickets place him in the top ten wicket-takers in the PSL this year, but it is his economy - a consistent weakness of late - that stands out. Shadab has a superior economy rate (6.70) to all spinners in the league bar Mohammad Nabi and Sikandar Raza, each of whom has fewer wickets to their names. That it has been achieved as a legspinner makes the numbers even more impressive; no other legspinner has managed an economy rate lower than 7.64.



SHEFFIELD: Zhao Xintong of China plays a shot in session one of Final match against Mark Williams of Wales on day 16 of Halo World Championship 2025.

Zhao dominates Williams 7-1

LONDON (AFP): Zhao Xintong made a blistering start in his bid to become the first Chinese player to win the World Snooker Championship, dominating Sunday's opening session to lead veteran Mark Williams 7-1. At the age of 50, three-time world champion Williams is attempting to make history of his own by becoming the oldest winner of snooker's most important title, surpassing Ronnie O'Sullivan, who was 46 years and 148 days old when he won his modern-day record seventh global crown in 2022. Williams, who fought back from 7-3 down to beat Judd Trump in his semi-final, still has time to recover. The final at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre in northern England is a best-of-35 frames contest. The Welshman has defied conventional wisdom by reaching the final as a 50-year-old with eye-

sight problems, but to enjoy a fourth global triumph, he will likely need his opponent to suffer a dramatic collapse. On his way to his first appearance in the final, Zhao, playing as an amateur as he continues his comeback after a 20-month ban for involvement in a betting scandal, came through four rounds of qualifying. He produced a stunning display to thrash O'Sullivan 17-7 with a session to spare in his semi-final. On Sunday he was in commanding form from the start taking each of the first three frames on Sunday, including two century breaks. Williams reduced fellow left-hander Zhao's lead to 3-1 just prior to the mid-session interval. During the break in play, World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association chairman Jason Ferguson was in no doubt about what it would mean for the sport as the 28-year-old Zhao

to win the final. "I think he has the potential to become the biggest star in the sport," Ferguson told the BBC. "Certainly the earning opportunities for someone like him are immense. It's a huge nation." When play resumed, Zhao, only the second player from China to reach the world final after Ding Junhui, restored his three-frame advantage with a break of 57. Williams found some semblance of form with a break of 61, more than double his previous best Sunday, only to misjudge a cannon off a black with the frame at his mercy. He was then unable to make a fine cut on the red and Zhao cleaned up. Zhao finished the session in style, extending his lead with a break of 104 before a superb plant on a long red led to a contribution of 83 that put him six frames ahead. The final resumes at 1800 GMT Sunday.

Desert Flower wins 1000 Guineas



LONDON (AFP): Trainer Charlie Appleby and jockey William Buick celebrated a Guineas double as Desert Flower won the English 1000 Guineas in impressive style at Newmarket on Sunday. The even money favourite -- making it five wins in five starts -- rounded off an exceptional weekend for owners Godolphin. Aside from both Guineas -- Ruling Court winning the 2000 on Saturday -- they also swept the Kentucky Oaks and the 'Run for the Roses' the Kentucky Derby. Appleby and Buick are the first trainer/jockey combination to achieve the Guineas double since Aidan O'Brien and Kieren Fallon in 2005 (Footstepsinthesand win-

ning the 2000 and Virginia Waters the 1000). For Norway-born Buick it was his first taste of 1000 Guineas glory. "I am a very happy man, amazing filly," said Buick. "It means everything. What a weekend for Godolphin. I cannot put it into words what this means. "We had to make the running and she showed her class. A beautiful filly. "This is what dreams are made of. To be part of the Godolphin operation is very special," added the 36-year-old. Appleby, 49, said it was the icing on the cake for the Godolphin Operation, the brainchild of Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum. "First and foremost it is great for Sheikh

Mohammed," he said. "For the team in the USA and here it has been an amazing weekend. Huge team effort. What they have achieved is remarkable. "Great ride by William and it is amazing to train the double." Desert Flower came home clear of outsiders Flight (28/1) and Simmering (33/1) both trained by young gun Ollie Sangster. The trainer's grandfather the late Robert Sangster was once the dominant owner but won the 1000 Guineas only once, with the Tommy Stack-trained Las Meninas in 1994. For his grandson it was a dream day. "We are elated," he said. "To be second and third is just fantastic. "To run Desert Flower close like that is a real feather in the cap. "To be at the top table like that is wonderful, as we are not used to supping at it." Godolphin's delight was in stark contrast to their great Irish rivals Coolmore as Aidan O'Brien's hotly-fancied Lake Victoria finished sixth of the 10 runners -- her first defeat in six races.

Litton Das named Bangladesh T20I captain

DHAKA (Agencies): Wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das has been formally announced as Bangladesh's T20I captain, while offspinner Mahedi Hasan has been named his deputy for the seven away T20Is against UAE and Pakistan in May-June. Litton replaces Najmul Hossain Shanto in the role after the 26-year-old quit as Bangladesh's T20I captain earlier this year. Litton had also led Bangladesh in a three-match T20I series in the West Indies last December, with Shanto unavailable due to a hamstring injury. Bangladesh had clean-swept the hosts 3-0. Litton has led Bangladesh in one Test, seven ODIs and four T20Is, but this is the first time that he has been named full-time captain in any format. The 30-year-old was recent-

ly ruled out of PSL 2025, where he was part of Karachi Kings, after he sustained a finger injury during training. He has since recovered. Shanto, meanwhile, is one of five players who have returned to Bangladesh's T20I squad. Apart from him, the national selectors have also included Towhid Hridoy, Tanvir Islam, Mustafizur Rahman and Shoriful Islam in the 16-member squad. Hridoy had also missed the West Indies series due to an injury, while Mustafizur was attending to a personal issue at the time. There was, however, no place for Afif Hossain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Ripon Mondol and Taskin Ahmed. Taskin is recovering from an ankle injury, while Mehidy's exclusion is

mildly surprising given he has been part of Bangladesh's leadership group in recent months. Bangladesh will first play two T20Is against UAE in Sharjah on May 17 and 19. They will then leave for Pakistan to play a five-match T20I series, which begins on May 25. The series will conclude on June 3. Bangladesh squad for T20Is in UAE and Pakistan Litton Das (capt), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain, Jaker Ali, Rishad Hossain, Mahedi Hasan (vice-capt), Tanvir Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, Hasan Mahmud, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Nahid Rana and Shoriful Islam.





## In brief

### Honey Trap gang busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have made significant progress in the investigation of notorious "Marina Khan gang" involved in blackmailing and armed robbery through honey traps. According to SP Sadar Muhammad Nabil Khokhar, an additional Rs. 533,000 has been recovered from the gang. This is in addition to Rs. 250,000 and weapons that were seized earlier. The gang, led by Marina Khan a Pakistani-origin Malawian from East Africa included her husband Bilal and members Farooq, Tayyab, Kamran, and Abdul Jabbar. Police said Marina Khan would contact victims on social media and invite them to meet. When the victims arrived, other gang members would target them at gunpoint and rob them of cash and valuables. SP Khokhar said that the accused will be presented in court with strong evidence. "Those who blackmail and rob innocent people cannot escape the law," he said, adding that they are aiming for the strict punishment against such elements.

### Street criminals arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a four-member gang involved in several street crimes across the city. According to SP Sadar Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar, the gang members were identified as Jawad, Shahzada, Raiyat Abbas, and Ali, who were involved in multiple incidents of robbery and snatching. Police recovered two stolen motorcycles, Rs. 8,500 in cash, and three mobile phones from the suspects. Weapons used during the crimes were also seized. During questioning, the accused admitted to commit crimes in different areas of the city. They are now being shifted to jail for an identification parade, where more details are expected to come to light. SP Khokhar said the police will present solid evidence in court, and the suspects will be prosecuted. He added that it is the prime duty of police to protect the lives and property of people.

### Use helmet for safety urged

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

### Impersonator busted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police's Sumbal Police Station team arrested a three-member organized gang involved in looting citizens while impersonating police officers. An official told APP on Sunday that the suspects were identified as Kashif, Haider Ali, and Shehbaz. They were found in possession of stolen cash, police uniforms, handcuffs, and weapons.



ISLAMABAD: Vehicles on their way at IJP Road during heavy rain that experienced the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## DG Hajj mission pledges best possible services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Hajj Mission Director General Abdul Wahab Somro said on Sunday that Pakistani pilgrims continue to arrive in Madinah Munawwarah as per schedule, thanks to seamless flight operations and exceptional arrangements by Saudi authorities, relevant departments and the mission.

The Director General (DG) of Pakistan's Hajj Mission while in an interview with Radio Pakistan's program assured that pilgrims will enjoy a seamless journey, pledging to provide the best possible services for Pakistani pilgrims, ensuring a smooth and hassle-free experience for them.

The Pakistan Hajj Mission, in close collaboration with Saudi authorities has undertaken meticulous planning to ensure seamless facilitation for pilgrims throughout their entire journey, he added. The DG highlighted significant upgrades in facilities under the Government Hajj Scheme this year, noting the continuation of the popular Short Hajj package, which was introduced last year and has proven to be a success.

"Pilgrims can now select accommodations tailored to their needs, with options for two-bed and three-bed rooms, especially designed to cater the need of family requirements," according to the DG. The Hajj Mission has secured around 93,000 beds for Pakistani pilgrims, with notable amenities including sofa beds and personal storage shelves in Mina, a first in Pakistan's Hajj history, as highlighted by Abdul Wahab Somro, enhancing pilgrims' comfort and convenience.

## Kashmiris' loyalty to Pakistan unshakeable

ISLAMABAD (APP): The President of the Muslim League-Nawaz Azad Kashmir, Shah Ghulam Qadir reasserted Sunday that AJK and Occupied Kashmir remain resolutely united with Pakistan's armed forces, unwavering in their allegiance and India can never alter the Kashmiris' deep-rooted affection for Pakistan, which is rooted in their unwavering commitment to the Kashmir cause.

In an exclusive conversation with PTV news channel, he emphasized that Kashmiris stand firm in their support for Pakistan and its armed forces, with their hearts beating for Pakistan. Shah Ghulam Qadir stated that there is no confusion among Kashmiris regarding their support for Pakistan.

He highlighted that recent public gatherings on April 29 and May 1 in AJK demonstrated overwhelming enthusiasm, with participants reaffirming their solidarity with Pakistan's armed forces. Ghulam Qadir further emphasized that India should consider accepting Pakistan's proposal for a thorough and impartial investigation into the incident.

This investigation would ideally be conducted by credible international institutions, ensuring a fair and transparent process, he added. By doing so, both countries can work towards uncovering the truth and potentially easing tensions, he suggested.

He also criticized India's actions in Kashmir, stating that the country's behavior has been exposed as deceitful. They specifically condemned India's military operations in the Kashmir Valley, describing them as oppressive. He also appealed to the international community to take notice of the situation and hold India accountable for its handling of the Phalgama incident.

He attributed the mishandling of the incident to India, emphasizing that the country bears responsibility for its actions and the consequences that followed.

He expressed solidarity with Pakistan, stating that Kashmir will remain supportive of Pakistan, unwaveringly.

He said the "Drugs! Not Anymore" campaign resulted in the arrest of 2,896 suspects and recovery of large quantities of narcotics, while over 21,000 cases were registered and thousands of absconders and habitual criminals apprehended. He said the Islamabad Police provided security for 11 international conferences, 12 foreign delegations, 69 VVIP movements, 497 protests, and 756 major events throughout the year.

He said multiple citizen-centric services such as the online Women Police Station, IGP Complaint Cell (1715), ITP facilitation for senior citizens, and community engagement programs were also launched to promote public trust and cooperation.

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2 suspects detained in Takhar

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Two individuals have been arrested on murder charges in northern Takhar province, police official said on Sunday. According to a statement from the provincial police headquarters, the two men allegedly stabbed a person to death in the Zargari area of Taloqan City following a family dispute. The suspects were detained during an operation conducted by security forces from the 4th Police District after an investigation into the incident.

Cricket tournament started

NANGARHAR (TOLONews): The four-day First-Class Cricket Tournament starts today (Monday) in Nangarhar, organized by the Afghanistan Cricket Board. Teams Hindukush, Maiwand, Pamir, and Mahipar will compete in the tournament. Officials from the Afghanistan Cricket Board told TOLONews that the matches will be held at two cricket grounds in Nangarhar province, featuring both national and domestic players.

Agricultural and Livestock Products Exhibition kicks off

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock has reported an increase in the number of visitors to the 32nd Agricultural and Livestock Products Exhibition in Badam Bagh, Kabul. The ministry also emphasized continued efforts to hold more exhibitions. Ghulam Mohammad Kazim Shahamat, spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, told TOLONews: "The number of visitors and attendees has increased compared to previous years. The Ministry considers this increase significant and fruitful."

Sectors and stressed that more support should be provided to farmers and industrialists in the country. Mohammad Haroon, an exhibition visitor, said: "When such exhibitions are held, our farmers and industrialists are encouraged. We visited this exhibition, and the public turnout was also very good." Mashooqullah, another visitor, said: "The products of our farmers, orchard owners, and traders help boost the economy, create job opportunities, and pave the way for exports."

Samiullah, one of the stallholders, told a TOLONews reporter: "We had many customers and signed contracts. A lot of people come to see the domestic products." Hanifa, another stallholder, said: "We are very happy. We have already sold a large part of what we brought to the exhibition. Some said they would come again."

Herat to launch industrial township

HERAT (TOLONews): Local officials in Herat have announced plans to develop an industrial township aimed at supporting small-scale industries and investors in the province. The planned industrial area, covering 1,000 acres, will be established in the western part of Herat city. Mohammad Yousuf Saeedi, spokesperson for the Herat governor, said: "The land survey and design work has been completed. The proposal will soon be sent to the capital for approval, and practical work on the 1,000 acres of land will begin shortly."

The purpose of the township is to support local entrepreneurs, reduce unemployment, and boost domestic production. According to the Herat Chamber of Industries and Mines, hundreds of investors are interested in investing in small-scale industries. Torkyalai Ghowsi, deputy head of the chamber, said: "When our investors submit proposals, we can process their requests more quickly. Hundreds of investors are waiting for land."

Small industries is key to achieving national self-sufficiency. Mohammad Yousuf Amin, executive head of the chamber, said: "This initiative is highly effective. It will reduce our reliance on imports of basic industrial goods, and our traders and investors will contribute to the growth of national trade and economy."

IE restores thousands of military vehicles



KANDAHAR (BNA): Since the return to power of the Islamic Emirate, 12,000 military vehicles have been repaired and made operational at the workshop of the Kandahar Police Command, according to local officials. Hafiz Rahmatullah Anas, head of the repair unit at the Kandahar Police Command, told Bakhtar

News Agency that since the Islamic Emirate's return, 12,000 military vehicles have been overhauled, with 2,300 of them repaired during the past solar year (1403) alone. According to Anas, the repaired fleet includes Rangers, Internationals, Humvee tanks, and a smaller number of Toyota vehicles. He added that many of

these vehicles had been damaged due to improper use during the previous administration. It is worth noting that, following the Islamic Emirate's return to power, thousands of military vehicles have been repaired and made ready for use by the technical teams of the Ministries of National Defense and Interior Affairs.

Two killed in natural disasters

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): Two individuals have been killed and three others injured as a result of natural disasters in northeastern Badakhshan province, an official said on Sunday. Information and Culture Director Eng. Zabihullah Amiri told Pajhwok Afghan News the Faizabad-Baharak highway had closed in Targani, Aab Afchak and Payanshahr village of Baharak district due to Saturday's flooding. "On Sunday morning, the 219th Omar Sales Division's machinery, in coordination with the Public Works Department, started clearing the Faizabad-Baharak road of flood sediments. God willing, the road will reopen soon," he added. Work on clearing roads in Juram, Yamgan, Karan Wa Manjan, Shuhada, Warduj, Zebak, Ishkashim, Wakhan and Shaghnan districts, which were blocked two days ago due to floods, is continuing.

Disaster management official Maulvi Mohammad Akram Akbari said at least two individuals had been killed and three others injured in natural disasters. He explained the casualties occurred in of Ab Afchak and Payanshahr areas of Baharak district due to flash floods and lightning strikes. Three people were injured due to heavy rain and the destruction of a residential house in the Ghani village of Warduj district. They were transferred to a health centre. Overnight floods in the Koh ar, Hazrat Syed, Dasht Gharami and the Yamkan Bazaar district caused huge financial losses to the residents, Akbari added. The damage caused by Friday night's floods in Juram, which destroyed dozens of residential homes, agricultural canals, drinking water networks, roads, orchards on hundreds of acres and agricultural land, had been surveyed and aid would be sent to the affected people.

55m collected from electricity debtors

NANGARHAR (BNA): Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat's office in Nangarhar has collected over 55 million Afghanis from electricity debtors. Mawlawi Jan Mohammad Enqilabi, the head of the department, announced that a total of 55.8 million Afghanis have been recovered. He highlighted that a targeted program was implemented across Jalalabad city, aimed at disconnecting the meters of those who of their debts exceeding 3,000 Afghanis. Emphasizing the importance of timely payments, Enqilabi urged all subscribers to fulfill their electricity bills promptly. He reiterated that consistent bill collection is a priority for the department, as it contributes to the maintenance of electrical services and boosts national revenue.

Major commercial center to be built in Jawzjan

JAWZJAN (BNA): For the first time, a major commercial center is being constructed in Jawzjan province with a \$10 million investment by the Jawzjan Union of Trade and Construction Companies. According to Bakhtar News Agency, officials of the union stated during the groundbreaking ceremony that the Jawzjan Union of Trade and Construction Companies, which includes 109 construction companies and 82 trading companies, aims to increase investment in the development of economic infrastructure and other areas through the establishment of this commercial center, which will include 2,320 shops. They also mentioned plans to dig 20 deep wells in the village of Jagdalak in Sheberghan city and transfer the water to the Siah and



Safid rivers to supply drinking water to the people. Additionally, a house-to-house gas distribution network is also on their agenda. Meanwhile, Qari Gul Haidar Shafaq, the governor of Jawzjan, said that

the Islamic Emirate has provided suitable opportunities for both domestic and foreign investors and will support investments in all sectors within the province. Jawzjan, with its 24-hour electricity and rich gas

resources, is considered one of the provinces with high investment potential. Officials hope that such projects will pave the way for industrial growth and the establishment of manufacturing factories in the province.

Afghan migrants call for urgent int'l support amid deportations

KABUL (TOLONews): A large number of Afghan migrants are complaining about various challenges in these countries. They criticize the continued arrests and forced returns of Afghan migrants by the police in both countries and call on refugee-supporting organizations to address their problems. Some of these migrants say that after the invalidation of census documents, Afghan migrants who went to the Kafalat office in Iran were issued exit permits. Marufa Eshaqi, an Afghan migrant in Iran, told TOLONews: "The arrest and deportation of

migrants, especially those with census documents, continues in Iran. When they visit the Kafalat office, they are issued exit permits requiring them to leave Iran within 15 days to a month." Safar Barez, another Afghan migrant in Iran, says: "The situation is becoming more difficult day by day, restrictions are increasing daily, and more people are being deported." However, Iran is not the only country where Afghan migrants face various challenges. Many Afghan migrants also report continued arrests and mistreatment by the host country, urging refugee-support

organizations to seriously address their concerns. Malak Mujahid Shinwari, an Afghan migrant, told TOLONews: "There are 1.4 million holders of PoR cards and 800,000 holders of ACC cards living here who have businesses and cannot wrap up and relocate their work in just one or two months. They are heavily involved in commercial activities." Atiqullah Mansour, another Afghan migrant, said: "Authorities in Afghanistan are obliged to engage, through mediation by international organizations including UNHCR and IOM and under interna-

tional documents such as the Geneva Convention, in negotiations with officials in Islamabad and Tehran to resolve the issues of Afghan migrants in both countries." Meanwhile, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent has issued a statement saying that due to the intensifying return crisis, the organization has launched an emergency appeal to support returning Afghan migrants.

Takhar outplay Badakhshan to clinch title

FAIZABAD (Pajhwok): A 50-over cricket series, featuring two provincial teams, has concluded in northeastern Badakhshan province, an official said on Sunday. Takhar Club won the tournament, said Badakhshan Cricket Director Syed Noorullah Quraishi. He said the objective behind the event was to promote and popularise cricket among youth from both provinces. The official said the matches were organised as part of this year's plan by the provincial cricket department, providing players with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and gain experience in a friendly yet competitive environment. Takhar clinched the title by securing two wins in the three-match tournament. Saboor Stanikzai, manager of Takhar Club, welcomed the organisation of the series. "We are working to create more opportunities like this to help players grow in talent and experience. We also hope to host a similar series in Takhar in the near future," he said.

Stray dog problem fuels rabies fears

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Residents of southeastern Khost province are increasingly concerned about a surge in incidents of dog bites with the onset of warmer weather, leading to a rise in rabies cases. They fear if no preventive measures are taken, many more people could be bitten. However, officials say vaccines are available, but a shortage of poisonous materials has hindered their efforts to eliminate stray dogs. Haji Salem Zadrar, 60-year-old elder man, whose eight-year-old granddaughter recently died after being bitten by a rabid dog, said: "My eight-year-old granddaughter was bitten by a rabid dog and died on the twelfth day. There were no vaccines available at the government hospital. I arranged three doses at a private clinic, but it was too late. The doctor said the virus had reached her brain very quickly."

Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News, he urged government officials to not only ensure vaccination but also to eliminate stray dogs promptly in both urban and rural areas, as rabid dog bite cases have increased across the province. Other residents of the province also stressed that, with the weather getting hotter by passing each day, officials, particularly the Department of Public Health, should launch public awareness campaigns to educate people on protection against rabid dogs. Wazir Padsha, an inhabitant of the province, told Pajhwok: "Before we may lose another person, child or youth, we must collectively take strong action." Shoaib, another resident, said: "As this is the season when raid dogs increase, people must report any suspected dogs to the relevant authorities to prevent further incidents." Meanwhile, Khost pub-

lic health officials said that compared to last year, there has been a decrease in rabid dog bite cases in the province. Dr Sher Agha Zadrar, deputy head of the Department of Public Health in Khost, told Pajhwok that the main challenge they face is the shortage of poisonous powder used to eliminate rabid and stray dogs. He said: "We have made preparations for treatment, and we have sufficient supplies, including vaccines against rabies available in the civil hospital and district clinics. As the weather becomes warmer, these cases are likely to increase further, but efforts will be made to control the situation." According to Dr Zadrar, over 1,300 cases of rabid dog bites were recorded in Khost last year, while 221 cases have been registered during the past three months of the current year.

Seven killed, two injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Three countries announced nearly \$4.4 million in aid to Afghanistan last week, when Afghan officials visited Qatar, Iran and Uzbekistan. Also last week, the United Nations said in a survey that women's access to various services in Afghanistan has been restricted, but the Islamic Emirate rejected the report as baseless. Casualties Seven people were killed and two others were injured in separate incidents of violence in Afghanistan last week. Last week, Sayed Tayeb Hammad, Nangarhar police spokesman, in a statement said: "Three Mujahideen were martyred and two others were injured by their cook at a checkpoint in Sherzad district of Nangarhar."

University and unidentified gunmen shot dead a mother and her young son in Badakhshan and a 20-year-old man in Balkh. In the previous week, seven people had been killed and five others injured in various incidents in Afghanistan. Before the regime change in 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would get killed and maimed in clashes and bomb blasts every week. Afghan delegation visits Qatar, Iran, Uzbekistan Afghan Acting Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi visited the Qatari capital Doha and discussed Qatar's support for the Afghan people, better management of humanitarian aid, and scientific and cultural cooperation with Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Qatar's Minister of State for International Affairs

Maryam bint Ali Al-Musnad, and Minister of Higher Education Lolwa Al-Khatir. In response, Qatari officials emphasized their country's support for the Afghan people and continued efforts to achieve security, stability, prosperity in Afghanistan. According to reports, last week, Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Maulvi Sadri Azam Osmani, led a delegation to Iran to participate in the 7th International Exhibition of Export Capabilities (Iran Expo) and met with various officials and businessmen there. During these meetings, they discussed attracting foreign investors, developing the agriculture and livestock sector, strengthening economic relations, and providing facilities for the export and import of agricultural products, as well as solving the problems of Afghan refugees.

Similarly, Maulvi Osmani, while meeting a number of Pakistani businessmen in Iran, said that politics should be kept separate from trade and economy and that creating a gap between the two countries would cause economic harm to both sides. According to reports, Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce, Maulvi Ahmadullah Zahid led a delegation to Uzbekistan to further cement bilateral trade relations and economic cooperation. Baku hosts 20-nation Afghanistan summit Last week, a summit on Afghanistan, titled "Afghanistan: Regional Connectivity, Security and Development," was held in Baku, Azerbaijan. State Security Service Chief Ali Nagiov said that one of the main goals of the conference was to present a unified position against the destructive efforts of "terrorist groups and forces" that are creating chaos in Afghanistan. He said Afghanistan must find its place in the system of international relations and ensure peace in the country. Representatives from other countries also expressed their hope that the summit would create the necessary opportunities in this regard and that the international community would support lasting stability in Afghanistan. Afghan Refugees Last week, Afghan Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, in a meeting with the UN Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher, said that they will provide assistance to returning Afghan refugees in areas of clean water, health care and head.

The UNAMA head said she will attract more financial resources for the purpose. Hundreds of families are arriving in the country through Torkham and Spin Boldak crossings every day after neighbor country launched the second phase of forced deportation of Afghan refugees. He called on the United

Nations to fulfill its responsibility in this regard. Fletcher said that Afghans needed assistance and cooperation, and the United Nations was trying to provide assistance to Afghans in various fields. In addition, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, in a meeting with Acting Minister of Rural Development and Rehabilitation of Afghanistan Mullah Mohammad Yunus Akhundzada said that they will provide assistance to returning Afghan refugees in areas of clean water, health care and head.

The returning refugees are complaining about their mistreatment at the hands of neighbor country's police. The representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Afghanistan says nearly 144,000 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan. Human Rights UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher visited a hospital in southern Kandahar province said said the health sector in Afghanistan had been badly damaged due after the suspension of international aid. He asked policymakers to visit hospitals like the Kandahar hospital to see the negative effects of the suspension of aid. He said three million people in Afghanistan have been deprived of health services in the past few months due to the aid cuts. Last week, the United Nations Women's Organ-

ization published the results of a survey that Afghan women and girls face difficulties in accessing humanitarian aid, livelihoods, health, and education services. The report said cultural and social restrictions, a shortage of female workers in some sectors and economic difficulties have increased women's problems. However, the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, in response to the report, called these statements far from reality and emphasized that laws were implemented based on Sharia principles. The spokesman for the ministry, Saif al-Salam Khaybar, said: "This report is not only far from reality, but a clear violation of Islamic values and an insult to our Sharia." Aid continues Last week, Sweden announced \$2.2 million in aid to Afghanistan, South Korea \$1 million in aid and France announced 1 million in aid.





GAZA CITY: Shuruq Ayyad consoles her 12-year-old daughter Rahaf, who suffers from malnutrition, at a school-turned-shelter in al-Rimal in central Gaza City, on Sunday.

# Gaza rescuers say Israeli strikes kill 16, including 3 children

GAZA (AFP): Gaza's civil defense agency on Sunday said Israeli strikes on the Palestinian territory killed 16 people, including at least three children.

Six people were killed in overnight air strikes in Khan Yunis governorate, in the south of the Gaza Strip, civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal said. They included two boys aged five and two, in an apartment in Al-Mawasi.

The civil defense later

said 10 more people were killed in a strike on a tent also in Al-Mawasi, among them a child and seven women. The Israeli military did not immediately respond for comment when contact by AFP. A spokesperson said they were gathering details.

A military statement issued in the morning said the army had "struck more than 100 terrorist targets throughout the Gaza Strip" during the past two days.

It said soldiers found

"weapons caches" and killed "a number of terrorists" in the south.

Israel resumed its military offensive in Gaza on March 18 after a two-month truce in its war against Hamas, which was triggered by the Palestinian militant group's October 7, 2023 attack.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza on Sunday said at least 2,436 people have been killed since Israel resumed its

campaign in Gaza, bringing the war's overall death toll to 52,535.

Israel halted aid deliveries to Gaza, saying Hamas had diverted supplies. Israel says the blockade is meant to pressure the militants into releasing hostages held in the Palestinian territory.

UN agencies have urged Israel to lift restrictions, saying Gazans have been experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe and warning of famine.

## Putin says Russia has strength to finish Ukraine operation

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin said in remarks published on Sunday that Russia had sufficient strength and resources to take the war in Ukraine to its logical conclusion, though he hoped that there would be no need to use nuclear weapons.

Putin ordered thousands of Russian troops into Ukraine in February 2022, triggering Europe's biggest ground conflict since World War Two and the largest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the depths of the Cold War.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have been killed or injured and U.S. President Donald Trump opens new tab has repeatedly said he wants to end the "bloodbath" that his administration casts as a proxy war between the United States and Russia.

In a film by state television about Putin's quarter of a century as Russia's paramount leader entitled "Russia, Kremlin, Putin, 25 years", Putin was asked by a reporter about the risk of nuclear escalation from the Ukraine war.

"They wanted to provoke us so that we made mistakes," Putin said, speaking beside a portrait of Tsar Alexander III, a 19th century conservative who suppressed dissent. "There has been no need to use those weapons ... and I hope they will not be required."

"We have enough strength and means to bring what was started in 2022 to a logical conclusion with the outcome Russia requires."

Trump has been signalling for weeks that he is frustrated by the failure of Moscow and Kyiv to reach terms to end the war, though the Kremlin has said that the conflict is so complicated that the rapid progress Washington wants is difficult.

Former U.S. President Joe Biden, Western European leaders and Ukraine cast the invasion as an imperial-style land grab and repeatedly vowed to defeat Russian forces, which control about a fifth of Ukraine.

Putin portrays the war as a watershed moment in Moscow's relations

with the West, which he says humiliated Russia after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 by enlarging NATO and encroaching on what he considers Moscow's sphere of influence.

Trump has warned that the conflict could develop into World War Three. Former CIA Director William Burns has said there was a real risk in late 2022 that Russia could use nuclear weapons against Ukraine, an assertion dismissed by Moscow.

Putin, a former KGB lieutenant colonel who was handed the presidency on the last day of 1999 by an ailing Boris Yeltsin, is the longest serving Kremlin leader since Josef Stalin, who ruled for 29 years until his death in 1953.

Russian dissidents - most now either in jail or abroad - see Putin as a dictator who has built a brittle system of personal rule reliant on sycophancy and corruption that is leading Russia towards decline and turmoil.

Supporters cast Putin, who Russian pollsters

say has approval ratings of above 85%, as a saviour who pushed back against an arrogant West and put an end to the chaos which accompanied the 1991 disintegration of the Soviet Union.

In the carefully choreographed state television film, which gave viewers a rare look behind the notoriously closed life of the Russian president, Putin was shown offering chocolates and a fermented Russian milk drink to Pavel Zarubin, a top Kremlin correspondent, in his private Kremlin kitchen.

Putin said that he first knelt in prayer during the 2002 Nord-Ost Moscow theater crisis, when Chechen militants took over 900 people hostage. More than 130 hostages were killed.

"I don't feel like some kind of politician," Putin said of his 25 years in power as president and prime minister.

"I continue to breathe the very same air as millions of Russian citizens. It is very important. God willing that it continues as long as possible. And that it doesn't disappear."

## Pakistan is a peaceful Nuclear power: Murad

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, in an interview with a private TV channel, emphasised that Pakistan is a peaceful nuclear power and will continue to uphold its commitment to regional and global peace.

Speaking from the CM House, Mr Shah paid tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saying that he made Pakistan a nuclear-capable nation. "Despite being a nuclear power, Pakistan has always advocated peace," he said.

Murad Ali Shah criticised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for leveling baseless and false allegations against Pakistan regarding the recent Pahalgam incident. He asserted that no responsible nation should even contemplate nuclear warfare, calling such

rhetoric dangerous and irresponsible.

"After the Pahalgam drama, Pakistan extended an offer for transparent investigation, and now India has fallen into its own trap," he remarked. "India is out of options and is failing to find a face-saving exit. Its propaganda has collapsed."

The CM also praised Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, noting that the Deputy Prime Minister had effectively presented Pakistan's stance to the international community. He commended Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for giving a clear and firm response to India, stating that "India has resorted to such tactics in the past, but this time its attempts have failed."

Talking on the Indus Waters Treaty, Mr Shah stressed that India cannot unilaterally suspend the agreement. "If India attempts to cut off

Pakistan's water, it will be considered an act of war," he warned.

The CM further highlighted Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's role in resolving inter-provincial water disputes, saying: "Thanks to Bilawal's efforts, water-related issues among provinces have now been settled."

Reaffirming Pakistan's position, the Chief Minister said, "We are a peace-loving nation, but we also know how to defend our homeland. The Pakistani nation stands shoulder to shoulder with its armed forces. Whenever the country has faced a crisis, the people have always stood firm."

The chief minister concluded by noting that a session of the National Assembly has been scheduled for tomorrow, in which all political parties are expected to demonstrate national unity.

## Missile fired by Yemen's Houthis lands near Israel's main airport

BEN GURION AIRPORT, Israel (Reuters): A missile fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels towards Israel on Sunday landed near Ben Gurion Airport, the country's main international airport, sending a plume of smoke into the air and causing panic among passengers in the terminal building.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis, who claimed responsibility for the missile strike, have recently intensified missile launches at Israel, saying they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to retaliate.

"We attacked in the past, we will attack in the future," he said in a video circulated by his office.

A senior Israeli police commander, Yair Hetzroni, showed reporters a crater caused by the impact of the missile, which airport authorities said landed beside a road near a Terminal 3 parking lot. The airport lies near the major city of Tel Aviv.

"You can see the scene right behind us here, a hole that opened up with a diameter of tens of metres and also tens of metres deep," Hetzroni said, adding that there was no significant damage.

Israel's Channel 12 News said Netanyahu would meet security ministers and defence officials on Sunday to discuss a response.

Most attacks from Yemen have been intercepted by Israel's missile defence systems, apart from a drone strike that hit Tel Aviv last year. Sunday's missile was the only one of a series launched in the past few days that was not intercepted.

The Israel Defense Forces said it was investigating.

"Today (Sunday), at approximately 9:18 a.m. (0618 GMT), the IDF identified the launch of a missile from Yemen toward Israeli territory. According to protocol, sirens were sounded in a number of areas in Israel," the military said.

"Several attempts were made to intercept the missile. A hit was identified in the area of Ben Gurion Airport." A Reuters reporter at the airport heard sirens and saw passengers running towards safe rooms.

## Dar reaffirms Pak's vision for a peaceful neighbourhood

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday reaffirmed Pakistan's vision for a peaceful neighbourhood, enhanced trade and connectivity, sustainable development and prosperity.

The DPM/FM chaired a high-level meeting at the Foreign Ministry to follow up on the outcomes of his visit to Kabul, Afghanistan, on April 19, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

During the meeting, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and rele-

vant line ministries were briefed on progress in the implementation of earlier decisions.

**DPM Dar discusses regional developments with Malaysian FM**

Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday held a telephone conversation with Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Seri Mohamad Hasan.

"The DPM/FM briefed him on the current regional developments. He categorically rejected India's provocative actions, including its baseless allegations, inflammatory

propaganda, and its unilateral decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance—an outright violation of treaty provisions and international legal obligations," Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

He underscored Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and security while reserving the right to safeguard its sovereignty and national interest.

Foreign Minister Hasan supported Pakistan's position and called for restraint by all parties.

Both leaders agreed to maintain close contact on the evolving situation.

## PCC positions Pakistan as rising force

Continued from Front Page

Even Indian outlets like The Times of India have been compelled to cover Pakistan's breakthrough, acknowledging Pakistan's progress and expressing concerns on India's lack-luster crypto policies.

Just as cricket diplomacy once reshaped regional narratives, Pakistan is now winning at crypto diplomacy, and this time, the stakes are even higher.

With a lean, focused, and execution-first model, the PCC has transitioned

Pakistan from a passive observer to a serious regional contender, all in just 50 days.

Critics have long pushed the narrative of a digitally isolated Pakistan. But these recent developments show a different picture: Pakistan is not just opening its doors to innovation - it is sprinting toward leadership.

While India isolates its developers and imposes punitive regulations, Pakistan is extending a hand to global investors,

builders and technologists.

In a world where bureaucracy often stalls progress, PCC's 50-day sprint has defied expectations, putting Pakistan firmly on the map of global crypto power players.

CEO of PCC Bilal Bin Saqib also met the Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad bin Hajji Hasan, and discussed with him collaborative opportunities in blockchain technology, digital assets and Shariah-compliant finance.

# Aqua-Fire: The weaponization of water in South Asia

Ertaan Siddiqui

**FROM being the elixir of life to a potential catalyst for war, water, in South Asia, is metamorphosing into a contentious commodity. As tensions flare between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan, their shared rivers have been transformed into a geopolitical flashpoint. The delicate balance of the Indus Waters Treaty, once heralded as a triumph of transboundary cooperation, is now in jeopardy, jeopardizing not just regional stability but the lives of millions.**

In the volatile political climate of South Asia, particularly between nuclear-armed neighbors

India and Pakistan, water is no longer just a natural resource - it is a strategic instrument. The term "Aqua-Fire", though imaginative, captures a dangerous and very real possibility: the ignition of conflict through the manipulation of water resources.

At the heart of this issue lies the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)\*, a landmark agreement brokered by the World Bank in 1960, which has survived wars and diplomatic breakdowns between the two nations. Under the treaty, India gained control over the eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej), while Pakistan secured rights to the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab). It ensured water



security for Pakistan's agrarian economy and served as a model for transboundary water cooperation.

However, recent developments such as the

Pahalgam incident and India's belligerent rhetoric have jeopardized the longevity of the treaty. In the wake of potential military confrontation between the two arch

rivals, the IWT has been thrust into the limelight, with debates swirling over its future. While the feasibility of India stifling the flow of water to Pakistan is subject to debate, the

incident underscores the tenuous nature of regional relations.

The possibility of India altering or cutting off water flow even partially raises grave humanitarian and environmental concerns. The rivers of the Indus basin are the lifeblood of Pakistan's agriculture, drinking water, and energy production. The manipulation of these waters would not only cripple Pakistan's economy but could spark an escalation with unpredictable consequences.

As Leonardo da Vinci\* famously noted, "Water is the driving force of all nature." In this case, it could drive either cooperation or catastrophe. Turning rivers into weapons defies both eco-

logical ethics and the principles of international law. It threatens not just regional peace, but the lives of millions dependent on these waters.

Water should be a bridge, not a barrier. It should inspire collaboration, not conflict. The world must recognize that weaponizing water in a time of climate stress, population growth, and rising regional tensions is a perilous path. As Benjamin Franklin\* reminded us, "When the well's dry, we know the worth of water." Let not the people of South Asia learn this lesson through devastation and loss.

The consequences of turning rivers into weapons could be irreversible - ecological

degradation, food insecurity, forced migration, and even full-scale war. In a region where millions already face water scarcity and climate vulnerability, such actions would amount to collective punishment and a humanitarian crisis.

In the end, "Aqua-Fire" is not just a poetic juxtaposition - it is a stark warning. When water becomes fire, no one remains unburnt. The very resource that sustains life can also destroy it if manipulated with hostile intent. Peace and stability in South Asia cannot flow without the protection and preservation of its rivers. For where water is turned into fire, the flames are not just political - they are existential.

