

Constable shot dead
F.P. Report

BANNU: A police constable was martyred on the spot when some unidentified armed assailants opened fire on him in Bannu. The incident took place in Tarang area of Bannu. The deceased Ibrar was performing his duty in Investigation Branch and was going to school to pick his children. When he reached near Tarang graveyard unidentified gunmen opened fire on him and he died on the spot.



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Pakistan seeks peace with dignity: Bilawal

NEW YORK: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that he will become the voice of Pakistan at the United Nations. He expressed these remarks ahead of Pakistani delegation's diplomacy at international front to expose the nefarious designs of India.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, the PPP chairman said that Pakistan seeks peace with dignity. "As I arrive in New York to lead Pakistan's delegation at the UN, I carry a clear message: Pakistan seeks peace with dignity, dialogue with purpose, and partnerships built on justice," said Bilawal on his X post.

He added that the unresolved issue of Kashmir continues to threaten the regional peace and any aggression over shared water resources challenges not just Pakistan's sovereignty, but global stability. "We reject terrorism in all forms, yet oppose its misuse as a political tool to target Pakistan. Trade must become a bridge - not a battleground. It's time for the world to engage, not ignore," said Bilawal.

According to sources, the Pakistani delegation will meet ambassadors from the five permanent and nine non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Pakistani delegation will also brief the UN Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, and members of the Security Council. Meanwhile, Bilawal is scheduled to address a conference at the Middle East Institute, a US think tank, on June 5. The Pakistani delegation includes Dr Mosaddiq Malik, Senator Sherry Rehman, Engr Khurram Dastgir Khan, Tehmina Janjua, Jalil Abbas Jilani and Hina Rabbani Khar.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari led Pakistan's diplomatic mission to the United Nations and met Fu Cong, China's Permanent Representative there.

During the meeting, the



former foreign minister and Ambassador Fu Cong discussed India's aggression and the regional security situation. Bilawal expressed gratitude for China's support in response to India's provocative actions. He briefed the Chinese delegation on Pakistan's responsible approach following the Pahalgam attack, emphasizing that India rejected Pakistan's offer for neutral and impartial investigations.

He underscored that resolving the Kashmir issue is essential for lasting peace in South Asia. He urged China to play a role in line with UN resolutions, calling on the international community to move beyond crisis management and toward a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Earlier, the high-level delegations started their visit to world capitals from Monday to project Pakistan's perspective on the recent Indian aggression. Formed pursuant to the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the delegations would visit New York, Washington DC, London, Brussels and Moscow from 2 June 2025, according to a Foreign Office press release. A nine-member multiparty delegation is led by Chairman Pakistan People's Party, and former Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The other members of the delegation include Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Masood Malik; Chairperson of Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and former Minister for Information

and Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman; Chairperson of National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and former Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar; former Minister for Commerce, Defence and Foreign Affairs, Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan; former Minister for Maritime Affairs, Senator Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari; and Senator Bushra Anjum Butt.

The delegation also includes two former Foreign Secretaries, Ambassador (R) Jalil Abbas Jilani, who also served as Caretaker Foreign Minister, and Ambassador (R) Tehmina Janjua. Another delegation, led by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Syed Tariq Fatemi, will visit Moscow from June 2, 2025.

The delegations will highlight Pakistan's responsible and restrained conduct - seeking peace with responsibility - in the face of India's reckless and belligerent actions in violation of international law. They will also highlight that dialogue and diplomacy should take precedence over conflict and confrontation.

The delegations will underscore the imperative for the international community to play its due role in promoting a lasting peace in South Asia. The need for immediate resumption of the normal functioning of the Indus Waters Treaty will also be a key theme of the delegations' outreach. The delegations will engage in a series of meetings with the leadership of international bodies, public office holders, senior officials, parliamentarians, think tanks, media and diaspora. — Agencies

Simplified digital tax return system for public soon

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the government was determined to lead the country toward becoming a stable global economy through sustainable institutional reforms.

Chairing a review meeting of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) affairs, the prime minister directed hiring of internationally renowned companies for third-party validation of ongoing initiatives and reforms in FBR. The prime minister said that institutional reforms were progressing rapidly across all sectors, adding that all government institutions were working tirelessly to eliminate corruption and address other deficiencies, such as a lack of transparency, he said.

The recent positive economic indicators are clear proof of the correct government policies, the prime minister added. Expressing satisfaction over the recent performance of the faceless customs assessment system, the prime minister highlighted that reforms such as the faceless customs assessment system were yielding promising results in maintaining transparency.

"God willing, we will succeed in our struggle to make Pakistan economically stable," the prime minister added. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the recent performance of the faceless customs assessment system and progress on reforms in Pakistan Revenue Automation Limited (PRAL).

The implementation of the faceless customs assessment system has led to an overall increase in revenue and a significant reduction in customs clearance time, according to the briefing. The reform process in PRAL is progressing rapidly, the meeting was informed.

It was also informed in the meeting that a simplified digital tax return system for the general public will be implemented soon, and efforts were underway to introduce the digital tax return system in Urdu and other local languages for the convenience of ordinary users. Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Chairman FBR, and senior officials from relevant institutions attended the meeting.

ECP can summon PM: CEC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja on Monday said he could even summon the prime minister in case local bodies' (LB) elections were not held in Islamabad.

A five-member bench of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) heard the case of delay in holding LB polls in Punjab. "Elections should be held as soon as possible. The election commission cannot shut its eyes," he said categorically.

Briefing the bench on the occasion, Secretary ECP Umar Hameed said that LB polls were held in Punjab after a delay of three years. "Local governments in the province had completed their term on December 31, 2021," he said, adding, "Since 2019, five times changes were introduced in the laws governing local governments in Punjab."

The secretary further said that now it was for the sixth time that the laws were going to be changed. He went on to say that the ECP had heard the case of local bodies in Punjab in February. The CEC said he had himself appeared in the Supreme Court (SC) in connection with the case. "This cannot happen that the provincial government does not do legislation and elections are not held for five years."



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on FBR reforms.

Pakistan slams Indian leadership's remarks

— urges constructive engagement for regional peace

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday denounced a recent wave of antagonistic rhetoric emanating from Indian political leaders and the Spokesperson of India's Ministry of External Affairs, calling it a "deeply troubling mindset" that undermines regional peace and stability.

Responding to media queries regarding the remarks made on May 29—particularly those voiced during political events in Bihar—the Foreign Office Spokesperson stated that India's attempts to malign Pakistan were "divorced from reality" and indicative of a larger pattern of hostility over peace.

"Any attempt to portray Pakistan

as the source of regional instability is not only misleading but also an attempt to obscure India's own record, including documented support for terrorist activities inside Pakistan," the spokesperson said adding that these facts cannot be obscured by hollow narratives or diversionary tactics.

The Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains the core issue threatening peace and stability in the region, the spokesperson added.

He stressed that Pakistan will continue to stand firm in advocating for a just and lasting resolution to the Kashmir dispute in line with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. "To sidestep this fundamental

issue is to condemn the region to continued mistrust and potential confrontation."

The developments of recent weeks have once again underscored the utter futility of jingoism and coercion. India cannot and will not achieve its objectives through threats, misrepresentation, or force.

The FO spokesperson added that Pakistan remains committed to peace and constructive engagement, but it is equally resolved to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against any aggression. "Durable peace in South Asia requires maturity, restraint, and the courage to address the root causes of conflict—not short-sighted political posturing," the spokesperson concluded.

KP CM distributes cheques among artists

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, distributed cheques worth Rs. 100,000 each among artists and skilled individuals from different cultural fields during a ceremony held at the Chief Minister's House here on Monday.

The event was attended by Advisor to the CM on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzab, high ups of Culture and Tourism department, and a large number of artists belonging to different cultural fields. A total of 574 artists are being awarded these honorarium cheques amounting to Rs. 57.4 million in total.

Addressing the ceremony,

the Chief Minister emphasized the pivotal role of artists in society, calling them "the mirror and positive face" of the society. "Through their art, they bring to light the hidden human values within us," he said. He added that artists identify and highlight the social evils through their art and pave way for their correction.

Paying tribute to artists, he acknowledged their sacrifices alongside those of police and security forces in the fight against terrorism. Adding that "Until and unless we provide artists with opportunities, they cannot progress. Our government is committed to creating and providing such opportunities."

The Chief Minister said that the provincial government has approved the establishment of a Rs. 500 million endowment fund for artists. Furthermore, he announced to double the number of artists benefiting from government's financial support and increase the individual grant from Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 150,000.

To promote cultural activities, the Chief Minister also announced a 50% reduction in the booking fee of Nishtar Hall. He directed that the committee constituted for the welfare initiatives of artists must include representation from all artistic fields and ensure transparency and merit in its initiatives.

Over 118 projects shut down, says Ahsan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has stated that more than half of the national budget will be spent on debt repayment, and over 118 unnecessary or low-priority projects have been discontinued.

He was addressing a key meeting of the Annual Plan Coordination Committee (APCC), which he chaired. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister Khalid Maqbool, various federal secretaries, representatives from the State Bank of Pakistan, provincial governments, national and provincial institutions, and other senior officials.

Chief Economist Dr Imtiaz briefed participants on the upcoming annual development plan, economic roadmap, and priority targets. In his speech, Ahsan Iqbal said that due to the economic challenges of recent years, the consistent decline in the national development budget has become a major issue.

"Expanding development funds is the need of the hour, as citizens expect improvements in health, education, water, electricity, and infrastructure from elected governments," he added. He pointed out that managing the development budget within current resources has become extremely difficult, with more than half of the federal budget going towards debt repayment. The development budget for the current fiscal year is set at Rs1,000 billion, making it impossible to include projects from all ministries.

He emphasized that reduced development budgets present challenges to economic growth, public welfare, and achieving national goals. Ahsan Iqbal stressed the urgent need for a nationwide campaign to curb tax evasion and expand the tax net, noting that Pakistan has one of the lowest tax revenue-to-GDP ratios in the world.

The minister revealed that over 118 inactive or low-priority projects have already been terminated, and only key national projects are being prioritized under the limited funds. Foreign-funded projects also remain a top priority in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

Tactics will not diminish Imran's popularity: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has said that despite winning the by-elections, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) appears dejected, while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) remains content even in defeat. "Outside the Returning Officers' offices, chants of 'Long live Imran Khan' echoed, while inside, the results were being manipulated," he stated.

In an official statement issued from his office, Dr. Saif accused the Sharif family of resorting to their old ways, saying, "This was not just rigging—it was blatant electoral fraud." He questioned how long the "fake government" would continue to alter election results, adding that "the truth cannot be hidden for long."

Dr. Saif emphasized that such tactics will not diminish Imran Khan's popularity, stating, "This manipulated outcome is not only a question mark on Maryam Nawaz's performance but a resounding slap on her political narrative. Her so-called development agenda is limited to TikTok videos, and the public has rejected these 'TikTok projects' with a decisive response in the elections."

He further alleged that the fake government broke all previous records of rigging in the Sialkot by-elections.

tions, claiming, "Returning officers carried out unprecedented electoral manipulation to ensure the victory of a losing candidate. This by-election served as a referendum against the fake regime, which is why the results were changed overnight."

Dr. Saif asserted that altering election outcomes cannot reduce Imran Khan's popularity, stating, "Imran Khan remains the heartbeat of the nation. No amount of coercion or electoral fraud can change the public's affection for him."

Concluding his statement, he said that from Khyber to Karachi, the people stand firmly with Imran Khan. "The Sharif family can only win elections through rigging because they have no performance to show. The public votes on performance, and the PML-N has none to offer."

Meanwhile, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, has said that maturity of character and self-awareness are essential for success. He emphasized that showcasing one's abilities and utilizing time wisely can lead a person forward in life.

Speaking during a special live transmission of Pakhtunkhwa Radio Abbottabad, Dr. Saif stated that the provincial government has introduced the Sahara and Roshan Mustaqbil (Bright Future)

programs for widows and orphaned children, while also including expensive treatments for the Sehlat Card scheme. He noted that the government believes in taking practical steps rather than relying solely on publicity.

Upon his arrival at Pakhtunkhwa Radio and the Regional Information Office, he was welcomed by Regional Information Officer Ikramullah Saeed, who presented him with a bouquet. On the occasion, the Advisor also inaugurated a health-focused program titled Sehat Zindagi (Health is Life).

During his video message, Barrister Dr. Saif stressed that the youth must not only recognize their talents but also refine them through strong moral character. He urged the younger generation to dedicate their time to developing their skills, acquiring knowledge, and pursuing their goals — asserting that such focus will inevitably lead to success.

In response to a question, Dr. Saif stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is undertaking genuinely public-oriented initiatives. He elaborated on the Sahara Card initiative for widows and the Roshan Mustaqbil plan for orphaned children, as well as the inclusion of high-cost treatments under the Sehlat Card.



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chairing a meeting on strategic reforms agenda across maritime organizations. —APP Photo

CM Maryam meets OPF MD, discusses reforms

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif held a meeting with Managing Director of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) Afzaal Bhatti to discuss key initiatives aimed at addressing the concerns of overseas Pakistanis.

During the meeting, it was decided to appoint dedicated focal persons for overseas Pakistanis in the Chief Minister's Office, the Chief Secretary's Office, and the Inspector General of Police's Office. These focal persons will play a

proactive and effective role in resolving issues faced by overseas Pakistanis.

The CM emphasized the need to revitalize the Overseas Pakistanis Commission Punjab and directed that immediate steps be taken to make the commission more active and responsive. She further instructed all government departments and district administrations to address the concerns of overseas Pakistanis on a priority basis.

Afzaal Bhatti gave a comprehensive briefing on

the challenges being faced by overseas Pakistanis from Punjab, including matters related to OPF housing societies and educational institutions. He also highlighted long-standing administrative issues that require urgent attention.

CM Maryam Nawaz issued clear directives for the prompt resolution of these problems and reaffirmed her government's unwavering commitment to the welfare of overseas Pakistanis. "Our overseas brothers and sisters are a valuable asset to the

nation, and the government is taking every possible step to ensure their issues are addressed promptly," she stated.

Afzaal Bhatti also congratulated the Chief Minister on the success of Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos, and expressed strong support from overseas Pakistanis for the government and Pakistan Army. He noted that overseas communities around the world celebrated Pakistan's victory in the war against India with great enthusiasm.

Eid, Muharram security arrangements discussed

LAHORE (APP): An important meeting on law and order, security, and administrative affairs was held at the Deputy Commissioner's Office on Monday.

The meeting was jointly chaired by Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza and DIG Operations Faisal Kamran. The session was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters) Muhammad Jafar Chaudhry and members of the Peace Committee.

During the meeting, Peace Committee members expressed their views and paid glowing tribute to the Pakistan Armed Forces for their dedication and service. They also lauded the strong coordination between the police and district administration, noting significant improvements in performance. Final preparations for Eid-ul-Azha and Muharram are underway.

DIG Operations Faisal Kamran assured that fool-proof security arrangements will be in place for the Urs of Bibi Pak Daman. He added that a comprehensive strategy has been developed to ensure peace and order during Muharram. The DIG also praised the Peace Committee's active and commendable role in promoting social harmony.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza said that concrete steps are being taken to enhance administrative efficiency. He assured the participants that their concerns would be addressed on a priority basis and emphasized that the Peace Committee serves as a vital support system for the district administration.

Gutka dealer arrested by Rangers

KARACHI (APP): In a joint operation, Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police apprehended a gutka mawa dealer during a snap-checking operation in the Bara Maidan area of Nazimabad No. 5. According to the Rangers spokesperson on Monday, the arrested suspect has been identified as Muhammad Fayaz. Authorities recovered 200 packets of mawa, 3 packets of rajni, and cash from his possession. Initial investigations reveal that the suspect was involved in the sale of hazardous gutka mawa in various parts of Karachi. The arrested individual has been handed over to Sharifabad Police Station for further legal proceedings.

LWMC CEO intensifies emergency visits

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din has intensified emergency visits across the city to ensure a clean environment in every street.

According to LWMC sources here on Monday, emergency visits were being carried out in connection with ongoing preparations for Eid-ul-Azha.

As part of the pre-Eid cleanliness drive, CEO Babar Sahib Din made a surprise visit to Data Ganj Bakhsh Town, where he inspected sanitation arrangements in key areas such as Krishan Nagar, Sanat Nagar and Islampura.

He reviewed ongoing cleanliness operations in streets, markets and on major roads, ensuring that all measures had been ensured before the Eid.

The CEO met sanitation workers on duty and encouraged them for their hard work. He directed cleaning operations teams to immediately carry out road scraping to remove dirt and ordered comprehensive sweeping and washing of U-turns, bus stops and pedestrian bridges across the city before Eid.

Babar Sahib Din also visited Data Darbar, Ravi Road, Azadi flyover and interacted with residents and shopkeepers in Baba Ground, Abdali Road and Sanda Road to get feedback on the cleanliness arrangements.

Honorary Russian Consul General calls on Governor Punjab

LAHORE (APP): The Honorary Consul General of the Russian Federation in Lahore Habib Ahmed called on Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan and discussed various aspects of Pakistan-Russia relations, including trade, cultural exchange, and regional security issues during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Monday.

The CEO Russian Federation Consulate in Lahore Dr. Muhammad Ashraf Nizami was also present during the meeting.

On this occasion, the Governor Punjab emphasized Pakistan's commitment to peace and its desire for

strong relations with neighboring countries. He highlighted that sustainable peace is crucial for development and prosperity in the region.

The meeting underscored the need for strengthening bilateral relations and promoting regional peace and stability. He said that the development and prosperity of the people are crucial for sustainable peace in the region.

The Governor Punjab said that Pakistan has always condemned terrorism at all levels and the world has also appreciated Pakistan's sacrifices against terrorism.

He further said that economic relations between

Pakistan and the Russian Federation are moving towards improvement. He said that there is a need to increase people-to-people contacts between Pakistan and the Russian Federation. He said that Pakistan is interested in promoting cooperation with Russia in various fields including economic, cultural and educational. The Governor appreciated the services of the Honorary Consul General towards Pakistan.

CG Habib Ahmed said that Russia is eager to strengthen its ties with Pakistan and is dedicated to enhancing bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.

All schools of thought united for Pakistan: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Health Minister and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Law and Order, Khawaja Salman Rafique, on Monday held a meeting with prominent religious scholars at the Home Department to discuss the prevailing law and order situation in Punjab.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Home Punjab Noor-ul-Amin Mengal, Special Secretary Home Fazal ur Rehman, Additional Secretary Home, and General Secretary Muslim League Ulama and Mashaikh Lahore Maulana Amjad. Other notable attendees included Mian Tariq and senior officers from the department.

Religious scholars from various schools of thought participated in the session. Among them were Dr. Mufti Muhammad Younus Rizvi, Maulana Muhammad Tahir Shahzad, and Maulana Imran-ul-Hasan Farooqi from Tanzeem-e-Madaris Ahle Sunnah Pakistan. Representatives from Wifaq-e-Madaris-ul-Salafiya, including Professor Muhammad Yasin Zafar, Professor Abdul Sattar Hamid, and Dr. Abdul Ghafoor Rashid, were also present.

During the meeting, the participants paid tribute to the government and the armed forces of Pakistan for their efforts in maintaining peace and stability. Special prayers were offered for the prosperity

and security of the country.

Addressing the gathering, Khawaja Salman Rafique reaffirmed the Punjab government's commitment to upholding law and order in line with the vision of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

"All schools of thought are united for the integrity of Pakistan," he said. "Ulema have historically played a pivotal role in the Pakistan Movement and continue to be vital stakeholders in the progress and stability of the state."

He emphasized the importance of inter-institutional coordination and active engagement with religious leaders to foster an environment of peace and mutual respect across the province.

11 held in illegal cattle market crackdown

LAHORE (APP): In preparation for Eid-ul-Adha, the Lahore district administration, under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza, has made extensive and high-quality arrangements to facilitate citizens at cattle markets across the city.

Alongside these preparations, a strict crackdown is underway against illegal cattle sale points, resulting in the arrest of 11 individuals and the sealing of several unauthorized locations within the past 24 hours.

The administration is maintaining constant surveillance through teams of Assistant Commissioners and officials from the Metropolitan Corporation Lahore. Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza has said that illegal cattle markets will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Immediate action is being taken to dismantle such setups as soon as they appear.

In recent operations across various areas of Lahore, Assistant Commissioner Cantt Fatima Arshad successfully eliminated illegal cattle sale points along Ring Road and resolved parking issues at the Barki Road market.

Assistant Commissioner Shalimar Muhammad Saqib Tarazi led the operation in Kotli Ghazi, removing illegal setups and overseeing the arrest of 11 violators.

Assistant Commissioner Ravi Tariq Shabir cleared the Ravi Bridge area of unauthorized cattle markets, while Assistant Commissioner Model Town eliminated illegal sale activity on Minhaj-ul-Quran Road. Similarly, Assistant Commissioner City Babar Ali Rai sealed four illegal cattle sale points in Sabzazar.

Metropolitan Officer Regulation Kashif Jalil reported that special enforcement teams, equipped with trucks and

motorcycles, are actively patrolling various parts of the city. Chief Officer of the Metropolitan Corporation, Shahid Abbas Kathia, confirmed that illegal sale points are being removed swiftly and without exception.

Alongside enforcement, the administration has established a comprehensive system of modern facilities in all authorized cattle markets. These include proper arrangements for traffic flow and parking, prevention of overcharging, clean drinking water supplies, tent installations, and enhanced sanitation measures. Veterinary services, fully equipped medical camps with round-the-clock doctors, and Rescue 1122 teams have been deployed to safeguard public health and ensure timely assistance. DC Syed Musa Raza reaffirmed the administration's commitment to citizen welfare, stating that public convenience and urban management are top priorities.

COMSTECH to host seminar on water crisis, Indus Treaty

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level international seminar titled "Water Crisis and the Indus Waters Treaty" will be held on June 04 at the COMSTECH Secretariat Auditorium, Islamabad.

The event is being jointly organized by OIC-COMSTECH, the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations (KCFR), the Hissar Foundation, and the Panjwani-Hissar Water Institute, NED University, Karachi.

This timely seminar comes in the wake of India's unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in May 2025 a move that has significantly heightened tensions

in the region and brought nuclear-armed neighbors perilously close to conflict.

The seminar will bring together a distinguished panel of national and international experts in the fields of hydrology, environmental law, international diplomacy, climate resilience and strategic security to critically assess the implications of the treaty's suspension and explore Pakistan's strategic options going forward.

The distinguished speakers include, Ms. Nadira Panjwani, Chairperson, Karachi Council on Foreign Relations; Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General OIC-

COMSTECH; Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Senior Parliamentarian and Security Analyst; Mr. Ikram Sehgal, Renowned Defense and Strategic Affairs Expert; Ms. Simi Kamal Founder and Chairperson, Hissar Foundation, Co-founder, Panjwani-Hissar Water Institute; Mr. Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, International Expert on Climate Finance, Mr. Rafay Alam, Environmental Legal Expert; Mr. Zohair Ashir, Member, Board of Governors, Hissar Foundation, Executive Board Member, Panjwani-Hissar Water Institute.

The seminar seeks not only to address the im-

mediate diplomatic and environmental implications of the IWT crisis, but also to advance regional and multilateral cooperation on shared water resources. It aims to explore adaptive, resilience-building strategies and help define a long-term strategic roadmap for Pakistan's water governance in an era of climate insecurity and geopolitical fragility.

Rather than a reactive measure, this seminar is part of a broader vision by COMSTECH to leverage science, diplomacy, and policy innovation to ensure sustainable and secure transboundary water management for Pakistan and the broader OIC region.

Avoid giving sacrificial skins to banned organizations: Home dept

LAHORE (APP): In a major move ahead of Eid-ul-Adha, the Punjab Home Department on Monday once again has issued a detailed list of banned organizations and their subsidiaries and has said that citizens should refrain from donating sacrificial skins to the banned organizations.

The spokesperson of the Home Department has urged citizens not to donate sacrificial skins to banned organizations or their subsidiaries, as providing any kind of financial or material support to such organizations is a punishable offense under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997.

The spokesperson further clarified that providing any kind of support to elements involved in terrorism and anti-state activities is not only dangerous for national security but can also bring citizens under legal custody.

Citizens have been instructed to donate sacrificial skins only to

organizations registered with the Punjab Charity Commission, which can be verified through the QR code on the relevant certificate. Madrasas and charitable organizations obtain permission from the concerned Deputy Commissioner to collect sacrificial skins.

The list has appealed to citizens to donate skins only to organizations that have a valid permit issued by the Punjab Charity Commission or the Deputy Commissioner. The Home Department has assured citizens to ensure that their donations reach the real beneficiaries and not terrorists.

The spokesperson further said that the organizations that have been banned include Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah Muhammad, Jaish Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, ISIS, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Balochistan Liberation Army,

Jiay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz, Falah Insaniyat Foundation, Al-Akhtar Trust, Al-Rashid Trust, Pashtun Tahafuz Movement and dozens of other organizations.

The detailed list includes the names of more than 70 banned organizations and their subsidiaries, to which it is a crime to provide any kind of financial or material assistance. The Punjab Home Department has appealed to all citizens, especially parents, mosques, madrasas and social organizations, to exercise caution on this sensitive occasion and play their role in ensuring national security.

The list of registered organizations is available on the website of the Punjab Home Department and the websites of the Punjab Charity Commission and NACTA. If you see any activity of collecting hides by any banned organization, immediately report it to 15, the spokesperson said.



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The first flight of Malaysia's budget airline AirAsia X arrived in Karachi late last night, where it received a traditional water salute from the Pakistan Airports Authority.

A reception ceremony was organized by AirAsia to mark the occasion at Jinnah International Airport. TCB CEO Khawaja Ali Kamal Majeed welcomed the arriving passengers, and a cake-cutting ceremony was also held to commemorate the event.

A total of 298 passengers arrived in Karachi on this inaugural flight from Kuala Lumpur, while 315 passengers departed on the return flight. TCB CEO Khawaja Ali Kamal Majeed and the Consul General of Malaysia welcomed the arriving passengers at the airport and later bid farewell to the departing ones.

TCB serves as the General Sales Agent (GSA) for AirAsia in Pakistan. Speaking to the media, the company's CEO, Khawaja Ali Kamal Majeed, stated that AirAsia X is a leading

Malaysian airline, and its entry into the Pakistani market marks a positive development for the country's aviation industry.

He further stated that AirAsia X has started four weekly flights initially to Karachi, and flights to Lahore and Islamabad will soon be starting.

The arrival of AirAsia in Pakistan is being greeted as the start of a new age for the domestic travel sector, which is likely to not only reduce travel expenses but also increase tourism and enhance business relations.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination, Muzzammil Aslam addressing the Annual Planning Coordination Committee meeting.

Media Sports Festival concludes Yasir, and Shehzad clinch badminton title

Shahid Afridi

PESHAWAR: The Media Sports Festival 2025 jointly organized by the Khyber Union of Journalists (KHUJ) and the Sports Writers Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the support of the District Sports Office Peshawar concluded successfully.

On the final day of the festival Yasir Ali and Shehzad Rasheed won the badminton title after an exciting final match.

The pair of Yasir Ali and Shehzad Rasheed claimed the championship title by defeating the duo of Irfan Musazai and Ali Sheikh in a thrilling final with a score of 2-1. In futsal, SWA White emerged victorious over KHUJ Green to take home the trophy.

Former world squash champion Qamar Zaman was the chief guest at the closing ceremony and distributed prizes among the players.

Other notable attendees included international hockey player and Olympian Abdul Rauf, President of Khyber Union of Journalists Kashif ud din Syed, KHUJ Secretary Irfad Ali and President of the Sports Writers



Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chairman of the KHUJ Sports Committee Asim Shiraz along with several other officials and journalists.

Addressing the gathering former world champion Qamar Zaman expressed his delight at seeing journalists actively participating in sports.

He emphasized that physical activity is essential for strong nerves and a healthy body.

He encouraged journalists not to be disheartened by defeat as winning and losing are part of the game

and advised them to regularly engage in exercise and such events to improve both their health and performance.

He also highlighted the vital role of sports journalists in promoting sports and said he always tries to attend events whenever journalists invite him.

Earlier KHUJ President Kashif ud din Syed thanked the chief guest and all organizers stating that the festival aimed to provide recreational opportunities for journalists who often face numerous challenges and struggle to find time for sports due to their profes-

sional responsibilities.

He assured that efforts would be made to organize similar events in the future.

The Media Sports Festival spanned over three days and was officially inaugurated by DG Sports Tashfeen Haider and ADC General Rao Hashim.

They were accompanied by District Sports Officer Mishal Malik, Regional Sports Officer Peshawar Kashif Farhan, and other notable personalities. Journalists participated in various games, including badminton, tug of war, swimming, throwball, futsal, and archery.

PHC approached for establishment of Law University

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A contempt of court petition has been filed in the Peshawar High Court (PHC) alleging that despite the orders of the Supreme Court and Peshawar High Court, no legislation has been made to establish a law university in Peshawar. The petition requests the court to direct the respondents to establish a law university and initiate contempt proceedings against them for non-com-

pliance.

The petition has been filed by the President and Secretary General of the Peshawar High Court Bar Association, Amin ur Rahman Yousafzai and Ashfaq Ahmed Daudzai, respectively. The respondents include the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Secretary of the Education Department, and the Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The petition states that a writ petition was filed in 2012 seeking the establishment of a law university in Peshawar. The Peshawar High Court directed the provincial government and relevant authorities to draft a bill and present it to the provincial assembly for approval. The court also directed the federal government and HEC to provide financial and technical support to the provincial government.

The petition mentions

that the Supreme Court in 2015 also directed that a law university should be established in Peshawar. However, no action has been taken by the respondents, and they have failed to comply with the court's orders.

The petitioners request the court to initiate contempt proceedings against the respondents for their failure to comply with the court's orders and to direct them to establish a law university in Peshawar.

CS reviews good governance measures

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A weekly review meeting on good governance measures was held with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah in the chair, with the participation of secretaries and other relevant officials.

The Chief Secretary was given a detailed briefing on the availability and prices of essential food items including flour across the province. The meeting also included a comparative analysis of food prices in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with those in other provinces and at the national level. The Chief Secretary directed that necessary measures be taken in areas where there is a significant difference between the retail price and the sale price.

The meeting was further briefed on initiatives taken to improve the drainage and sewage systems of hotels and restaurants in order to promote tourism in the province.

The Galiyat Development Authority issued notices to 40 hotels and restaurants, out of which 29 have improved their drainage and sewage

systems. Five hotels that failed to comply with SOPs have been sealed. Similarly, in the Kumrat Development Authority, 8 out of 34 hotels have rectified their systems. In the Kaghan Development Authority, 14 out of 193 hotels have improved their drainage systems, and 3 units have been sealed so far. In the Kalash Valley Development Authority, 6 out of 14 have made necessary improvements. In Upper Swat, 112 hotels have been issued notices, and after the 14-day notice period ends, action will be taken against all non-compliant hotels.

The Chief Secretary stated that the purpose of these actions is to promote tourism through ensuring environmental protection, which will help strengthen local economies. He also directed the concerned authorities to continue consultations with local residents and other stakeholders. He emphasized that the establishment of these authorities aims at the promotion of sustainable tourism in these areas.

The Chief Secretary was also briefed on the launch of the e-office project,

progress on public-private partnership initiatives, master planning and land use planning, anti-polio measures, and ongoing development projects.

Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah reviews examination system reforms

An important meeting regarding reforms in the examination system was held in Peshawar with Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah in the chair. The meeting was attended by the Secretary of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, as well as chairpersons of the provincial examination boards. During the session, detailed proposals for reforming the examination system were presented. A comprehensive action plan with defined timelines was discussed, keeping the next academic year in view, and several key decisions were made.

It was decided that 1,308 existing examination centers in government high and higher secondary schools would be upgraded within six months to facilitate students of private schools in taking exams at public

exam centers. The examination halls will be ready before the upcoming exams.

All future matriculation and intermediate exams will be conducted under a cluster system. From next year, fifth and eighth-grade examinations will also be conducted under the boards. The SLO-based Item Bank currently operational in Abbottabad will be replicated across all examination boards as a model.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Department will ensure formal certification of examination staff. Those with poor performance will not be assigned duties, while staff demonstrating good performance will be duly acknowledged.

To ensure transparency, the top 15 papers from each board will be cross-checked by staff from other boards. Online/on-screen checking and marking will be introduced to improve transparency in the paper-checking process.

Instead of re-totalling, formal re-checking of papers will be carried out, and moderators will be engaged to improve the quality of assessment.

Agriculture decline costs farmers, country Rs2,800bn: Muzzammil

Says KP spent Rs60bn on Merged Districts, with no federal reimbursement

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination, Muzzammil Aslam stated that according to the federal government, there has been a 15% decline in the production of major crops, which includes a 30% decline in cotton production alone. As a result, an additional five billion dollars will need to be spent on cotton imports.

Similarly, due to the drop in wheat production, 3 billion dollars will be spent on wheat imports. Overall, the decrease in agricultural output will force Pakistan to import goods worth \$10 billion, representing a loss of Rs 2,800 billion to the country and its farmers.

He said the government had claimed that the inflation rate was 4.5% or 4.7%, but it is now admitting that inflation will rise to 7.5% next year.

Muzzammil Aslam noted that Pakistan's GDP this year was Rs 114 trillion, and next year it's expected to increase to Rs 129 trillion. Despite this, only Rs 1 trillion has been allocated for development expenditures, and the federal government is not

launching any new projects. Likewise, no new projects have been allocated to the provinces.

Of the Rs 1 trillion development budget, Rs 120 billion is from savings that were not provided as fuel subsidies, which are being used to build roads in Balochistan. This means that the actual Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) is only Rs 880 billion.

He further stated that under the "Uraan Pakistan" program, discussions were held on sports, water, and the environment, and Rs 65 billion was initially allocated to higher education. This has now been slashed to Rs 45 billion—without any consultation with the provinces.

Muzzammil Aslam pointed out that the government had earlier said that projects which are more than 75% complete would be prioritized, yet two road projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that were over 90% complete have been deleted, which he called a clear injustice and raised during today's meeting.

He questioned, "If the government claims inflation is being brought down to 1%, why is the interest rate still at 11%?" He said that Rs 2 to 2.5 trillion in

savings from interest payments this year should be redirected to development projects—but it is not happening.

He said that according to the Planning Ministry, 118 development projects have been scrapped, while the government is claiming that the growth rate will be 4.2% next year, with inflation at 7.5%. Exports will not increase significantly, but imports will rise, and \$39.5 billion in remittance has been estimated.

Regarding allocations, he said out of Rs 1 trillion PSDP,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will receive only Rs 540 million, while Balochistan will get Rs 120 billion plus Rs 20 billion more. Sindh has been allocated Rs 47.1 billion, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir Rs 37 billion and Rs 45 billion, and the merged tribal districts only Rs 70 billion, of which only Rs 34 billion has actually been disbursed this year.

He added that this year, Punjab's development budget is Rs 1 trillion, Sindh's is reportedly Rs 1.1 trillion, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's total development budget is Rs 433 billion. The federal government is not providing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with its due share for the merged

tribal districts, which is unjust.

He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has spent Rs 20 billion from its own funds on development in the merged districts, and around Rs 40 billion on current expenditures, which the federal government has not reimbursed.

Muzzammil Aslam said that this year alone, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will receive Rs 300 billion less from the federal government. So far, Rs 42 billion less has been received under the NFC award, and the federal government has collected Rs 1 trillion less in taxes till May, meaning KP will receive Rs 90 billion less this year.

He demanded that the federal government issue the NFC award for the former FATA merged districts and immediately provide the share based on population, or at the very least, fulfill the allocations announced in the budget.

He concluded by stating that because the current government has not formed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the merged districts, they are being denied funds—which is unfair. He emphasized that KP has complied with the IMF conditions, and even the federal government has acknowledged this.

Dr. Naila Gul defends PhD



PESHAWAR (APP): Dr. Naila Gul, Lecturer at the Department of Zoology, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), on Monday successfully completed her PhD in Zoology.

Her groundbreaking research focused on the "Drug-Resistance and Virulence Profile of Enterobacteriaceae Isolated from Migratory Birds in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan".

Dr. Naila Gul conducted her research under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Shahid Niaz Khan (Department of Zoology, KUST) and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Qasim (Department of Microbiology, KUST). Her work explores the role of migratory birds as carriers of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, offering crucial insights into zoonotic disease transmission and antimicrobial resistance in the region.

The evaluation of her PhD thesis was carried out by esteemed external examiners, Prof. Dr. Mian Sayed Khan, Vice Chancellor of the University of Swabi, and Prof. Dr. Jabbar Khan, Director of the Institute of Biological Sciences at Gomal University, D.I. Khan.

KP demonstrates commitment to disability rights

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ghulam Ali, Director General Law & Human Rights, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, attended a high-level consultative session on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), organized by the Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan, at Serena Hotel, Peshawar. The session was attended by representatives from almost all departments of the KP Government, reflecting a strong inter-departmental commitment to disability rights and inclusive governance. Ghulam Ali delivered the welcome address on behalf of Akhtar Saeed Turk, Secretary Law, Parliamentary Affairs & Human Rights Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

AD&SJ seeks police response in Bilour threat case

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Asmat Ullah Wazir has sought a response from the police regarding a petition filed by Awami National Party leader Daniyal Bilour and another citizen under Section 22-A. The court has adjourned the hearing until 13th June, on Monday.

During the hearing, the court was informed that Daniyal Bilour, a member of the influential political Bilour family in Peshawar, and his associate have been receiving threatening calls from unknown numbers, warning them of dire consequences.

The petitioners also reported an incident of firing at Daniyal Bilour's residence in Donga Gali, for which CCTV footage is

available. Despite informing the relevant SHO and providing the phone numbers involved, no action has been taken.

The court has adjourned the hearing until June 13 and issued notices to the parties involved, seeking their responses. The petitioners have requested that FIR be registered against the SHO and the Moharar concerned for failing to take legal action.

ICS teaching staff meets new VC ICP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A four-member delegation of the Teaching Staff Association of Islamia Collegiate School, led by the Association's President Mr. Kafeel Ahmad Khalil, met with the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of Islamia College Peshawar, Professor Dr. Ahmad-ur-Rehman Saljuqi, and extended their heartfelt congratulations on his appointment.

The delegation included General Secretary Dr. Muhammad Shehzad, Vice President Khalil-ur-Rehman, and Finance Secretary Syed Masood Shah.

The Teaching Staff Association presented a bouquet to the Vice Chancellor and assured their full cooperation for the overall development of the institution, enhancement of academic standards, and promotion of a conducive teaching environment.

On this occasion, the delegation expressed hope that under the leadership of Professor Dr. Saljuqi, both Islamia Collegiate School and Islamia College Peshawar would progress by leaps and bounds.

The delegation stated that Dr. Saljuqi is known as an experienced, visionary, and education-friendly personality, and his leadership will mark the beginning of a new era for the institution.

Educational advancement of Afghan students reflects Pakistan's desire for peace and stability in the region: Qasim

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Empowerment, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, stated that "the distribution of tablets among 275 Afghan students is a practical manifestation of the promotion of education and regional brotherhood." He was addressing a prestigious ceremony held today at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar, where digital educational devices were distributed among Afghan students.

On the occasion, the minister said that this initiative was made possible through the joint efforts of the Government of Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission, the Allama Iqbal Scholarship Program, and the UNHCR. Expressing heartfelt gratitude to all these institutions, he said that Pakistan takes the educational needs of Afghan refugees seriously and is taking practical steps for their brighter future.

Syed Qasim Ali Shah further said, "Pakistan and Afghanistan are not just geographical neighbors but are bound by deep ties of history, culture, and religion. We believe that the light of education knows no borders, and we are committed to facilitating Afghan students in their educational journey with all possible support."

He added that the provision of digital facilities is a vital effort to align the new generation with modern-day demands, laying the foundation not only for education but also for the creation of empowered societies. At the conclusion of the event, the minister expressed his gratitude to all the concerned institutions, organizers, teachers, and students who contributed to the success of this purposeful program.



In brief

All Parties Conference held F.P. Report

PABBI: An All Parties Conference (APC) held at the Pabbi Press Club, in which representatives from various political parties and trade organizations gathered to discuss the issues of load shedding, GT Road, and railway line closure in the city and tehsil. The conference gave an ultimatum to WAPDA to resolve the load shedding issue by Eid al-Azha. If the issue is not resolved, a massive protest movement will be launched using the power of the people. A 10-member action committee was formed, comprising representatives from all political parties and trade organizations. The committee will announce the future course of action at the Tehsil Chairman's office. Tehsil Chairman Pabi, stated that if load shedding is not stopped by Eid al-Azha, a powerful protest movement will be launched using the power of the people. Muhammad Ilyas, President of Pabi Press Club, said that the responsibility for any deterioration in the situation will lie with WAPDA Sub-Division 1, 2, and 3. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, announced a major breakthrough using the power of the people. The conference demanded an immediate end to the excessive and unjust load shedding. A 4-member legal team was formed, headed by Tariq Mahmood Khattak, President of Tehsil Bar Association, to provide free legal services.

Burnt body of woman found F.P. Report

NOWSHERA: The burnt body of a missing pregnant woman was recovered near a stream in Nowshera on Monday informed that 25-year-old Uzma, who was eight months pregnant, mysteriously disappeared from her home yesterday. She was later found dead with severe burn injuries in the jurisdiction of Nowshera Cantt Police Station. Her husband, Yasin, son of Javed, stated that Uzma left home for unknown reasons and her mobile phone was switched off. "We searched everywhere—neither did she went to her parental home nor came back to her residence. This morning, we were informed that her burnt body had been discovered," he said. Police arrived at the scene and shifted the body for post-mortem examination. An investigation into various possible angles of the case has been launched.

Huge quantity of drugs recovered F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Police recovered marijuana 550 Kgs, heroin 50kg, opium 20kg, ice 44kg, and liquor 100 bottles in operations against drug dealers in May. "The operation against drugs will continue at all levels", Deputy Inspector General of Police Kohat, Abbas Majid Khan Marwat said. A campaign against drug dealers has been started on the orders of the Inspector General of Police, KP, Zulfiqar Hameed.

98 suspects arrested F.P. Report

D I KHAN: In a decisive move against criminal elements, the Dera police launched a large-scale search and strike operation across the district resulting in the arrest of 98 suspects and recovery of drugs and illegal arms. According to police spokesman, following the directives of District Police Officer Sajjad Ahmad Sahabzada and under the supervision of SP City Ali Hamza, the police conducted search and strike operation in different localities aimed at apprehending proclaimed offenders and suppressing criminal activities.

PTI's anarchic politics intensified, says Amir Muqam

F.P. Report

SWABI: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan, States and Frontier Regions and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, here Monday said that the Pakistan Tahrir e Insaf's anarchic politics has intensified after fading away of the India's war hysteria.

Speaking to the media here, the federal minister said that like India's war hysteria, PTI's chaotic frenzy has also been defeated. He said the fresh protest call of PTI dubbed the "final protest" will prove to be the last nail in PTI's coffin, just like the humiliating failure of their "final call."

Engr Amir Muqam added that PTI has not

changed its mindset, mood, or agenda and that Just as "Operation Sindoor" completely failed, the so-called "Operation Release from Adiala Jail" will also fail. He questioned how those elements who ran away from dialogue now plan to run a mass movement, and said there's no way such a movement can succeed when the public is not ready to support the PTI after the unfortunate events of May 9.

PTI workers have already seen the true face of their leaders and started to distance themselves from its negative politicking. "The earlier calls of PTI also flopped, and this time too there is neither any threat nor capability—only disgrace awaits them," Federal Minister Amir Muqam maintained that the

PML-N's victory in Sialkot is a public acknowledgment and confidence in the leadership of former Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif who achieved success on every front.

He praised Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for making bold, timely, and correct decisions after Indian provoked attacks. Engr Amir Muqam said that people of KP are fed up with negative politics and long marches of PTI and wanted resolution of their problems. He said cases of corruption started to surface in KP and problems of masses especially youth has increased manifold.

Tribesmen seek provision of basic facilities

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Dwellers of Bazaar Zakha Khel complaint of lack of 3G/4G net services, education and health facilities in the remote and bordering area of tehsil Landi Kotal.

Addressing to a press conference in District Press Club, Landi Kotal on Monday Bazaar Zakha Khel Village Council Chairman Attaullah Afridi flanked by tribal elders Muhammad Sadiq, Abdullah Jan and others said that 3G and 4G net services had been suspended in the area to deliberately keep them ignorant and to deprive them of the important communication service in the modern era. They added that the locality was communicationally cut off from the rest of the country and abroad that multiplied their miniseries,



they added.

The Bazaar Zakha Khel hospital was short of health staff and other basic facilities that compelled them to take their patients down towns by paying twelve thousands of rupees per patient in form of fare expenses, that was beyond their income sources, they regretted.

They went on that the main purpose of establishing state-run schools in Bazaar Zakha Khel had ended and instead of educating their children, it remained only a source of income for the absent teachers to collect their

salaries. Out of six teachers one or two teachers were available in the schools that were unfair to them, they remarked.

They also came hard on the Parliamentarians who had turned blind eyes towards their problems and criticized Deputy Commissioner Khyber for not even visiting their area since his posting to get informed of the problems being faced by them. They threatened that if a net service was not restored before Eidul Azha, then they would launch a massive movement to collect their basic rights.

Pak Customs released after five months

F.P. Report

WANA: In a significant development, two Customs officials, Nisar Abbasi and Khushhal, who had been kidnapped nearly five months ago, have been released by their captors. According to official and local sources, the two officials were abducted by unidentified armed men from the Shulam area of Wana, South Waziristan, on April 13.

The incident occurred while they were returning from Angoor Adda, a key border crossing point between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The officials had been in the area to inspect preparations for reopening the trade gate

with Afghanistan—part of a broader government initiative to promote cross-border trade and regional economic integration.

The kidnapping raised serious concerns about the security situation in the region, particularly for government personnel involved in border management and trade facilitation projects. Despite sustained efforts by law enforcement agencies and tribal elders to secure their release, the whereabouts of the abducted officials remained unknown for several months.

Sources say the officials were released without any direct military action; however, it has been reported that their release took place

in the Boya area of North Waziristan. It remains unconfirmed whether tribal negotiations, financial arrangements, or other means contributed to their freedom.

The return of Nisar Abbasi and Khushhal has brought immense relief to their families and the Customs Department, which had been actively advocating for their safe return.

However, the incident has once again highlighted the persistent risks faced by government officials operating in Pakistan's tribal border regions—areas still grappling with instability, militant activity, and weak law enforcement structures.

Youth bust be guided with skills and values to build a stronger Pakistan

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Vice-Chancellor of the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK), Prof. Dr. Nadeem Haider Bukhari, has emphasized the importance of investing in youth by equipping them with modern skills, technological proficiency, and strong Islamic values. He said youth are the greatest asset of the nation and must be guided wisely to help them unlock their full potential and contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's progress.

He expressed these views while addressing as Chief Guest at a special event held under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP) at UAJK's Chella Campus on Monday. Prof. Dr. Bukhari lauded the initiative launched by the Prime Minister of Pakistan for youth empowerment and called it "a step in the right direction." He stressed that the government, academic institutions, parents, and society at large must take joint responsibility to ensure that youth are not wasted but rather mentored and motivated to become productive citizens.

Highlighting the need for

responsible use of time and media, the Vice-Chancellor advised students to adopt discipline, set high goals, and strive to achieve them through hard work. Sharing the inspiring example of Olympian Arshad Nadeem, he encouraged the youth to follow his example by pursuing excellence despite limited resources.

On this occasion, Mr. Muhammad Ali Malik, Deputy Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, gave an overview of the objectives and impact of the PMYP. He shared several inspiring success stories of young people who have benefited from the program and informed the audience that various initiatives, including skills development programs and interest-free loans, are being launched to empower youth across the country, both financially and professionally.

The event was attended by key stakeholders and officials, including Prof. Dr. Wajid Aziz Lone, Focal Person PMYP UAJK; Syed Waqar Hussain Shah, Project Director PMYP; Mr. Shahid Hussain, Engagement and Education Expert; Mr. Faizan Ali, Consultant; Fateh Muhammad Kiyani, Focal

Person PMYP AJK; Prof. Dr. Saadat Hanif Dar, Registrar UAJK; Prof. Dr. Khawaja Basharat, Director Finance; and Dr. Sharjil Saeed, Director Student Affairs, along with a large number of faculty members and students.

As part of the day's activities, focus group discussions were held with students to gather their insights and recommendations for inclusion in the upcoming National Youth Policy. These discussions provided a platform for youth voices to directly inform policy planning at the national level.

In addition, boxing talent hunt events were organized under the PMYP banner, drawing participation from different institutions. The sporting events reflected the Prime Minister's vision of encouraging youth involvement in healthy extracurricular activities alongside academics and skills development. The event concluded with renewed commitment from both university leadership and government representatives to continue working hand-in-hand to build a more skilled, responsible, and empowered youth population in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and beyond.

Two killed in separate coal mines mishaps F.P. Report

SHANGLA: A tragedy struck Shangla as two young men lost their lives in separate coal mine accidents. Their bodies were recovered and transported to their native villages, where mourners bid them a sorrowful farewell.

The first incident occurred at the Chapar Meshti Coal Mine in Orakzai Agency, where Sher Zaman, son of Karwan from Banjaar, Alpuri Tehsil, became trapped due to a mine collapse. Despite intense rescue efforts, it took 20 hours to retrieve his body.

The second fatal accident took place at the PMDC Coal Mine in Balochistan, where Akbar Ali, son of Abdul Razzaq from Bela Peer Abad, Shangla, tragically fell into the mine and lost his life. Following funeral rites, both victims were laid to rest in their ancestral villages, with hundreds of grief-stricken individuals paying their final respects.

Education a top priority: Tehsil Chairman Chakisar, Bakhti Alam Khan, has stated that no society can progress without education, as the development of responsible and capable citizens is only possible through quality educational institutions. He expressed these views during a meeting with the Sub-Divisional Education Officer (SDEO) Alpuri, Aurangzeb, who called on him at his office.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held on the performance, challenges, and improvement opportunities of public schools in Tehsil Chakisar. Chairman Bakhti Alam assured full support in resolving educational issues and emphasized his commitment to addressing minor problems at the tehsil level promptly.

ASE lower staff stage protest F.P. Report

LARKANA: All Sindh Education (ASE) department employees staged a protest demonstration at Jinnah Bagh Chowk in Larkana on the call of the union demanding the acceptance of their demands.

The demonstrators held placards and banners and raised slogans demanding the acceptance of their demands. On this occasion, union leaders Bakhsal Thahim, Ghulam Shabbir Abbasi and others addressed the gathering and said that the salaries of many employees have been stopped in the name of biometric attendance and they are not even being given upgradation, time scale and uniform allowance. A notification should be issued immediately so that the unrest among the employees can be ended. On the other hand, the protest movement will continue peacefully.

Azadari conference held: Al-Daim Social Forum organized a conference to protect the mourning in Wadi Zahra. On this occasion, the leaders of the Al-daim Social Forum, Professor Karam Hussain Wadho, Maulana Imran Hussain Chandio, Saleem Raza Abro, Zulfiqar Magasi and others addressed the conference and said that the Al-daim Social Forum has been established to protect the oppressed.

14 criminal arrested F.P. Report

SARGODHA: Police claimed on Monday to have arrested 14 criminals including 2 proclaimed offenders and four court absconders, and recovered contraband from their possession.

In a crackdown, the teams of different police stations raided the areas under their jurisdiction and arrested Imran, Ahmed, Nouman, Naem, Shakeel, Raheel, Rehman, Rehmat, Amjed, Adnan, Iqbal, Saqib, Saqlain, Majeed and others. The police recovered 345 liters liquor, 200 empty bottles, 12 pistols, 11 rounds, 110 bullets, 2.4 kg hashish, 2.3 kg heroin and valuables worth in millions of rupees.

Irregularities in development projects

JUI announces protest campaign

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Lower Dir has announced a protest movement against alleged irregularities in development projects and the continued lack of funding for critical infrastructure in the district. The announcement was made during a district 'Majlis-e-Shura' meeting held at Zawal Baba, chaired by district Ameer Sirajuddin and attended by party members here on Monday.

Addressing the meeting and later talking to media, the JUI-F district chief Siraj ul Din and General Secretary Maulana Muhammad Huzaifa strongly criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, accusing it of neglecting Lower Dir throughout its 13-year rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They claimed that no major development project had been completed in the district during this time, citing stalled initiatives like the Timergara Medical College, Koto Hydro Power Project, Talash Bypass Road, extension of Balambat Irrigation Channel and several other development schemes.

The speakers said the district headquarters, Timergara now resembled a picture of ruins due to prolonged neglect and delay in completion of Timergara beautification project. The Shura also rejected the recently passed federal Marriage Act, terming it a



clear violation of the Constitution and Islamic values. The party expressed full support for JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's movement against corruption and nepotism and vowed to mobilize mass public participation in future protests.

School uniform distributed: District Education Officer Inayatullah Khan and Deputy DEO Fayyaz ul Din distributed uniforms to orphaned and underprivileged students during a function at Government High School Mian Banda here on Monday. The officials stressed the importance of both academic and extracurricular participation for leadership development.

They assured that existing issues, especially water shortages would be addressed on priority in government schools. Students presented Quran recitations, Hamd, Naat, national songs, and speeches in English and Urdu, showcasing their talents before community leaders and education officials. The school's principal Haroon ur Rashid thanked the offi-

cers and the donors on the occasion.

Studio inaugurated: Prominent poet Munir Buniri on Monday inaugurated a modern video studio on Timergara Bypass Road under the Youth Experts 03 Project. Speaking as chief guest, the poet urged youth to focus on entrepreneurship and digital media, rather than depending solely on traditional and government employment.

Under the Youth Experts initiative, 20,000 young people will be provided free advanced IT training. The project also seeks to encourage local investment in solar energy and real estate sectors while offering podcast and meeting facilities to political and social organizations.

The ceremony was attended by MD Nawabzada Umair Khan, JI's former MPA Izazul Mulk Afkari, former district council members and local officials. The Speakers highlighted that with over 70% of Pakistan's population comprising youth, such efforts were vital for skill development and economic progress.

Constitutional supremacy key for national unity

F.P. Report

MINGORA: Chairman Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and head of Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Ayeen Pakistan, Mahmood Khan Achakzai addressed a grand public jirga in Hazara, Kabal, Swat. In his powerful speech, he strongly criticized the country's prevailing political conditions, constitutional crisis, the plight of the Pakhtun nation, and state policies. He unequivocally stated that the survival, progress, and prosperity of Pakistan lie solely in upholding the constitution, and there can be no compromise on this principle.

Achakzai asserted that, like every nation in the world, the Pakhtun nation also has the full right over its own resources. "If former US President Donald Trump can say 'America First,' then we too have the right to say 'Pakhtun

First,'" he said. This demand, he emphasized, aligns not only with international law but also with Islamic principles. He clarified that while they do not seek to break Pakistan, they will not accept slavery in any form. Equality, equal opportunities, and development are their constitutional and human rights.

Achakzai stressed, "We are human beings first, so humanity must be our first priority." He condemned all forms of discrimination based on religion, color, race, ethnicity, or sect. He highlighted the tragedy that the Pakhtun nation has become a victim of global political and economic wars as well as the state's so-called defensive and strategic policies.

He criticized the ruling elite for taking loans from the IMF and other international financial institutions without informing the public where and how those

funds were spent. He strongly condemned the February 2024 general elections, alleging that they were blatantly rigged under a well-devised plan.

Achakzai announced that after Eid-ul-Adha, a nationwide public movement would be launched under the flag of Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Ayeen Pakistan, with the goal of restoring the Constitution, democracy, and popular sovereignty.

The jirga was attended by representatives of various political parties, civil society organizations, intellectuals, lawyers, teachers, and local elders, who shared their thoughts and concerns. The event concluded with a unanimous declaration emphasizing the supremacy of the Constitution, the end of state oppression, and a collective struggle for the legitimate political, economic, and cultural rights of the Pakhtun people.

Scholars engaged to promote 'family planning' efforts

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In Balochistan, Pakistan's most resource-rich yet economically marginalized province, the government has taken a decisive step to confront one of its most pressing challenges - unchecked population growth. In a groundbreaking initiative, authorities have turned to the province's most influential social figures - religious scholars - to foster public acceptance and understanding of family planning.

With each passing year, the surging population in Balochistan compounds the burden on a region already grappling with widespread poverty, rampant unemployment, inadequate healthcare and education systems, and strained infrastructure. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the Balochistan government has recalibrated its family planning strategy by integrating it with religious outreach - a move designed to bridge the gap between public health goals and cultural sensitivities.

Under this new initiative, the Population Welfare Department Balochistan has recruited 150 religious scholars across 31 districts, officially designating them as Family Planning Assistants. These scholars receive honorariums and are equipped with Islamic literature and fatwas from reputed religious institutions.

These resources emphasize the Islamic legitimacy of responsible family planning, reproductive health, parental responsibility, and child welfare. According to the department, these fatwas make it unequivocally clear - birth spacing and safeguarding maternal and child health are not only compatible with Islamic teachings but are encouraged under principles of human welfare and moderation. The initiative aims to promote healthier families and create a sustainable balance between population growth and available resources.

The scholars have been tasked with incorporating these messages into Friday sermons, mosque gatherings, religious seminars, community events, and social dialogues. By grounding the narrative in faith-based teachings, the government hopes to dispel long-standing misconceptions that family planning is 'un-Islamic'.

"We deliver our message through the lens of Islamic values - that every individual is entitled to a healthy life, proper education, and financial stability," says Maulana Mula Dad, one of the religious scholars in Balochistan.

"Family size should be in harmony with one's means, so children can be raised and educated with dignity." He further emphasizes that back-to-back pregnancies in resource-deprived house-

holds pose significant health risks for mothers and hinder children's physical and cognitive development.

"Preserving life and promoting welfare are central to Islam. Unfortunately, some communities still misinterpret religious teachings on this issue. That's where we, as scholars, must step in," he vows. The urgency of this initiative is underscored by alarming demographic trends. In the early 1950s, Balochistan's population was just 1.2 million. Today, it exceeds 14.8 million, according to the 2023 census - a nearly tenfold increase in seven decades.

The province's annual growth rate of 3.2% is the highest in the country. If this trajectory persists, the population could double by 2045, placing unsustainable pressure on employment, housing, education, and healthcare services.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) warns that if growth remains above 2%, the province will require 6.5 million new employment opportunities, one million homes, and over 7,000 educational institutions by the year 2040. The toll on public health is already severe. Limited access to reproductive healthcare and family planning services has resulted in 298 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births - a rate far exceeding the national average.



‘Putin is preparing for more war’

PARIS (AP): Russian President Vladimir Putin is stalling at the peace table while preparing a new military offensive in Ukraine, two senior US senators warned, arguing that the next two weeks could shape the future of a war that has already smashed cities, displaced millions and redrawn Europe's security map.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham and Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal spoke to The Associated Press in Paris after meeting President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and touring neighborhoods shattered by what they called the worst Russian bombardments since the full-scale invasion began. In Paris for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron - who they say is "100% aligned" with them on the war - the senators warned the window to prevent a renewed assault is closing.

A sweeping US sanctions bill could be the West's last chance to choke off the Kremlin's war economy, they said - adding that they hope their firsthand findings will shift momentum in Washington and help bring a skeptical President Donald Trump on board. "What I learned on this trip was he's preparing for more war," Graham said of Putin. Blumenthal called the sanctions proposed in legislation "bone-crushing" and said it would place Russia's economy "on a trade island."

"It is crunch time for Putin and for the world because Russia is mounting a new offensive," he said. At the heart of their push is a bipartisan sanctions bill, backed by nearly the entire US Senate but still facing uncertain odds in Washington. It would impose 500% tariffs on countries that continue buying Russian oil, gas, uranium and other exports - targeting nations like China

and India that account for roughly 70% of Russia's energy trade and bankroll much of its war effort. Graham called it "the most draconian bill I've ever seen in my life in the Senate." "The world has a lot of cards to play against Putin," he said. "We're going to hit China and India for propping up his war machine." With peace talks yielding little and Trump's approach to Ukraine highly uncertain, Graham and Blumenthal have stepped into the breach - blunt emissaries on a lonely mission. Political opposites moving in lockstep, they're crossing Europe, and the aisle, with the moral urgency of two men trying to forestall another Russian offensive before it's too late.

Peace talks are scheduled to resume in Istanbul. But Ukrainian officials say Moscow has yet to submit a serious proposal - a delay both senators described as deliberate and dangerous. "Putin is playing President Trump," Blumenthal said. "He's taking him for a sucker." The senator said Putin "is, in effect, stalling and stonewalling, prolonging the conversation so that he can mount this offensive and take control of more territory on the ground." Graham added: "We saw credible evidence of a summer or early fall invasion, a new offensive by Putin. ... He's preparing for more war."

Trump has yet to endorse the sanctions bill, telling reporters: "I don't know. I'll have to see it." Graham said the legislation was drafted in consultation with Trump's advisers. Graham backed the president's diplomatic instincts but said, "By trying to engage Putin - by being friendly and enticing - it's become painfully clear he's not interested in ending this war." Blumenthal hoped the bipartisan support for

Ukraine at least in the Senate - and the personal testimonies they plan to bring home to Congress and the Oval Office- may help shift the conversation.

"He needs to see and hear that message as well from us, from the American people," he said of Putin. In Kyiv, the senators said, the war's human toll was impossible to ignore. Graham pointed to what Ukrainian officials and Yale researchers estimate are nearly 20,000 children forcibly deported to Russia - calling their return a matter of justice, not diplomacy. Blumenthal described standing at mass grave sites in Bucha, where civilians were executed with shots to the head. The destruction, he said, and the stories of those who survived, made clear the stakes of delay. "Putin is a thug. He's a murderer." Both said that failing to act now could pull the US deeper into conflict later. If Putin isn't stopped in Ukraine, Blumenthal said, NATO treaty obligations could one day compel American troops into battle. After a one-hour meeting with Macron in Paris, both Graham, of South Carolina, and Blumenthal, of Connecticut, said they left convinced Europe was ready to toughen its stance.

"This visit has been a breakthrough moment because President Macron has shown moral clarity in his conversations with us," Blumenthal said. "Today, he is 100% aligned with that message that we are taking back to Washington." Blumenthal pointed to the rare bipartisan unity behind the sanctions bill. "There are very few causes that will take 41 Republicans and 41 Democrats and put them on record on a single piece of legislation," he said. "The cause of Ukraine is doing it."

Nawrocki wins Poland’s presidential election

WARSAW (AP): Conservative Karol Nawrocki won Poland's weekend presidential runoff election, according to the final vote count. Nawrocki won 50.89% of votes in a very tight race against liberal Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski, who received 49.11%. The close race had the country on edge since a first round two weeks, revealing deep divisions in the country along the eastern flank of NATO and the European Union. An early exit poll released suggested Trzaskowski was headed to victory before updated polling began to reverse the picture hours later.

The outcome indicates that Poland can be expected to take a more nationalist path under its new leader, who was backed by US President Donald Trump. Most day-to-day power in the Polish political system rests with a prime minister chosen by the parliament. However, the president's role is not merely ceremonial. The office holds the power to influence foreign policy and to veto legislation. Nawrocki will succeed Andrzej Duda, a con-

servative whose second and final term ends on Aug. 6. Prime Minister Donald Tusk came to power in late 2023 at the end of a coalition government that spans a broad ideological divide - so broad that it hasn't been able to fulfill certain of Tusk's electoral promises, such as loosening the restrictive abortion law. But Duda's veto power has been another obstacle. It has prevented Tusk from fulfilling promises to reverse laws that politicized the court system in a way that the European Union declared to be undemocratic.

Now it appears Tusk will have no way to fulfill those promises, which he had made both to voters and to the EU. Nawrocki, a 42-year-old historian, was tapped by the Law and Justice party as part of its push for a fresh start. The party governed Poland from 2015 to 2023, when it lost power to a centrist coalition led by Tusk. Some political observers predicted the party would never make a comeback, and Nawrocki was chosen as a new face who would not be burned by the scandals of the party's eight years of

rule. Nawrocki has most recently been the head of the Institute of National Remembrance, which embraces nationalist historical narratives. He led efforts to topple monuments to the Soviet Red Army in Poland, and Russia responded by putting him on a wanted list, according to Polish media reports. Nawrocki's supporters describe him as the embodiment of traditional, patriotic values. Those who oppose secular trends, including LGBTQ+ visibility, have embraced him, viewing him as a reflection of the traditional values they grew up with. Trump made it clear he wanted Nawrocki as Poland's president.

The conservative group CPAC held its first meeting in Poland last week to give Nawrocki a boost. Kristi Noem, the US Homeland Security Secretary and a prominent Trump ally, strongly praised Nawrocki and urged Poles to vote for him. The US has about 10,000 troops stationed in Poland and Noem suggested that military ties could deepen with Nawrocki as president.

Ukraine’s audacious drone attack sends critical message to Russia

KYIV (BBC): It's hard to exaggerate the sheer audacity - or ingenuity - that went into Ukraine's countrywide assault on Russia's air force. We cannot possibly verify Ukrainian claims that the attacks resulted in \$7bn (£5.2bn) of damage, but it's clear that "Operation Spider's Web" was, at the very least, a spectacular propaganda coup.

Ukrainians are already comparing it with other notable military successes since Russia's full-scale invasion, including the sinking of the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet, the Moskva, and the bombing of the Kerch Bridge, both in 2022, as well as a missile attack on Sevastopol harbour the following year. Judging by details leaked to the media by Ukraine's military intelligence, the SBU, the latest operation is the most elabo-

rate achievement so far.

In an operation said to have taken 18 months to prepare, scores of small drones were smuggled into Russia, stored in special compartments aboard freight trucks, driven to at least four separate locations, thousands of miles apart, and launched remotely towards nearby airbases. "No intelligence operation in the world has done anything like this before," defence analyst Serhii Kuzan told Ukrainian TV. "These strategic bombers are capable of launching long-range strikes against us," he said. "There are only 120 of them and we struck 40. That's an incredible figure."

It is hard to assess the damage, but Ukrainian military blogger Oleksandr Kovalenko says that even if the bombers, and command and control aircraft were not destroyed, the impact is

enormous. "The extent of the damage is such that the Russian military-industrial complex, in its current state, is unlikely to be able to restore them in the near future," he wrote on his Telegram channel. The strategic missile-carrying bombers in question, the Tu-95, Tu-22, and Tu-160 are, he said, no longer in production. Repairing them will be difficult, replacing them impossible.

The loss of the supersonic Tu-160, he said, would be especially keenly felt. "Today, the Russian Aerospace Forces lost not just two of their rarest aircraft, but truly two unicorns in the herd," he wrote. Beyond the physical damage, which may or may not be as great as analysts here are assessing, Operation Spider's Web sends another critical message, not just to Russia but also to Ukraine's western allies.

Chile president to ramp up decarbonization

VALPARAISO, Chile (Reuters): Chile's President Gabriel Boric said that he will accelerate renewable energy efforts and step up pressure against Israel over its war in Gaza among other initiatives during his government's last nine months in office. In a wide-ranging three-hour speech from Congress in the coastal city of Valparaiso that marked his last annual address, Boric also discussed crime, infrastructure, the economy and abortion rights.

In comments that sparked the largest amount of cheers and jeers from opposite sides of Congress, Boric said he will introduce a law to ban imports from what he called "illegally occupied territories" and back efforts by Spain for an arms embargo against Israel. Boric, an outspoken critic of Israel, had recently recalled military personnel from Chile's embassy in the country and summoned the ambassador for questioning.

Chile's government will also introduce an "accelerated decarbonization" bill that aims to boost investment in renewable energy sources, help end coal-powered thermoelectric plants and move the country's 2040 goal to decarbonize the electric grid up to 2035. Boric added that a bill to speed up the permitting process for new projects was weeks away from being approved, a long-awaited request by miners, renewable energy companies and other investors. Its goal is to cut permitting times by 30% to 70%, Boric said. "Investment projects won't develop to their full potential if we don't modernize and speed up permitting," Boric said, while also touting his plan to expand lithium mining, led by state copper giant Codelco.

Critics have rebuked Boric for not making major reforms he promised as a candidate, and for failing to see through a rewrite of the dictatorship-era constitution that was knocked back twice by voters. Boric appeared to recognize the complaints, while defending his record. "Have we achieved everything we wanted, with the depth we wanted? No, but we have made progress in that direction, with the conditions under which we had to govern," he said.

UK to build up to 12 new attack submarines

LONDON (BBC): The UK will build up to 12 new attack submarines, the prime minister will announce as the government unveils its major defence review. The review is expected to recommend the armed forces move to "warfighting readiness" to deter growing threats faced by the UK.

Sir Keir Starmer will say up to 12 conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines will replace the UK's current fleet from the late 2030s onwards. The prime minister is also expected to confirm the UK will spend £15bn on its nuclear warhead programme. Sir Keir will say that, alongside the UK's nuclear-armed submarines, the new vessels would keep "Britain and Nato safe for decades". The Strategic Defence Review, commissioned by Labour, will shape the UK's armed forces for years to come.

Led by ex-Labour defence secretary Lord Robertson it will make 62 recommendations, which the government is expected to accept in full. Defence Secretary John Healey has signalled he is not aiming to increase the overall size of the Army before the next general election. He said his "first job" was to reverse a decline in numbers with a target to return to a strength of 73,000 full-time soldiers "in the next Parliament". Building the new submarines will support 30,000 jobs into the 2030s as well as 10,000 apprenticeships and 14,000 graduate roles across the next 10 years, the Ministry of Defence said.

Healey said: "Our outstanding submariners patrol 24/7 to keep us and our allies safe, but we know that threats are increasing and we must act decisively to face down Russian aggression."

Homeless seek refuge at Madrid airport as rents soar

MADRID (AFP): Victor Fernando Meza works during the day, but his salary is not enough to afford rent in the Spanish capital Madrid. So, once again, the 45-year-old Peruvian will spend the night at the airport.

On a sweltering May evening, Meza arrived at Barajas airport before 9:00 pm -- just in time to get past security. Any later, and people without a boarding pass are not allowed in under a new policy implemented a week ago to deter the hundreds of homeless people staying overnight.

The measure aims to address the rising number of people sleeping in Spain's busiest airport -- a situation thrust into the spotlight by images showing rows of people lying on the floor among bags and shopping carts, sparking a blame game between government officials. Those who call Barajas home say the increased scrutiny in Europe's fifth busiest airport is unwelcome.

They doubt solutions will come and fear losing what they see as the safest place to sleep, compared to the streets or the metro in a city where homeless shelters have limited capacity. "We just want to be left alone," Meza told AFP. "To be treated like people, not animals."

Meza blames Aena, the state-owned company that manages Spanish airports, for mishandling the humanitarian situation that has also occurred to a lesser extent in Barcelona, Gran Canaria, Malaga, Palma de Mallorca and Tenerife. Aena argues its facilities were never meant to house hundreds of homeless people. Meza said the Barajas security guards know those who cause trouble in the airport. "The ones who smoke, the ones who drink every day. They should be the ones kicked out, not all of us," he said.

Meza works occasional moving jobs and is hoping to save enough to



rent an apartment with his brother. But like elsewhere in Spain, housing prices in the capital have soared and social housing is scarce. The average monthly rent for a 60-square-metre (645-square-foot) apartment in Madrid has almost doubled to 1,300 euros (\$1,415) from about 690 euros a decade ago, according to figures from real estate website Idealista.

Sleeping in Madrid's airport has taken a toll on Meza. "People look down on you, there's still a lot of racism here," he said, adding that he plans to return to Peru when he turns 50. Zow, a 62-year-old construction worker from Mali who spends his nights at Barcelona's airport, is also weary of the stares he gets. "I don't like sleeping here. It's awful, everyone looks at you like this," he said, imitating a look of disdain.

Around 421 people were sleeping rough at Madrid's airport in March, a survey by a Catholic charity group counted. Most were men, half had been sleeping at the airport for over six months and 38 percent said they had a job. Nearly all of them would leave the airport during the day. The

issue has exposed deep divisions among the institutions tasked with addressing homelessness. City and regional governments in Madrid have clashed with Aena, which operates under the control of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialist administration.

"Primary social care is the responsibility of the local government," Aena said in a statement, adding the city must fulfil its "legal duty to care for vulnerable populations". Madrid's conservative Mayor Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida fired back, arguing that the central government controls Aena and "what's happening depends on several ministries". The city insists that most of those sleeping in the airport are foreigners who should fall under Spain's international protection system. Despite the finger-pointing, both sides have agreed to hire a consultancy to count and profile those sleeping at the airport. The study results are expected by the end of June. But Meza is sceptical. "We don't want help. We don't want anything. We just don't want to be bothered," he said.

Martial law fractured South Korea. Can this election heal the nation?

SEOUL (BBC): The striking feature of this election has been the leading opposition candidate, Lee Jae-myung, campaigning in a bullet-proof vest. At a recent rally, he was escorted to the podium by close protection officers, ready to shield him with their ballistic briefcases. He then addressed the crowd from behind bullet-proof glass, under the gaze of rooftop watchers.

This is not South Korean politics as usual. But South Korea has not been itself lately. It is still recovering from the martial law crisis last December, when the president, Yoon Suk Yeol, tried to orchestrate a military takeover. He failed, because of resistance from the public and politicians, and was impeached, triggering this snap election to choose his successor. But the chaos Yoon unleashed that night has festered. While stuck in limbo, without a president, the country has become more polarised and its politics more violent.

At street protests earlier

this year it became commonplace to chant for various political leaders to be executed. And since launching his presidential bid, Lee has been receiving death threats, and his team say they have even uncovered a credible plot to assassinate him. This election is an opportunity to steer South Korea back onto safer, more stable ground, and heal these fractures. Given this, the ruling party was always going to struggle, marred by President Yoon's self-defeating coup. But rather than break away from the disgraced former president, the conservative People Power Party (PPP) has chosen a candidate who repeatedly defended Yoon and his actions. Kim Moon-soo, Yoon's former labour minister, was the only cabinet member who refused to stand and apologise during a parliamentary hearing into martial law. He said sorry only well into his campaign, after he had won Yoon's public endorsement. This has turned the election into more of a referendum

on martial law than anything else. Given most of the public overwhelmingly rejected the move, it has also virtually gilded the path for the opposition leader Lee, who famously livestreamed himself scaling the walls of the parliament complex, to get inside and vote down the president's order. Now the Democratic Party politician portrays himself as the only candidate who can ensure this never happens again. He has said he will change the constitution to make it more difficult for future presidents to declare martial law.

"We must prevent the return of the rebellion forces," Lee urged voters at his recent rally from behind fortified glass. Such promises have pulled in people from across the political spectrum. "I didn't like Lee before, but since martial law I now trust and depend on him," said 59-year-old Park Suh-jung, who admitted this was the first time she had attended a political event. One man in his 50s said he was a member of

another smaller political party, but had decided to back Lee this time: "He is the only person who can end Yoon's martial law insurrection. We need to stop those who destroyed our democracy." Most recent polls put Lee about 10 points ahead of his rival Kim, but he was not always so popular. This is his second term running for president, having lost out to Yoon three years ago. He is a divisive character, who has been embroiled in a series of court cases and political scandals. There are many who do not trust him, who loathe him even.

Kim, hoping to capitalise on this, has branded himself "the fair and just candidate". It is a slogan his supporters have adopted, many seemingly backing him not for his policies, but because he is not Lee. "I don't like Kim but at this point there's no real choice. The other candidate has too many issues," said one elderly woman who is planning to vote for him. Kim has charted an unusual political path.

China says US has ‘severely violated’ tariffs truce

BEIJING (BBC): China says the US has "severely violated" their trade truce and will take strong measures to defend its interests. China's Ministry of Commerce said Washington has "seriously undermined" the agreement reached during talks in Geneva last month, when both countries lowered tariffs on goods imported from each other.

The spokesperson added that US actions have also severely violated the consensus reached during a phone call in January between China's leader Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump. The comments come after Trump said China had "totally violated its agreement with us". The US President did not give details but Trade Representative Jamieson

Greer later said China had not been removing non-tariff barriers as agreed under the deal.

Under the trade truce struck in May at a meeting in Geneva, the US lowered tariffs imposed on goods from China from 145% to 30%. China's retaliatory tariffs on US goods dropped from 125% to 10%. Beijing said US violations of the agreement included stopping sales of computer chip design software to Chinese companies, warning against using chips made by Chinese tech giant Huawei, and cancelling visas for Chinese students. The deal reached in Geneva came as a surprise to many analysts as it seemed that the two sides were incredibly far apart on many trade issues.

This showed that during

face-to-face talks, Washington and Beijing can reach agreements. But as the rhetoric is once again ratcheting up, the fragility of the current agreement has been highlighted and gives an indication of just how challenging it may be to reach a longer-term trade truce. Although the fresh accusations may suggest that talks between Washington and Beijing are not going well, top White House officials suggested that Trump and Xi could hold talks soon. Treasury Secretary Bessent told CBS News, the BBC's US news partner, that details of the trade will be "ironed out" once Xi and Trump speak, but he did not say exactly when that conversation is expected to happen.

National Economic

Council Director Kevin Hassett told ABC News that the two leaders are expected to talk this week and "both sides have expressed a willingness to talk". "The bottom line is that we've got to be ready in case things don't happen the way we want," Hassett said of the expected talks. But the Chinese side prefers agreements to be done at a lower level first before they reach the desk of the president. Last week, Trump announced the US would double its current tariffs on steel and aluminium from 25% to 50%, starting. Speaking at a rally in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Trump said the move would help boost the local steel industry and national supply, while reducing reliance on China.

Seven migrant women and children died metres from shore in Canary Islands

MADRID (Reuters): Seven migrant women and children who died when their boat capsized just metres from shore in Spain's Canary Islands were buried at the La Restringa harbour where they had hoped to find safety.

Two five-year-old girls and a 16-year-old were among the dead, emer-

gency services said. The migrant boat capsized as rescuers were escorting it to port at La Restringa on the El Hierro island, the services said. "I heard the screams and didn't hesitate. Like any citizen faced with an emergency or an accident, I got in my car, rushed to where the boat was, and helped however I could," Javier Iglesias, a

La Restringa resident, said at the funeral of the seven, which was also attended by surviving migrants.

"What really moves you and leaves an impression is when you see the faces, the expressions of those people who didn't reach their dream, just five metres from the shore." The number of migrants reaching the Canary

Islands from West Africa hit an all-time high in 2024, but the number of arrivals has fallen this year, Interior Ministry data shows. In the first five months of 2024, 4,808 people died on the perilous Atlantic voyage to the Canaries after leaving Africa, according to migrant rights group Walking Borders.

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IAEA points to Iran's secret nuclear facilities

THE International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the global nuclear watchdog, has apparently given a confidential report to the 35 members of the board. It is about Iran not disclosing about its secret experiments in three places.

The report is rather vague about when Iran had conducted these experiments and the IAEA inspectors were kept in the dark. It could be as far back as 2000. The IAEA had expressed its dissatisfaction with Iran on several occasions earlier.

The report says, "The Agency concludes that Iran did not declare nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at three undeclared locations in Iran, specifically, Lavisian-Shian, Varamin, and Turquzabad."

West Germany, France and Britain are to use this information to rap Iran, and also increase pressure on the United States to come to the negotiating table, and work out a fresh nuclear deal.

US President Donald Trump had pulled out of the deal during his first presidential term. But now he is keen that the deal should be worked out. It appears that Trump believes that the nuclear deal with Iran is a means of satisfying Israel, which in turn will help forging peace in Gaza. It is not clear how right and relevant the assumption is. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might continue his offensive against Gaza despite the US, Germany, France and Britain signing a nuclear deal with Iran, and ensure that Iran will not have the nuclear weapons which would pose a security threat to Israel.

The U-turn on the part of President Trump in his keenness to clinch the nuclear deal with Iran is surprising. Trump, of course, approaches Iran with the offer of a deal in his inimitable style. He tries to browbeat, threaten, arm-twist Iran to join talks for the deal. Iran has predictably adopted a defiant stance.

However, the two sides, behind their hardline stances, seem to be only too willing to talk to each other and get the deal done. Iran feels the pinch of the economic sanctions, and it does want to free itself so that it can sell oil in the global markets and also strengthen its economy. For Trump, it is a question of providing safety for Israel. It is for the same reason that he shook hands with Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Iran has said time and again that its nuclear programme is meant for peaceful uses, for generating electricity. But it has not been able to keep the programme transparent so that no one can point an accusing finger at it. It is its reluctance to fully disclose the details of its nuclear programme that raises doubts in the minds of other countries who are not necessarily hostile to it.

Tehran's policymakers perhaps will have to decide that the nuclear programme will be open because it is meant for civil purposes. The other reason there is pressure on Iran is the fact that Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968. It was signed by the then government of Shah Reza Pahlavi, who was overthrown in the 1979 revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini. So, Iran is treaty-bound not to manufacture nuclear weapons.

What raises the suspicion is the uranium enrichment process that it carries out. If the uranium enrichment is over 60 per cent, it is 90 per cent weapons grade stuff. It is this borderline uranium enrichment process that is causing all the trouble. Iran might have to soften its stance and work its way out of the tight spot it finds itself in. Then it will gain support of the neighbouring Arab countries as well.

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Ballots and Battles: How India's Elections Feed on Conflict with Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

INDIA, the world's largest democracy, has held regular elections since gaining independence on 15 August 1947. With over 900 million eligible voters today, Indian elections are often hailed as monumental democratic exercises. However, a critical examination of India's electoral history reveals a disturbing pattern; the deliberate creation of external threats-primarily through engineered tensions with Pakistan-to secure emotional, nationalistic votes. This electoral strategy has consistently influenced Indian political outcomes and destabilized peace in the region.

India held its first general election between 25 October 1951 and 21 February 1952, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This was a remarkable democratic feat in a newly decolonized and largely illiterate country. While the Indian National Congress dominated the early decades, the seeds of political opportunism were planted early. As internal challenges grew, so did the temptation to invoke external threats-especially from Pakistan-to consolidate electoral gains.

The first major instance was the India-Pakistan war of 1965, which broke out on 6 September 1965 and ended with a ceasefire on 23 September 1965. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri emerged from the war as a national hero with his slogan "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan." Though he died mysteriously in Tashkent on 11 January 1966, soon after signing a peace agreement, the Congress party used the post-war nationalistic wave in its favor during the 1967 general elections.

The 1971 India-Pakistan war, which began on 3 December 1971 and ended

with Pakistan's surrender in Dhaka on 16 December 1971, was another key milestone. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi leveraged India's military victory to gain immense popularity. The war led to the creation of Bangladesh and was used effectively to project her as the "Iron Lady" of India. In the 1972 state elections and 1977 emergency-driven polls, war heroism was invoked repeatedly, even as authoritarian tendencies crept in.

With the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 1990s, anti-Pakistan rhetoric became a central electoral theme. The Kargil War of 3 May to 26 July 1999, occurring under the BJP-led government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, came just a year after India's nuclear tests on 11 and 13 May 1998 and the Lahore Declaration signed on 21 February 1999. Despite intelligence lapses, the BJP won the 1999 general elections, capitalizing on nationalistic fervor. A deeply tragic and politicized moment came with the Mumbai attacks of 26 November 2008, when some armed persons carried out designed assaults at multiple locations, including the iconic Taj Mahal Hotel, killing over 100 people. Although Pakistan-based groups were swiftly blamed, the timing and handling of the attacks cast a long shadow over the Indian political landscape. As the 2009 elections approached, the Congress-led UPA government hardened its posture, leveraged public anger, and turned the tragedy into a call for stronger security measures. The emotional charge of the attacks, along with media-fueled nationalism, helped deflect attention from internal security failures and re-elect the ruling alliance.

Perhaps the most glaring example came in February 2019, when a suicide attack on Indian paramilitary forces in Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir, on 14 February 2019 killed 40 soldiers. India launched the Balakot airstrikes on 26 February 2019, and Pakistan responded with its own strikes on 27 February 2019, downing an Indian jet and capturing its pilot. The incident was highly politicized. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign for the 2019 general elections, held in April-May 2019, was centered almost entirely on national security. The BJP won with a resounding majority.

The latest and perhaps most dangerous escalation occurred on 7 May 2025, when a sudden and intense one-day war erupted between India and Pakistan. Tensions had been brewing for weeks, with provocative statements and military posturing from the Indian side. On the morning of 7 May, Indian jets crossed the Line of Control, prompting retaliatory strikes from Pakistan. The conflict lasted less than 24 hours but claimed dozens of lives and pushed both nuclear-armed neighbors to the brink.

Crucially, this war coincided with India's general election phase scheduled between 19 April and 7 May 2025. The timing strongly suggests that the ruling party, facing growing criticism over economic stagnation, rising inflation, social unrest, and farmer suicides, resorted to a familiar tactic-manufacturing a military confrontation with Pakistan to divert public attention and invoke emotional nationalism.

The pattern is clear and disturbing. Whenever domestic governance fails to inspire voter confidence, Pakistan is invoked as a threat to national security.

The media, often compliant or state-influenced, whips up hysteria, while emotional narratives eclipse economic realities. This short-term political gain comes at the cost of long-term peace, regional cooperation, and the democratic ethos that India claims to uphold.

Since 14 August 1947, when Pakistan formally became independent a day after India, the Sub Continent has seen three full-scale wars (1948, 1965, 1971), one limited war (1999), multiple stand-offs, and countless border skirmishes. Each has left scars, consumed resources, and reinforced mistrust. But when conflict is reduced to an electoral strategy, the threat to regional stability becomes existential. The 7 May 2025 one-day war marks the most cynical use of this playbook to date.

India's electoral history thus reflects not just the growth of democratic institutions but also how electoral politics can be manipulated through war-mongering. It is a warning to all democracies; when nationalism replaces governance, and emotional manipulation takes precedence over policy, elections cease to be instruments of progress and become tools of perpetual conflict.

Therefore, while Indian elections are often celebrated for their scale, they must also be examined for the disturbing trend of militarized nationalism. From the 1971 war to the 2008 Mumbai attacks, from Balakot in 2019 to the one-day war on 7 May 2025, there is a consistent theme: invoking Pakistan as a threat to distract, manipulate, and win votes. The result is a democracy that thrives not on performance or progress but on polarization and paranoia. South Asia deserves better. It is time to break the cycle and let votes be cast for hope, not hostility.

Trump-Putin stalemate stokes fears of global conflict

Mohamed Chebaro

AS a journalist, it has struck me in recent months how the people I meet — friends and acquaintances — have stopped discussing the state of the world whenever we sit down for a chat. At a recent gathering, there was even a rule to steer clear of politics, news and the chaos the world is witnessing.

The few who still appeared to care revealed, in their questioning, a deep anxiety of what is to come, with some fearing the worst, including another world war.

Amid the uncertainty and persistent fog of political discord enveloping our world, fatalistic thoughts have become dominant and a natural reaction is for people to evade the subject of conflict.

However, polls reveal that war is on people's minds everywhere, especially in Europe. A recent survey by YouGov found that between 41 and 55 percent of respondents in France, the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain believe that another glob-

al conflict is likely in the next five to 10 years, with the vast majority also expecting that nuclear weapons will be used.

In Britain, 89 percent of those questioned believed their country would be involved, while in Italy the figure was 66 percent.

According to the poll, Russia is ranked by Europeans as the major obstacle to peace, with 82 percent seeing Moscow as a moderate to major threat.

Islamist terrorism came second, especially for people in Germany. But the surprise is that US President Donald Trump's controversial foreign policies, including threats to abandon Europe's defense, side with Russian leader Vladimir Putin against Ukraine and annex Greenland, have led people in Germany, France and Spain to rank the US as a threat to peace on the continent.

Despite these fears, I believe that total war is still some distance away and is unlikely, unless a

breakdown in communication takes place between the big powers. Nevertheless, all parties are hardening their postures and this is increasingly being felt by citizens, increasing anxiety levels and threatening participation and trust in traditional channels and institutions.

The effects of the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza, the avoidable conflicts elsewhere, the neglect of global warming and its implications, the widening gap between rich and poor, and an unrestrained digital realm magnifying discord are compounded by a political stalemate between the big powers.

Recent outbursts by Trump directed at Putin increase this sense of uncertainty and fear.

The US leader prides himself on being a deal-maker capable of stopping wars, knocking reason into hotheads and solving historically, geographically and geopolitically complex conflicts at the stroke of a pen.

However, his recent

emotional attack on the Russian leader reflects a realization that this deal-maker image has been dented and that his ability to live up to his own boasting is being threatened by none other than his Russian counterpart.

People believed Trump was sincere about seeking peace, but his methods of achieving it seem warped, intensifying risks and threats, as sensed by those polled in Europe. A change of tack is urgently needed.

As everyone is witnessing, the world cannot survive more chaos and shortcomings. The chaotic policymaking that characterized Trump's first administration is reaching new heights in his second.

Cooperating with allies before foes could be a conduit for bringing conflicts to a close, or at least keeping them under control, offering the White House what Trump yearns for most — to be seen as presiding over a mighty America that can reduce the threat of world wars, not increase them.

‘Fresh ideas’ mooted to close gap in US-Iran N-deal talks

Belén Fernández

DONALD Trump has said he warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against attacking Iran because Washington and Tehran are close to reaching a deal on limiting that country's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting sanctions. He said this would be an unprecedented agreement as US as well as UN inspectors would be included on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) teams monitoring Iran's nuclear sites.

His declared objective is to make certain Iran is not preparing to make nuclear bombs.

Trump's statement suggests that that US is ready to accept Iran's "red line" — the right to enrich uranium — which Iran insists cannot be violated by any agreement. Iran demands domestic enrichment to 3.67 per cent for use in civilian power plants. The US previously flip-flopped on this issue. Washington demanded total shutdown of the nuclear programme, then agreed on low enrichment.

The programme was launched in the 1950s when the US provided a nuclear reactor to Iran under the Atoms for Peace Programme long before the shah was toppled by anti-US clerics in 1979.

To reassure the US and regional neighbours over its retention of a low level of enrichment, Tehran has suggested creating a consortium comprising the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Iran. Tehran would make partners shareholders in exchange for funding and give them access to its technologies and provide them a with stake in developing an independent capacity for nuclear power generation.

The UAE has already established the first civil nuclear power plant in the Arab world with four operational reactors which

Since Omani-mediated indirect talks began this spring, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi threatened to pull out if the US called for Iran to shut down its enrichment programme. Araghchi said this would amount to a violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to which Iran is a signatory. Trump stated on May 25th that the latest round of negotiations was "very, very good." He said there could be an announcement, presumably of a breakthrough, in coming days. "We've had some real progress, serious progress." Since he has threatened military action if no deal is reached, he added, "I would love to see no bombs dropped and a lot of people dead." Trump is eager for a foreign policy success while Tehran is under heavy domestic pressure for a deal as sanctions have crippled the economy and impoverished Iranians. Following the fifth round of talks round in Rome on May 23rd, the US State Department declared, "The talks continue to be constructive — we made further progress, but there is still work to do" when the sides "meet again in the near future."

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Following the fifth round of talks round in Rome on May 23rd, the US State Department declared, "The talks continue to be constructive — we made further progress, but there is still work to do" when the sides "meet again in the near future." Araghchi contended the issues were complicated and needed further discussions.

He said mediator Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-

Busaidi had suggested fresh ideas to close the gap between the sides. Busaidi posted on X, "We achieved some progress, although it was not conclusive" and expressed the wish that "outstanding issues can be clarified in coming days that allows for meaningful progress toward a sustainable agreement."

During his first term in office, Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 agreement limiting Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for lifting sanctions. After a year, Iran responded by breaching the 3.67 per cent enrichment limitation, produced a large stockpile of 20 and 60 per cent enriched uranium and cut inspections by the IAEA.

Sixty per cent is near the 90 per cent for weaponization. Iran has dismissed Western allegations that it intends to make nuclear arms and could produce enough highly enriched uranium for several devices from the existing stocks of 60 per cent pure. Experts have said Iran could take up to 18 months to make bombs once the decision to do so was taken.

While no date has been declared for a sixth round of talks, the experts from the sides are said to be holding discussions behind the scenes. To show willingness to compromise, Iran has proposed sending its stocks of highly enriched uranium to a third country, presumably Russia.

Moscow had been assigned this role under the original agreement reached during the Obama administration. Al Monitor cited the International Crisis Group's Iran Project Director Ali Vaez who said negotiators are moving toward a framework agreement that would postpone the enrichment issue until a more permanent deal is reached.

"When they realized that the gaps are too wide to bridge, they decided to go for a framework agreement

in order to prevent the process from collapsing. What is very likely in the next few weeks is a statement of principles — basically very broad strokes that would defer some of the most difficult issues." Unwise pressures could torpedo this tactic.

Reuters reported that the US, UK, and Europe are preparing to urge the IAEA board at its meeting beginning on June 9th to declare Tehran in breach of its non-proliferation commitments, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which Tehran ratified in 1970. This prohibits the development, testing and transfer of nuclear weapons.

Since Iran has not violated the NPT, this would mark the first time this step has been taken in almost 20 years and could "enrage Tehran."

Such action could add further aid complications to negotiations for a deal the US and Iran are striving to reach or, even, scupper the negotiations altogether.

As he is prone to taking unconsidered, wrongheaded moves, this proposed move has Trump's fingerprints all over it and he could end up shooting himself in the foot. It must be recalled that when Trump pulled out of the earlier deal and slapped down 1,500 sanctions, Europe, Russia and China could not deliver on promised benefits by circumventing the US grip on international banking and multinational business. This did not happen. Tehran responded by advancing and expanding nuclear research and development far beyond the basic level and escaped tight IAEA monitoring.

Ukraine’s wily drone strikes expose Russia’s vulnerability and could shift war’s narrative

AFTER too many nights of pulling children from the rubble of Russian drone strikes, the weekend’s devastating attacks on Moscow’s military pride mark a moment of brief respite for Ukrainian morale, and yet another twist of the unexpected in the Kremlin’s war of choice.

It may be hard to fathom the precise impact of Ukraine’s wily drone assault on Russian air bases thousands of miles beyond the Ukrainian border. Kyiv said 41 long-range bomber jets were set aflame and that the attacks hit 34% of Russia’s strategic cruise missile carriers at its main bases.

We don’t know how many bombers Russia had that were fully functional – after years of taxing nightly missions over Ukraine – and how many others had been cannibalized for spare parts, but some reports suggest Russia only had about 20 of the propeller-driven Tu-95s and about 60 supersonic Tu-22M3s in service.

It will become clear in the months ahead to what extent this really dents the terror the air raid sirens bring across Ukraine. But if what Kyiv says is true – 117 relatively cheap drones taking out dozens of planes and causing what one security source estimated to be \$7 billion in damage – then the economics of the war have shifted.

And it marks another point in which guile triumphs over the giant. Russia’s main card is its vastness – of military resources, frontline manpower, tolerance for pain and financial reserves. But repeatedly, Kyiv has shown targeted pin pricks can burst these bubbles.

In late 2022, the Ukrainians struck supply lines across occupied northern parts of Ukraine, causing a swift

and embarrassing collapse of Russian positions. In 2023, they hit the Kerch Strait bridge linking Russia to occupied Crimea. And last year they invaded Kursk, Russia proper, exposing the vulnerability of the Russian war machine’s borders.

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end’s show its hardware is vulnerable, limited and probably not easy to replace.

Moscow may brush off this latest setback, its rigidly subservient state media able to sustain any narrative the Kremlin chooses. But that does not alter the reality of its troubles. It did not stop the short-lived Wagner rebellion of 2023, or the

Ukrainian incursion into Kursk last year. The damage is twofold: to the internal narrative that Moscow can do this indefinitely – it clearly cannot, if surprises like these keep coming. And secondly, to its ability to visit the sort of bulk destruction it has relied upon to grind forwards in the war. The latter can slow its progress, but former is more dangerous. Tiny cracks can spread. For now, they are all Ukraine is able to inflict, but their longer-term impact, like so much in this war, is utterly unpredictable.

As with China, Trump backed down in his tariff war with the European Union. Then Financial Times commentator Robert Armstrong enraged the president by coining the term TACO trade — “Trump Always Chickens Out.”

Everyone thought that Trump would be on the same page as Benjamin Netanyahu. After all, in his first term he offered the Israeli prime minister pretty much everything he wanted. But now that he’s trying to broker peace in the Middle East, Trump is finding that prolonging the Gaza conflict is existential

analysis to identify where the risks and gaps lie, including by assessing both direct and indirect exposure to the tariffs through value chain linkages. Tailored support for hard-hit export sectors, especially for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, would be vital.

Governments, on their part, need to accelerate the digitalization of trade-streamlining customs procedures, adopting cross-border paperless trade systems, and enabling seamless data flows across supply chains — to reduce trade costs and improve efficiency. They also should make efforts to strengthen their broader structural resilience and diversify their trade partners and products in the long run, in order to reduce their over-reliance on a single market. These steps can cushion the impact of future trade shifts and help smaller exporters stay competitive.

Expanding trade in digitally delivered services, such as in financial, business and different professional services, offers a promising pathway. These sectors have been less affected by recent trade tensions and could help offset some of the disruptions in goods trade.

Besides, countries should prioritize policies that promote domestic consumption, foster innovation and address supply-side constraints, thus expanding their development base and reducing vulnerability to external shocks. Strategic potential may lie in the possible realignment of global supply chains toward the Asia-Pacific.

On the other hand, countries graduating from least-developed status and facing the loss of trade preferences, as well as middle-income countries striving to move up the value chain, could leverage new avenues and invest in economic diversification and industrial upgrading.

More fundamentally, policy coherence, stability and predictability must remain key to trade, investment and business engagements. In an environment where uncertainty undermines economic confidence, especially for smaller or more exposed economies, upholding a

transparent, multilateral rules-based system has become more important than ever. Regional cooperation and integration will be increasingly critical. Reinforcing intra-regional trade and investment can reduce exposure to global disruptions and help build more resilient economic ecosystems, deeper engagement in sub-regional mechanisms such as ASEAN and mega-trade agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, along with initiatives such as ESCAP’s Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade, which offer a way forward.

Moreover, economies should prioritize regulatory convergence and harmonization, enhanced supply chain linkages and cross-border trade digitalization to strengthen connectivity and competitiveness. To further aid smaller and less-developed economies with limited trade negotiation and policy capacities, governments could consider reducing or exempting tariffs on their goods. As economies navigate an increasingly volatile global environment, such collaboration will be crucial for supporting policy adaptation to the shifting dynamics.

The Asia-Pacific region has bounced back from crises in the past, but the challenges it faces today require coordinated, forward-looking responses. With the right policies and strengthened regional partnerships, the region’s economies can turn the current trade headwinds into an opportunity to build more inclusive, diversified and resilient economies. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific stands ready to support economies in this effort through targeted technical assistance, regional dialogue platforms and data-driven tools that help governments diagnose vulnerabilities, prioritize interventions and coordinate policy responses. The decisions made now will determine whether the Asia-Pacific will emerge stronger or more vulnerable in a reshaped global trade landscape.

Trump’s foreign policy frustrations are piling up

Stephen Collinson

Every president thinks they can change the world – and Donald Trump has an even greater sense of personal omnipotence than his recent predecessors.

But it’s not working out too well for the 47th president. Trump might intimidate tech titans to toe the line and use government power to try to bend institutions like Harvard University and judges, but some world leaders are harder to bully.

He keeps being ignored and humiliated by Russian President Vladimir Putin who is defying the US effort to end the war in Ukraine. Russian media is now portraying Trump as the tough talker who always blinks and never imposes consequences.

The president also thought that he could shape China to his will by facing down leader Xi Jinping in a trade war. But he misunderstood Chinese politics. The one thing an authoritarian in Beijing can never do is bow down to a US president. US officials say now they’re frustrated that China hasn’t followed through on commitments meant to deescalate the trade conflict.

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Besides, countries should prioritize policies that promote domestic consumption, foster innovation and address supply-side constraints, thus expanding their development base and reducing vulnerability to external shocks. Strategic potential may lie in the possible realignment of global supply chains toward the Asia-Pacific.

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He started wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — which the US won, then lost the peace. And his failed second term goal to democratize the Arab world never went anywhere.

Obama tried to make amends for the global war on terror and travelled to Egypt to tell Muslims it was time for “a new beginning.” His early presidency pulsated with a sense that his charisma and unique background would in itself be a global elixir.

Joe Biden traveled the globe telling everyone that “America is back” after ejecting Trump from the White House. But four years later, partly due to his own disastrous decision to run for a second term, America — or at least the internationalist post-World War II version — was gone again. And Trump was back.

Trump’s “America First” populism relies on the premise that the US has been ripped off for decades, never mind that its alliances and shaping of global capitalism made it the most powerful nation in the planet’s history. Now playing at being a strongman who everyone must obey, he is busily squandering this legacy and shattering US soft power — ie, the power to persuade — with his beligerence.

The first four months of the Trump presidency, with its tariff threats, warnings of US territorial expansion in Canada and Greenland and evisceration of global humanitarian aid programs show that the rest of the world gets a say in what happens too.

So far, leaders in China, Russia, Israel, Europe and Canada appear to have calculated that Trump is not as powerful as he thinks he is, that there’s no price for defying him or that their own internal politics make resistance mandatory.

Global aid cuts put children's lives at risk

CHILDREN around the world are in crisis. Every day, stories of suffering light up our screens, as emergencies erupt across the globe: children devastated by the conflict in Gaza; children ravaged by hunger in Sudan; children in need of protection in Afghanistan. Each day a new crisis unfolds that leaves children and their families reeling.

Organizations such as UNICEF exist to help children in crisis and make sure they get the help and protection they need. But our ability to do so depends on the generosity of governments, the private sector and individuals around the world funding our work. In recent years, international aid funding has been in steady decline, but these cuts have now accelerated alarmingly.

The unprecedented scale and speed of change is disrupting critical services and putting the lives and well-being of millions of children at risk. These cuts are unprecedented and are posing an immediate and severe threat to children’s rights.

On nutrition, for example, UNICEF estimates nearly 15 million children and mothers could have their access to nutrition services such as therapeutic food disrupted, leaving them vulnerable to severe malnutrition and even death. Immunization efforts are also facing a growing threat. The global funding crisis is severely limiting UNICEF and the World Health Organization’s ability to vaccinate more than 15 million vulnerable children against measles in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Immunization services, disease surveillance and

outbreak response in nearly 50 countries are being disrupted — with setbacks at a similar level to what we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In other words, UNICEF’s humanitarian response is at risk. We are looking at a shortfall of more than 40 percent of dedicated emergency funding in East and Southern Africa alone. Because of this, children will die from entirely preventable causes — not only malnutrition, but

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First, protecting children from deadly but preventable diseases is one of the most profound things we can do as a global community. It’s also one of the smartest.

Over the past 50 years, immunization has saved the lives of 146 million children, accounting for 40 percent of the drop in infant mortality during the same period. Vaccinating a child doesn’t just save that child from deadly childhood diseases; it protects all of us by preventing disease outbreaks that can easily cross borders and become global health threats.

Second, by increasing access to clean water, safe sanitation and nutri-

tion, we can protect children from illness and hunger — and lay the foundation for resilient, thriving and peaceful communities. In just 25 years, global action has halved the number of children dying before their fifth birthday and reduced childhood stunting by 33 percent.

Third, humanitarian responses to conflict and natural disasters, and investing in keeping children safe helps prevent displacement across bor-

ders. Left unchecked, political instability degrades social systems and breeds extremism.

And fourth, investing in quality education increases children’s ability to cope with challenges and makes them more likely to find employment as adults, contributing to overall social development.

Saving and protecting millions of children’s lives is a collective endeavor. The hard-won progress the world has made in recent decades

has been possible because of the generosity of donors and the tireless work of thousands of aid workers worldwide.

UNICEF is determined to stand up for the world’s children, especially during these times of unprecedented need. Every dollar or yuan invested in humanitarian aid and development creates long-term benefits for children and families, and a more stable and secure world for all.

— China Daily



Land reforms of ports: Minister chairs key progress review meeting

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chaired a high-level progress review meeting on Monday to assess and accelerate ongoing land reform initiatives at the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) and Karachi Port Trust (KPT).

The meeting brought together senior officials to evaluate current progress, discuss key strategies, and identify coordinated solutions to long-standing issues of land encroachment and underutilization at the two major seaports.

During the meeting, the Federal Minister underscored the strategic importance of safeguarding and developing ports land for sustainable economic growth and investment.

He suggested both PQA

and KPT to form a joint anti-encroachment force with the mandate to secure and protect the property of both ports from illegal occupation and misuse.

The Minister emphasized that this dedicated force should operate with full authority and coordination with local law enforcement agencies to ensure effective on-ground enforcement.

"The maritime sector is a critical pillar of Pakistan's economic framework. We cannot allow valuable port land, which holds tremendous economic potential, to remain encroached or underutilized," said Minister Chaudhry. "It is imperative that both PQA and KPT work together to enforce land protection measures, implement digital transparency, and enable private sector investment through proper planning

and legal frameworks."

Management of the Port Qasim Authority briefed the Minister on the ongoing initiatives being undertaken as part of a new comprehensive masterplan. This masterplan will include the regularization and optimal use of leftover pockets of land, reclaimed areas, and currently non-utilized plots. These spaces are intended to be repurposed for high-value investment, commercial use, and strategic infrastructure development aligned with national economic priorities.

A significant highlight of the meeting was the PQA's plan to introduce a digital land automation system, a standalone module that will bring transparency, traceability, and operational efficiency to land management. The system will be fully integrated with the PQA Port ERP system,

enabling seamless data synchronization, digital record-keeping, and real-time decision-making.

The Karachi Port Trust (KPT) management also presented their updates and reaffirmed their commitment to addressing the issue of encroachment on port land. The KPT officials informed the Federal Minister that enforcement actions are already underway and that the Trust is closely collaborating with the Survey of Pakistan, which is actively conducting a detailed land demarcation survey to accurately identify and map the boundaries of KPT land holdings. This demarcation exercise is expected to pave the way for stronger legal action against encroachments and provide a foundation for more informed land-use planning.

Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry lauded both authorities for their ongoing efforts but reiterated the urgency of translating planning into tangible results.

The Minister also expressed his resolve to personally oversee the progress of these initiatives and announced that monthly review meetings will be held to monitor implementation and resolve inter-agency bottlenecks. He urged all maritime stakeholders to align their activities with the national vision of sustainable port development and economic resilience.

"The maritime sector holds the key to transforming Pakistan into a regional trade and logistics hub. Unlocking the potential of port land through strategic reforms, enforcement, and digitization is a top priority of our ministry," said the Minister.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from both PQA and KPT leadership to work in unison toward a modern, secure, and investment-ready port infrastructure framework.

MCL joins MDCN

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Manhattan Communications (Pvt) Ltd (MCL) is proud to announce its affiliation with Müller's Digital Creative Network (MDCN), a leading group of creative agencies across Egypt, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. This strategic partnership positions MCL as a key player within MDCN's expanding regional network, enabling the Pakistani agency to deliver even greater value through innovative, world-class digital and creative solutions.

MCL, recognized for its expertise in above-the-line creatives, digital marketing, branding, and impactful content creation, brings local market knowledge and creative excellence to MDCN's growing footprint. As part of this collaboration, Manhattan Communications (Pvt) Ltd (MCL) will leverage MDCN's group resources, experience, and regional reach to enhance its offerings to clients in Pakistan and beyond.

"Joining Müller's Digital Creative Network is a significant milestone for us," said Anis Khan, Managing Director of MCL. "This partnership allows us to access new markets, share insights with some of the best creative minds in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, and offer cutting-edge solutions that empower our clients' success."

The MDCN network is renowned for delivering innovative digital strategies, creative campaigns, and integrated marketing solutions that drive business transformation.

MCL's addition to the network ensures that Pakistan becomes part of this regional conversation, further solidifying the country's role as a hub for creative excellence.

MCL is a leading creative agency, with offices in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. It specialises in creative, digital marketing, branding, and content creation. With a strong focus on results-driven strategies, MCL delivers impactful business solutions across industries.

AirSial launches first int'l flight from Capital to Dubai

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) successfully facilitated and supervised the launch of AirSial's inaugural international flight (PF784) from Islamabad International Airport (IIAP) to Dubai. The flight departed at 1134 hours with 137 passengers on board, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's private aviation sector.

To commemorate this achievement, a formal launch ceremony was held at Check-in Zone 1 (Business Class Area) of Islamabad International Airport. The Defence Minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by Defence Secretary Lt. Gen. Muhammad Ali HI (M), DG of PCAA Nadir Shafi Dar, Chief Operating Officer/ Airport Manager Aftab Gilani, and CEO AirSial.

PAA continues to provide world-class infrastructure and services, enabling airlines to expand their international reach while ensuring comfort, safety, and seamless travel experiences for passengers across the country.

Rupee gains 05 paisa against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 05 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs281.97 against the previous day's closing of Rs282.02.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs282.5 and Rs284.3, respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif launching AirSial's international flight (PF784) from Islamabad International Airport to Dubai.

SCCI concerned over revival of FCA in power bills

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed grave concern over revival of the fuel charge adjustment (FCA) in power bills for industrial consumers and described the government's move would prove detrimental for economic growth, also it would further bring slowdown in the industrial sector.

SCCI president Fazal Moqeen Khan, senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan and vice president Shehryar Khan along with executive committee members in a joint statement here on Monday stated the decision is completely contrary to the government's commitments to declining electricity prices.

They continue to say that the higher FCA effectively reduced the overall tariff reduction announced by the prime minister from Rs7.41 per unit to approximately Rs3 per unit for April and

may further dilute in May.

Senior office bearers said they said they had worked out their business orders based on official commitments for tariff reductions, but the latest results were surprising. The senior office bearers said such decisions would bring sluggishness in the process of revival of the industrial sector and economy.

Essentially, they mentioned the industrial sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also on the verge of closing and the revival of rising fuel costs would force manufacturers to pack up their units and shift the investment from the country. Office bearers said it is a dire need of hour to incentivize the local industries rather than further burdened by such unpredictable decisions.

Therefore, they urged the government and relevant authorities to reconsider the decision in the best interest of the industries and national economy and

let the wheel of industries continue to spin, which are the major source of employment for many households.

Quoting the various official data and reports, the SCCI office bearers said more than 50 percent industries are rather close or running on very low production in KP whereas the sick industries are also a major dilemma and its revival is challenging and daunting task for government and authorities concerned.

It is pertinent to mentioning here that at a public hearing on Rs1.27 per unit additional fuel cost adjustments demanded by distribution companies (Discos), the majority of the interveners also criticised the power companies and the National Electricity Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) for disclosing insufficient data and opposed a regulatory decision unless full disclosures were made to reach examine detailed datasets.

Experts call for reversing 18% GST on safe packaged milk

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) organized a focused policy dialogue titled "Enabling Dairy Sector Transformation through Smart Taxation". The session, moderated by Zainab Naeem and organized as part of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute's (SDPI) pre-budget consultation series, aimed to finalize a joint statement and action plan.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI, highlighted that despite contributing significantly to economic activity, over 90% of Pakistan's dairy sector remains undocumented and untaxed. "Documentation of the economy is crucial not just for fiscal stability but also for tackling malnutrition and ensuring food safety," said Dr. Suleri.

He emphasized that the current tax policy, particularly the 18% GST on safe packaged milk, disincentivizes the formal sector and undermines both public health and economic development.

Representing the private



sector, Dr Muhammad Nasir of Friesland Campina Engro Pakistan stressed the sector's socio-economic importance, especially in rural areas.

He also flagged Pakistan's alarming 40% stunting rate and warned that increased taxation on safe packaged milk could worsen national nutrition indicators.

Moreover, he elaborated that due to 18% GST on safe packaged milk 35% of existing formal dairy farmers were forced to shift back to the unsafe and unregulated loose milk market.

Aatekah Mir from Nestlé

Pakistan and Dr. Shehzad Amin, CEO of the Pakistan Dairy Association, also stressed the importance of safe packaged milk. Dr Muhammad Anjum Iqbal, Animal Nutritionist at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research urged the government to incentivize quality milk production, highlighting the need for improving animal health, diet, and environment besides lowering tax on safe packaged milk.

During the discussion, a major concern was highlighted: around 92% of the milk market consists of loose, untaxed milk, while only 8% is safe, hygienical-

ly packaged, and taxed. This discourages the regulated sector and creates an uneven playing field. All regulatory bodies and food authorities across Pakistan urge to regularize dairy sector, but current tax policy discourages it.

In conclusion, stakeholders unanimously called for immediate reduction of GST on packaged milk to 5%, recognition of milk as a nutrition-sensitive commodity, alignment of fiscal policies with health and nutrition goals, and promotion and protection of the formal dairy sector through public awareness and infrastructure development.

IBA held Indus 'Water Treaty in Perspective'



F.P. Report

KARACHI: IBA Karachi hosted a Policy Roundtable "Indus Water Treaty in Perspective", to discuss the implications of the India's unilateral suspension of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in April 2025, at the City Campus. The event was organized by the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) at SESS.

Experts highlighted a critical lack of institutional capacity to engage and respond meaningfully with the treaty's technical and legal dimensions on diplomatic fronts. While academic institutions in Pakistan teach water-related subjects, they emphasized the urgent need to strengthen expertise in international water law and transboundary water diplomacy. Participants also discussed how prevailing media narratives about India's "blocking water" have misguidedly public as such claims are technically infeasible without large-scale infrastructure and serve more as political tools than realities.

Participants noted that the World Bank role is not clear regarding the resolution of this dispute, and without an institutional conflict resolution mechanism between the two

countries, the treaty's ability to adapt to new challenges remains limited. Some of the experts warn that building new dams is not a solution, as Pakistan lacks sufficient water stock and is facing long-term water flow decline. In conclusion, participants called for the establishment of a multi-stakeholder working group under the umbrella of IBA-CBER that meets regularly to deliberate on national and regional water strategies and provide actionable recommendations to modernize and strengthen the Indus Water Treaty.

The session brought together government officials, journalists, and academicians to engage in dialogue on the topic, moderated by Dr. Lubna Naz, Director, IBA-CBER. Notable participants included Mr. Muhammad Ehsan ul Haq Laghari, Sindh Member, Indus River System Authority; Mr. Shahab Usto, Advocate, Supreme Court of Pakistan; Mr. Syed Jaffar Ahmed, Member on IBA's Board of Governors and Director, Institute of Historical and Social Research; Mr. Hafeez Ahmed Jamali, Director General, Balochistan Civil Service Academy; Mr. Syed Hasan Habib, Former Ambassador; Mr. Syed Imran Ahmed, Director,

Panjwani Hisaar Water Institute; Mr. Yasir Husain, Founder, Climate Action Center; Mr. Zakir Hussain Dahri, Director General, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council; Ms. Afia Salam, Journalist; Mr. Bakhshal Khan Lashari, Emeritus Professor, US Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in Water; Mr. Khurram Husain, Journalist; Ms. Raheema Panhwar, Water Aid; Mr. Naseer Memon, Climate Change Expert; Dr. Aadil Nakhoda, Assistant Professor, IBA Karachi; Dr. Fazilda Nabeel, LUMS; Ms. Saba Aslam, PhD Candidate, University of Cambridge; Mr. Nasir Mansoor, General Secretary, National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan, and Mr. Farzand Ali, Integrated Research Solutions Global.

About IBA Karachi: IBA Karachi, Pakistan's leading and most prestigious institution of higher education, has nurtured generations of trailblazers, with 20,000+ alumni driving innovation and leading organizations across the globe. Equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure, modern learning spaces, and cutting-edge facilities, IBA offers a world-class education that empowers students to shape the future. Committed to sustainability, IBA fosters an eco-conscious campus community, continuously reducing its carbon footprint through impactful green initiatives. With a rich legacy and an unwavering pursuit of progress, IBA continues to redefine education, leadership, and responsible innovation. Here's to the next 70 years of Visionary Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Sustainable Impact.

20th editions of IFTECH and Plasti&Pack kick off



F.P. Report

LAHORE: The 20th editions of the International Exhibition of Food & Beverage Processing & Packaging - IFTECH Pakistan and Plasti&Pack Pakistan - the country's premier exhibitions for the food, plastics, and packaging industries - officially opened at Expo Centre Lahore.

Organized by Pegasus Consultancy Pvt. Ltd., the exhibitions were inaugurated by Chaudhry Shafay Hussain, Honorable Minister for Industries, Commerce & Investment, Punjab. The ceremony was also graced by distinguished dignitaries, including the President of LCCI, Vice President of FPCCI, CEO PBIT, President PCJCCI, and Acting Chairman of FLEXPAC.

In his remarks, the Minister congratulated Pegasus Consultancy for consistently promoting key industrial sectors and commended the exhibitions' role in strengthening Pakistan's manufacturing base and enhancing economic growth.

These landmark exhibitions mark two decades of excellence, innovation, and international collaboration, serving as the country's premier B2B platforms for advancing industrial technologies in food processing, packaging, plastics, and printing sectors.

Pakistan's growing consumer market, industrial development, and export potential continue to drive strong interest in these sectors. IFTECH and Plasti&Pack have become vital forums for introducing

the latest global technologies, fostering partnerships, and catalyzing economic growth.

This year's exhibitions have attracted over 200 companies from more than 30 countries, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, UK and USA.

Alongside the exhibits, Pegasus is also hosting International IFTECH Conference, under the theme "Shaping Tomorrow's Food Industry: Innovations, Intelligence & Integrity," featuring experts and thought leaders from across the globe. The conference is organized in collaboration with National Alliance for Safe Food as Conference Partner.

The exhibitions also include an exclusive Business Matchmaking Program, designed to facilitate B2B connections, joint ventures, and trade discussions among local manufacturers, international suppliers, and potential investors.



In brief

PHF name squad for Hockey Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has announced a 20-member squad, led by Ammad Butt, for the upcoming Nations Hockey Cup in Malaysia from June 15 to 21. The team was selected after trials here at the Naseer Banda Hockey Stadium, which were also witnessed by the Director General Pakistan Sports Board, Yasir Pirzada. According to Pakistan Hockey Federation Secretary General Rana Mujahid, the national team will depart for Malaysia on June 8 and play three matches before the tournament. The national squad includes Moneeb-ur-Rehman, Abdullah Ishtiaq, Ammad Butt, Muhammad Abdullah, Sufyan Khan, Abdul Manan, Hammad Anjum, Arshad Liaqat, Moin Shakeel, Zakaria Hayat, Ghazanfar Ali, Salman Razzak, Junaid Manzoor, Hanan Shahid, Rana Waheed, Afraz Khan, Abdul Rehman, Ahmed Nadeem, Mohibullah, Rana Waleed. Pakistan is placed in Pool B with New Zealand, Malaysia, and Japan. PHF President Tariq Bugti mentioned that talks are underway for hockey funding, and daily allowances are being paid to national players. Head coach Olympian Tahir Zaman expressed hope for success in the Nations Cup, emphasizing the need for Pro League access to revive Pakistan's hockey team.

Meeting held for South Asian Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high level meeting regarding the organization of the 14th South Asian Games was chaired by Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah here on Monday. The Pakistan Olympic Association has submitted its recommendations to the Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination for the Games, scheduled to take place in Pakistan in January 2026. Sanaullah, who also holds the portfolio of the Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination, has formed a high-level committee to review and implement these recommendations. The committee, chaired by the Secretary Inter-Provincial Coordination, will include representatives from all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir. It will submit suggestions to the government on key aspects such as sports venues, security, and other logistical issues. The event will feature 27 sports, and the Punjab government has agreed to host the mega event. Sanaullah emphasized that hosting the South Asian Games will highlight Pakistan's positive image. He noted that successfully hosting major international events like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit, Champions Trophy, and now the South Asian Games is a proof of Pakistan's security capabilities.

Klaasen retires from int'l cricket

JOHANNESBURG (APP): South African batsman-wicketkeeper Heinrich Klaasen announced on Monday that he was retiring from international cricket. The big-hitting Klaasen, 33, earned a reputation as one of the most destructive batsmen in white-ball cricket. "Playing for the Proteas gave me the opportunity to meet great people who changed my life," Klaasen said in a statement issued by Cricket South Africa. Klaasen scored 2141 runs at an average of 43.69 in 60 one-day internationals, maintaining a strike rate of 117.05. His highest score of 174 was made off 83 balls against Australia at Centurion in 2023.



SARGODHA: Players in action in badminton match played between District Sargodha and District Bhakher during Inter-District Badminton Championship. —APP Photo

Djokovic cruises into record 19th French Open quarter-final

PARIS (AFP): Novak Djokovic eased into a record-breaking 19th Roland Garros quarter-final with a comfortable straight-sets victory over Cameron Norrie on Monday. The three-time French Open champion will renew his rivalry with third seed Alexander Zverev in the last eight on Wednesday after seeing off Norrie 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 on Court Philippe Chatrier. His tally of 19 quarter-final appearances at Roland Garros is the record for a single Grand Slam tournament.

"I feel good. I know I can play better. But 12 sets played, 12 sets won, it's been solid so far," said the 38-year-old after his 100th French Open win. "It's great, but victory number 101 would be better. I'm very honoured... But I need to continue now." Djokovic holds an 8-5 winning record in his head-to-head with German Zverev, but retired injured from their last meeting in the Australian Open semi-finals in January. Britain's Norrie, a former top-10 player now ranked 81st, has lost all

six of his career matches against Djokovic. The Serb, hoping to set a new outright record of 25 Grand Slam titles this week, dominated from the start. He broke serve three times in a one-sided opening set, before battling through a closer second, crucially saving a break point before holding for a 3-2 lead. Norrie, playing in the second week in Paris for the first time, mustered little resistance in the third set as Djokovic wrapped up victory on his first match point.

Historic victory for Pakistan at Asian Rowing C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a groundbreaking performance that marks a new era for rowing in Pakistan, the national indoor rowing team secured a total of 14 medals including 10 gold, at the Asian Indoor Rowing Championship held in Pattaya, Thailand. Competing against 25 countries, the underdog Pakistani squad stunned traditional powerhouses such as India, Iran, Thailand, South Korea, and Japan, proudly raising the national flag and making the national anthem echo across the international arena. Despite being a small contingent, the Pakistani rowers delivered an outstanding performance that defied expectations, said a press release. The Pakistan Rowing Federation, along with other sports stakeholders, gave the athletes a grand welcome upon their return. President of the Pakistan Rowing Federation, Hamdan Nazir, and Chairman Rizwan-ul-Haq praised the players' exceptional performance, stating that Pakistan's rowing athletes are now ready to compete — and succeed — at the global level.

TTS and Faisalabad win matches

FAISALABAD (APP): Toba Tek Singh and Faisalabad have won their opening matches during Inter-District Boys' Hockey Tournament arranged under the aegis of Divisional Sports Department at Hockey Stadium Madina Town here on Monday to prepare teams for Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Summer Games 2025. Former MNA Mian Abdul Mannan inaugurated the tournament by hitting the ball while Divisional Sports Officer Shah Manzhar Fareed, former Divisional Sports Officer Ch. Tariq Nazir, District Sports Officers Sajida Latif and Muhammad Jameel, Provincial Coach Zarina Waqar and others were also present on the occasion. In the opening match, District Toba Tek Singh delivered a commanding performance by defeating District Chiniot with 4-1 goals. The second match saw a close contest where District Faisalabad edged past District Jhang with a narrow 1-0 victory. This event marked a significant step in promoting grassroots hockey talent and nurturing a spirit of competition among the youth ahead of the grand provincial event.

Sri Lanka to host Pakistan matches at World Cup

COLOMBO (Agencies): Sri Lanka will host matches at this year's Women's World Cup as part of ongoing arrangements surrounding fixtures involving India and Pakistan. India's refusal to travel to Pakistan for the men's Champions Trophy earlier this year prompted the International Cricket Council (ICC) to introduce neutral venues to tournaments hosted by either nation. As part of the plans, announced in December, neither country will travel to the other for an ICC event. The Sri Lankan city of Colombo will join Indian cities Bengaluru, Guwahati, Indore and Visakhapatnam in staging the Women's World Cup, which runs from 30 September until 2 November. Colombo will host Pakistan's seven group games, including against India and England. It will also host a semi-final and

the final if Pakistan make it that far. Bengaluru will stage the opening match, involving India, and the final if Pakistan are not involved. The full list of fixtures for the eight-team tournament is still to be announced. Australia are the defending World Cup champions, having beaten England in the final of the previous tournament in New Zealand, delayed until 2022 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. One potential problem with the logistical switch could be the weather, with October one of the wetter months of the year in Sri Lanka. India and Pakistan were not playing each other outside of major tournaments even before the conflict between the two nations last month. The cricketing tension between the two countries escalated over the Champions Trophy. Even though Pakistan travelled to

India for the men's 50-over World Cup in 2023, India did not make a reciprocal journey earlier this year. As part of the ICC arrangements, India played their matches in Dubai, going on to win the trophy after playing every fixture at the same venue. In May, amid cross-border military strikes between the two nations, both the Indian Premier League and Pakistan Super League were suspended before resuming. The delayed IPL final will be played on Tuesday. It remains to be seen whether the government of either country will allow their team to take part in a fixture against the other. It has also been announced the opening game of next year's Women's T20 World Cup in England will be played at Edgbaston on 12 June. The semi-finals have been confirmed for The Oval. The final will take place at Lord's on 5 July 2026.

Glenn Maxwell retires from one-day int'l cricket

MELBOURNE (AP): Two-time World Cup champion Glenn Maxwell is retiring from one-day international cricket in a bid to play a role in Australia's push for a Twenty20 world title next year. Cricket Australia confirmed Maxwell's decision Monday. The 36-year-old Maxwell played 149 ODIs for Australia in an enduring career that is memorable for his unbeaten double-century in the 2023 World Cup, his unconventional shot-making and his brilliant fielding. Maxwell said the physical toll of the ODI game, which can take up to eight hours and be played on short turnarounds, was beginning to impact on his



fielding ability and he didn't think he'd make it to the 2027 World Cup. "I always said I wasn't going to hand my position over if I felt like I was still good enough to play. I didn't want to just hold on for a couple of series and almost play for selfish reasons," Maxwell said. The Australian selectors "are moving in such a clear direction," he said, so the retirement confir-

mation "gives them the best look at what the line-up is leading into that next World Cup. I know how important that planning is." Australia's selection chairman George Bailey said Maxwell was one of the one-day game's most dynamic players and played a key role in two ODI World Cup titles. The shorter T20 format is still a good vehicle for Maxwell's rare talents. "His level of natural talent and skill is remarkable. His energy in the field, underrated ability with the ball and longevity has been superb," Bailey said. "What else stands out is his passion for and commitment to playing for Australia. "Fortunately, he still has much to offer Australia in the T20 format."

Javed Memon elected PFF executive member

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director of Sports and Co-curricular Activities at the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Javed Ali Memon, has been elected as an Executive Member of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF). Memon is the first-ever HEC representative to be elected to the PFF Executive Committee, following elections conducted under the supervision of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). His election marks a significant milestone in fostering collaboration between academic institutions and national sports bodies, said a press release. His appointment to the Executive Committee is a recognition of his tireless efforts in promoting sports within Pakistani universities and nurturing youth development. Under his leadership, university-level sports have seen a remarkable revival, with numerous inclusive and impactful events



encouraging student participation and athletic growth. Through the Prime Minister's Talent Hunt Youth Sports League—a flagship initiative of the Government of Pakistan focusing on twelve key sports, including football—Memon has played a vital role in identifying and nurturing young talent. Several players discovered through this program have already represented Pakistan at national and international levels, showcasing the success of grassroots development efforts. In addition, Memon serves on the Prime

Minister's Task Force on e-Sports, where he is shaping the future of digital sports in Pakistan and expanding opportunities for youth engagement in emerging sporting platforms. Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of HEC and the Pakistan University Sports Board (PUSB), emphasized the importance of university-level competitions in promoting physical well-being and athletic excellence. He reaffirmed HEC's commitment to grassroots sports development and urged aspiring young athletes to take full advantage of the opportunities provided through intervarsity competitions. Javed Memon's induction into the PFF Executive Committee is expected to further strengthen ties between academic institutions and national sports organizations, opening up new avenues for student-athletes and contributing to the growth of football in Pakistan from grassroots to professional levels.

National Ranking Tennis C'ships enters final stages

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 1st edition of the Emerging Pakistan National Ranking Tennis Championships has entered its final stages after a week of high-energy, competitive matches here at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex. In a dramatic Men's Singles quarterfinal, Muzammil Murtaza overcame Islamabad's rising star Ahmad Nael Qureshi in a marathon three-set thriller. Both players delivered outstanding baseline tennis in the opening set, with neither conceding serve. The set went into a tense tiebreak, where Muzammil's power play saw him edge ahead to win 7-6(4). The momentum shifted in the second set as the young Qureshi bounced back impressively, matching the No. 2 seed shot

for shot. He eventually captured the set in another close tiebreak, 7-6(6), leveling the match. In the decisive third set, Murtaza drew on his experience, displaying clinical precision and strong court coverage. He controlled the pace, denied Qureshi any opportunity to regroup, and secured the set 6-2 to advance to the semi-finals. In the Ladies Singles semi-finals, top seed Ushna Suhail extended her winning streak with a commanding 6-2, 6-2 victory over 3rd seed Mehaq Khokhar. Meanwhile, 4th seed Zunaisha Noor stunned 2nd seed Mahrukh Sajid with a dominant 6-1, 6-4 win to secure her place in the final. In the Men's Doubles event, the experienced pair of Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi and Aqeel

Khan showcased their dominance, defeating Hamza Roman and Saqib Hayat with ease in the second quarterfinal. The seasoned duo sealed the match in straight sets, 6-1, 6-2. Meanwhile, top seeds Yousaf Khalil and Barkatullah were pushed to their limits in a sizzling, three-set battle against Mudassar Murtaza and the talented Sami Zeb Khan. After dropping the first set 3-6, the top seeds bounced back to claim the second set 6-2. They then powered through the match tiebreak, winning it 10-1 to secure their place in the semi-finals. The championship continues to showcase the depth of talent emerging in Pakistan's tennis scene, promising an exciting conclusion in the days to come.

Men's Singles (quarterfinals), Aqeel Khan beat Musaddar Murtaza 6-2 6-0, Barkatullah beat Hamza Roman 6-1 6-1, Yousaf Khalil beat Abubakar Talha 6-3 6-3, Muzammil Murtaza beat Ahmad Nael Qureshi 7-6(4), 6-7(6), 6-2. Ladies Singles (semifinals), Ushna Suhail beat Mehaq Khokhar 6-2 6-2, Zunaisha Noor beat Mahrukh Sajid 6-1 6-4. Men's Doubles (quarterfinals), Yousaf Khalil & Barkatullah beat Mudassar Murtaza & Sami Zeb Khan 3-6 6-3 10-1, Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi & Aqeel Khan beat Hamza Roman & Saqib Hayat 6-1 6-2, Abu Bakar Talha & Ahmad Nael Qureshi beat Ahmed Chaudhary & M.Abid 7-5 6-1, Abdullah Adnan &

Muzammil Murtaza beat Faizan Fayyaz & Asad Zaman 6-1 6-0. Junior 18 & Under Singles (Pre-quarterfinals), Abubakar Talha beat Ahmed Hussain 6-0 6-0, Zohaib Afzal Malik beat Abdul Basir 1-6 6-4 7-5, Hamza Roman beat Muhammad Ali 6-4 7-6(4), Nabeel Ali Qayyum beat M.Junaid 6-4 6-1, M.Yahya beat M.Hassan Usmani 2-6 6-4 6-3, Muhammad Salar beat M.Uzair 6-0 6-0, M.Haziq Aasim beat Inam Qadir 6-2 6-3, Asad Zaman beat Moazzam Babar 6-0 6-2. Junior 18 & Under Singles (quarterfinals), Hamza Roman beat Nabeel Ali Qayyum 6-1 6-2, Muhammad Salar beat M.Yahya 5-7 6-2 6-1, Asad Zaman beat M.Haziq Aasim 1-6 6-1 6-1, Abubakar Talha beat Zohaib Afzal Malik 6-0 6-3.

Boys 14 & Under Singles quarterfinals, Muhammad Junaid beat Muhammad Aayan 4-1 5-3, Razik Sultan w/o Behroze Mamoon, Muhammad Umer beat Mahd Mahmood 5-3 4-2, Muhammad Muaz beat Ohad-e Mustafa 4-0 4-2. Boys 14 & Under Singles semifinals, Muhammad Muaz beat Muhammad Umer 7-5 6-2. Boys 12 & Under Singles quarterfinals, Muhammad Muaz beat M.Hamza 4-0 4-1, M.Faizan beat Mustafa Uzair 4-0 4-0, Muhammad Danyal beat Ashtar Alam 4-5 (5) 5-4(5) 4-1, Muhammad Aayan beat M.Turad 4-1 4-1. Boys 12 & Under Singles semifinals, Muhammad Aayan beat Muhammad Danyal 4-0 4-0, Muhammad Muaz beat M. Faizan 4-1 4-1.



In brief

3,635 challans fine issued for traffic violations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi issued 3,635 challan tickets in one day on Sunday for traffic violations across the district, collecting over Rs 3,352 million fine from violators. Chief Traffic Officer Beenish Fatima told APP on Monday that 909 motorcyclists were challaned for not wearing helmets while 533 drivers were given challan tickets for not having driving licenses and 117 did not have documents with them. A total fine of Rs 3,352,500 was imposed on the violators, she added. The CTO, however, made it clear that the purpose of issuing challans to citizens was to improve the traffic system and inculcate the habit of following traffic laws in them. She said challans and fines were issued for minor traffic violations, but in case of serious ones, vehicles and motorcycles were impounded in police stations. She said in collaboration with the district administration, the CTP also carried out a crackdown against encroachments and illegal parking on daily basis.

IRSA releases 240,629 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 240,629 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 213,572 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1476.02 feet which was 74.02 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 112,100 cusecs and 150,900 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1163.00 feet, which was 113.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 36,743 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 172,148, 146,153, 121,735 and 66,827 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 28,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 11,797 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

IFA seals bakery unit

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Monday sealed a bakery unit here after a social media report exposed poor hygiene practices inside its production unit. The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) took immediate action, while the factory owner claimed that some individuals posing as journalists had been demanding money by pretending to be food inspectors. According to the IFA, the action was taken on the direction of the authority's director. A team led by Deputy Director Dr. Tahira Siddique carried out the inspection. The team found poor sanitation practices at the site. Open food dyes and unlabelled chemicals were also being used in the preparation of bakery items. These findings led to an immediate sealing of the production unit. During the inspection, an unexpected situation unfolded. The factory owner informed the IFA team that some individuals had previously visited the bakery and claimed to be from the Food Authority. According to him, these individuals had demanded money from the factory staff. Meanwhile, the authority is looking into the claims made by the factory owner regarding the impersonation of food inspectors by people posing as journalists. No formal complaint has been registered yet, but the IFA said it is ready to assist if any evidence is provided.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi's Important Media Talk: Discussing Pakistan Railways' Outstanding Performance and Development Projects. —APP Photo

Kundi hosts luncheon in honour of Russian Ambassador

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi hosted a luncheon in honour of Russian Ambassador to Pakistan, Albert P. Khorev, at his residence in Islamabad on Monday. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi personally welcomed the ambassador, who was accompanied by senior diplomats from the Russian Embassy. During the gathering, the Governor thanked Ambassador Khorev for Russia's timely humanitarian assistance to the people affected in Kurram district. The luncheon also served as a platform to discuss and

express mutual interest in enhancing bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

Governor Kundi emphasized the provincial government's appreciation for the solidarity shown by the Russian government and people during challenging times, particularly in Kurram. He highlighted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's keen interest in expanding development initiatives and investment cooperation with Russia. Governor Kundi also expressed hope that Russian assistance to the remote and underprivileged areas of the province would continue.

He extended an invitation to the ambassador to visit

Peshawar, which the ambassador graciously accepted.

Ambassador Khorev, in his remarks, thanked the Governor for the warm hospitality and reiterated Russia's commitment to supporting the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and maintaining strong ties with the people of Pakistan. He described the relationship with the people of KP and Pakistan as one of friendship, mutual respect, and affection. At the conclusion of the event, Governor Kundi presented the ambassador with a traditional KP chadar (shawl), a cap, and a souvenir, symbolizing the province's culture and hospitality.

Nawaz Sharif Flyover set for inaugural

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab government has successfully completed the state-of-the-art Nawaz Sharif Flyover at Khawaja Corporation Chowk, which is a significant milestone in Rawalpindi's infrastructure development. The Rs. 2.1 billion project stands ready for formal inauguration on June 03, to revolutionize traffic flow in one of the city's most busy areas.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif personally supervised the project's progress, ensuring its timely completion as part of the government's commitment to the city's development. The 1,915-foot-long, 52-foot-wide flyover flanks two 22-foot service roads on each side and forms a crucial link between Rawalpindi's inner city and the Rawalpindi Ring Road network.

Engineered to handle approximately 80,000 vehicles daily, the flyover will dramatically improve travel along the Adiala Road corridor. The project includes complementary infrastructure upgrades, including a Rs. 1.93 billion road rehabilitation initiative from Khawaja Corporation to Gorakhpur, further enhancing regional connectivity.

Rana Qasim Ali, Executive Engineer of the Punjab Highways Department, confirmed APP that all structural work has been completed with minimal disruption to traffic.

"We've employed cutting-edge engineering techniques and optimal resource allocation to deliver this world-class infrastructure," Rana Qasim said adding that located at one of the busiest areas of the city, the project went on with round the clock work, uninterrupted traffic flow through diversion plans and accelerated pace of civil works.

The flyover has been named in honor of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's contributions to Punjab's development. Its inauguration will usher in a new era of commutation for Rawalpindi residents, significantly reducing travel times and congestion in the area.

The project stands as a testament to the Punjab government's vision for modern, efficient urban infrastructure that serves the needs of its citizens. Federal and provincial ministers, parliamentarians and other notables are expected to attend the inaugural ceremony.

Abbasi announces 20% discount on fares during three days of Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Monday announced that Pakistan Railways will run five special trains and offer a 20 percent discount on fares during the three days of Eid-ul-Azha.

Speaking to the media, the minister described the last 11 months as a remarkable period for Pakistan Railways, saying the department had shown strong progress. He shared that revenue had reached Rs83 billion, mainly due to better operations, especially in the past four months.

He said Rs42 billion was earned from passenger trains, Rs29 billion from freight services, and Rs13 billion from other sources. For the first time in its history, Pakistan Railways is now able to pay salaries and medical expenses of its staff from its own revenue.

Abbasi highlighted that freight services are a key source of income globally. To improve efficiency, the ministry plans to outsource these operations. He also noted that leased railway land is contributing to revenue, while the Royal Palm Golf and Country Club is

being outsourced through a transparent process under the Prime Minister's vision.

He said Rs1 billion has been allocated to upgrade eight railway hospitals, which will also be outsourced. Railway employees will continue to receive free treatment, while non-employees will pay for services. Fourteen railway schools are also being outsourced. These schools will offer facilities similar to private institutions, and children of railway staff will pay fees based on special terms.

Abbasi said infrastructure improvements are also underway. Cleanliness has improved at Chaklala and Margalla stations, and food services are being strictly monitored with the support of all four provincial food authorities. To enhance passenger experience, front-desk and train hostess services will be introduced. An anti-encroachment drive based on the Punjab model will be launched to reclaim valuable railway land, including station yards, commercial, residential, and agricultural areas.

He said the Punjab government is fully backing these efforts. Several projects that had been stalled since 2016 are now being revived. As part of the Green Pakistan initiative, trees will be planted along railway tracks.

The minister also announced a Rs45 billion development plan for Punjab, aiming to increase train speeds to 60 km per hour. He said 1,413 new wagons would be produced to support these goals. A new passenger train between Lahore and Narowal will start operating on June 15, the same day a freight train bound for Russia will be dispatched via Multan and Sindh.

Abbasi added that work is also progressing on a rail link with Kazakhstan. These projects, he said, are crucial for transporting resources from Reko Diq and Thar Coal fields. He confirmed the closure of three inactive companies related to freight and audit operations and said that Margalla Railway Station would be modernized. Abbasi reaffirmed the government's commitment to honoring all agreements with the media and expressed confidence in a promising future for Pakistan Railways.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Khalil Tahir Sandhu addressing a press conference at Press Club. —APP Photo

Rubina Khalid inaugurates BISP Tehsil office in Bhera

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid Monday inaugurated the BISP Tehsil Office in Bhera. Secretary Information of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Nadeem Afzal Gondal Chan, was also present on the occasion, along with a large number of party leaders and deserving women from the area, said a news release. Addressing the participants, Senator Rubina Khalid stated that the newly established office aims to provide registration and payment services to deserving women close to their doorsteps.

This initiative reflects BISP's strong commitment to ensuring that every deserving woman receives assistance in a dignified and transparent manner—one of the programme's top priorities. Senator Rubina Khalid further emphasized that BISP is the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the credit for implementing this programme goes to President Asif Ali Zardari. She highlighted the unique aspect of BISP that

recognizes the women as the head of the household.

Currently, 10 million families are benefiting from the programme, which is designed to bridge the gap between household income and essential expenses for low-income families.

She added that, under special instructions from President Asif Ali Zardari, financial support is being provided to deserving women in a transparent and respectful manner. Referring to Bibi Shaheed's famous words, "Skill is your asset," she noted that the Benazir Hunarmand Programme has been launched to provide technical training, helping families become self-reliant and contribute positively to the country's economy.

Senator Rubina Khalid clarified that there is no fee for the BISP survey. To participate, individuals must bring their national identity card, children's B-form, a recent electricity bill, and an active mobile number.

She also highlighted the Benazir Nashonuma Programme, which provides nutritious food and financial

assistance to pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of two, aiming to prevent stunting.

Moreover, she mentioned that under the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif Programme, educational stipends are awarded to children who maintain at least 70% school attendance. Special incentives are given to girls to promote female education.

Chairperson BISP reminded everyone that all official messages are sent only from the number 8171. "Do not trust messages received from any other number or source," she stressed.

She reiterated that corruption and irregularities will not be tolerated under any circumstances, and strict action will be taken on any such complaints.

Earlier, while addressing the ceremony, Nadeem Afzal Gondal Chan expressed his gratitude to Senator Rubina Khalid and the entire BISP team for inaugurating the Tehsil Office in Bhera, which will greatly benefit the local community.



ISLAMABAD: Students busy in picking garbage during launching ceremony of the Clean-up Drive Initiative at the Margallah Hills, National Park and Trail 5. —APP Photo

CDA cracks down on illegal housing schemes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) has announced sweeping measures against illegal housing and cooperative societies operating in the federal capital.

The decision was made during a high-level meeting chaired by CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Monday.

Senior officials including CDA board members, planning directors, and enforcement officers attended the session.

It was decided that the CDA will immediately publish a comprehensive list of unauthorized housing societies in major news-

papers and on its official website. "We want every citizen to easily verify a society's legal status before investing their hard-earned money," stated a CDA spokesperson.

Authorities have imposed a complete ban on construction material sales to illegal societies. Building material suppliers must now verify a society's approved layout plan and valid No-Objection Certificate (NOC) before any transaction. Violators will face strict legal consequences.

The crackdown particularly targets societies involved in illegal plot transfers and those avoid-

ing mandatory CDA transfer fees. "These unauthorized developments not only cheat investors but also create urban planning nightmares," explained the spokesperson.

The measures come after increasing complaints about fraudulent housing schemes cheating thousands of citizens.

The CDA urges the public to always cross-check any property investment through their official channels before making payments.

For verification of housing societies and regular updates, citizens can visit the CDA's official website or contact their helpline.

616 acres registered

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Justice has registered more than 616 acres of land in Haji Qadir township in Sara Rud district of eastern Nangarhar province as state-owned land based on documents and evidence. The Ministry of Justice in a statement said the land in Fatehabad and Khairabad areas of Sara Rud district was registered as state land as per order of the Central Zone Special Court for Access to Usurped Land Cases.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil Hajj 06, 1446 — Tuesday, June 03, 2025

Robbers kill educ official

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): A senior education official has been gunned down by armed robbers in Kandahar, sources said on Monday. Dand district education head Qari Saeed Ahmad Salar was shot dead yesterday in Yakh Karez area in the limits of 15th security district of Kandahar city, a reliable security source told Pajhwok Afghan News. He added Qari Salar was on his way home when armed robbers intercepted him, killed him and stole his motorcycle.

350 suspects arrested for criminal activities

NANGARHAR (TOLONews): The Nangarhar Police Command has arrested more than 350 individuals over the past two months on charges of involvement in various crimes.

Security officials in the province said the suspects are accused of crimes including murder, theft, kidnapping, bribery, and several other offenses. After preliminary investigations, they will be referred to judicial and legal institutions.

Mohammad Tahir Mobarez, deputy chief of Nangarhar police command, stated: "In the past two months, the Nangarhar

Criminal Investigation Department has registered 204 cases, resulting in the arrest of 266 individuals: 59 on charges of theft, 9 for adultery and illicit relations, 5 for assault, 17 for murder and attempted murder, 10 for human and goods trafficking, 3 for illegal logging, 1 for kidnapping, 1 for embezzlement and bribery, 3 for disrupting public order, 4 for fleeing from home, and 122 others for various other crimes."

Meanwhile, residents of Nangarhar have called for stricter actions by security agencies to ensure public safety.

Imran Nabi, a resident of

Nangarhar, said: "Criminals who are arrested must be brought to justice and given harsh punishments under the law so that they serve as an example and deter others from committing such acts in the future."

Another resident, Shoaib, added: "More steps must be taken to strengthen security so that Nangarhar can move further toward peace and prosperity."

According to the Nangarhar police command, over the past two months, more than 2,000 hectares of land in various parts of the province have been cleared of poppy cultivation.

Afghan Hajj Minister attends Saudi moot

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Hajj and Religious Affairs Minister Sheikh Noor Mohammad Saqib has participated in the 49th Global Conference of "Nadwat al-Kubra" in Jeddah city of Saudi Arabia, the ministry said on Monday.

In a statement, the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs said that heads of Islamic organizations, renowned scholars, intellectuals from the Islamic world, the Minister of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia, all hajj ministers of Islamic countries, and several Saudi government officials were present at the conference.

The ministry added that the conference was inaugurated with a speech by Tawfiq Al Rabiah Minister of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia.

It is noteworthy that this international conference is held annually during the Hajj season in Saudi Arabia, and Hajj ministers, officials, and religious scholars from Islamic countries are invited to attend it.

The statement stated that the main goal of the conference is to review the legal and jurisprudential issues related to Hajj and to ensure adherence to the established regulations and guidelines, in order to create a suitable environment and provide better facilities for pilgrims to perform the Hajj rituals.

New ancient historical site discovered in Nangarhar

NANGARHAR (BNA): A significant archaeological find has been reported in the Omari Camp area of Torkham, located in Nangarhar province. Mawlawi Zabihullah Noorani, Head of Information and Culture in Nangarhar, confirmed that the site, believed to date back to antiquity, showcases relics from both the Mughal (Babur) era and the Kushan civilization.

According to Noorani, cultural department staff identified the site near Torkham, specifically within the services committee area of Omari Camp, which stands 597 meters above sea level.

Local residents report the presence of six ancient wells at the site, one of which has been sealed by the services committee and repurposed for cooking facilities. Additionally, a prominent mound on the eastern side is believed to hold historical significance, possibly dating back to the Mughal era. Observers noted a tower and several rooms located on top of this mound.

In light of these discoveries, the Nangarhar Department of Information and Culture has urged the Omari Camp Services Committee to cease any digging, construction, or other activities within the site to ensure its preservation for future generations. Noorani emphasized that the importance of this site has been communicated to the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Educ Ministry hands over 15 newly built schools

KABUL (BNA): In a significant boost for education in southeastern Afghanistan, local authorities in Paktika province have announced the completion and handover of 15 new school buildings across 14 districts.

The construction project, funded by the NSRDO organization at a cost of 192 million Afghanis, was officially inaugurated in a ceremony attended by Afghanistan's Minister of Education, Mawlawi Habibullah Agha, alongside several regional officials.

Speaking at the event, Minister Agha emphasized the importance of education for Afghanistan's future, stating that the new facilities will provide thousands of students with a safe and suitable learning environment. He pledged ongoing efforts to address challenges in the education sector, encouraging students to pursue higher education, including master's and doctoral degrees.

"Our country needs educated youth equipped with both religious and modern knowledge to compete globally. I urge parents to support their children in pursuing both," the minister said.

According to Paktika's Director of Education, Mawlawi Abdul Wakil Khalid, each new building includes six classrooms and an administrative office, and completed within nine months. The initiative is seen as a vital step toward improving educational infrastructure in the province, which has long struggled with inadequate facilities.

Foreign Minister meets Russia Ambassador



KABUL (BNA): The country's Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, held a meeting in Kabul with Dmitry Zhirnov, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

The discussions focused on ushering in a new phase

of ties between Afghanistan and Russia, reviewing agreements reached at the recent Kazan conference, and strengthening the work of bilateral committees.

According to information from the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, Ambassador

Zhirnov formally presented the official note of acceptance for Afghanistan's nominated ambassador to Russia. He expressed hope that the elevation of diplomatic engagement would lead to significant progress in various areas of cooperation

between the two countries.

Minister Muttaqi described the new chapter in relations with Russia as significant, voicing optimism that both nations would be able to expand bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors during this period.

UNICEF: Four million Afghan children deprived of wducation

KABUL (TOLONews): According to a new report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), about four million children in Afghanistan are deprived of education.

The lack of adequate educational infrastructure, clean water, sanitary facilities, and qualified teachers—particularly female teachers—has been cited as the main reasons for this deprivation.

UNICEF warns that the continuation of this situation poses a serious threat to the future of the younger generation.

The report states: "An estimated 4 million children in Afghanistan are reported to be out of

school. Many are unable to attend due to lack of proper school buildings, safe water and clean sanitation facilities, and lack of qualified teachers—particularly women. Children often drop out due to economic barriers, sometimes forced into child labour to help their families earn an income."

Hekmatullah Mirzada, a university professor, said: "Afghanistan's education sector currently faces numerous challenges and limitations, including infrastructural problems, a lack of skilled and professional teachers, the absence of a standardized and updated curriculum, societal cultural weaknesses, and political

restrictions."

Some teachers emphasize that serious attention must be paid to education for the country's better future and call on international organizations, especially UNICEF, to work toward improving education.

Zaki Mohammadi, another university professor, stated: "Opportunities for education must be created for both men and women. In every aspect, conditions should be improved—materially, through the provision of school buildings, stationery, and facilities—and spiritually, by ensuring quality teaching."

At the same time, some female students once again

urged the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools for girls above the sixth grade.

Hasanat, a student, told TOLONews: "It has been four years since girls' schools were closed. We request the Islamic Emirate reopen the schools for girls."

Diana, another student, said: "I wanted to become a doctor in the future, but now my future is uncertain. I call on the Islamic Emirate to reopen the schools for girls."

Previously, UNICEF had reported that 2.2 million girls in Afghanistan have been deprived of education due to these restrictions, with 400,000 of them affected just this year.

Sacrificial animal market sites selected in Kabul



KABUL (Pajhwok): As Eid-ul-Adha draws closer, the Kabul Municipality has selected sites for the sale and purchase of sacrificial animals in the capital city.

Kabul Municipality Representative Nematullah Barakzai: "As our dear fellow citizens are aware, we are approaching Eid-ul-Adha and the Kabul Municipality has identified places for buying and selling livestock in 22 districts of Kabul city. We request all citizens to buy and sell their livestock only in these places."

The animal market sites have been selected in:

- Districts 1st and 8th: Behind Logar Oil Tank – Shuhada Saleheen
- Districts 2nd, 4th, 10th, 11th and 15th: Opposite Arya City
- District 3rd, 6th and 7th: Behind Dar-ul-Aman Palace
- District 3rd, 5th, 13th and 14th: Nakhas Company
- District 8th: Qala Barki

– Behind Security Zone 8

District 9th: Near Pacha Bridge – Zaman Khan Fort Road

District 16th: Designated Special Location

Districts 12th, 16th: West of Mission Crossroads – Ahmad Shah Baba Mina Project

Districts 12th, 16th: Sharq Shasat-e-Matri Qala Zaman Khan – Al-Wokhil Area

Districts 11th, 17th:

Hada Mazar – Left Side of the Road

Districts 19th, 21st: Aziz Hotak Bazaar – Pul-e-Charkhi Area

District 20th: Kabul-Logar Road – Sarai Malik Shir Agha (Amro Bazaar)

District 22nd: Bagrami Main Road – Connected to Oil Tank – Past Bagrami Bridge

Barakzai asked livestock owners to sell their animals only in these places and

empathized: "Kabul Municipality survey and monitoring teams would continuously patrol these places"

He urged citizens to throw the waste left over from animal sacrifices in designated trash cans to prevent bad odors and environmental pollution.

During Eid, Kabul Municipality employees would collect and clean garbage bins every six hours, he added.

Wasi meets Dejan Panic

KABUL (Ariana News): Mullah Abdul Wasi, Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister's Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, on Monday met with Dejan Panic, the Director General of the humanitarian health organization Emergency for discussions on the health situation in the country. Mohammad Asif, Director of Relations for Emergency, also attended the meeting, ARG said in a statement.

According to ARG Wasi welcomed the delegation and expressed appreciation for Emergency's continued commitment to providing essential healthcare services to the Afghan people.

He commended the organization's dedication and its long-standing contributions to the country's health sector.

Panic provided a comprehensive overview of Emergency's operations both in Afghanistan and internationally.

He highlighted the organization's evo-

lution from primarily treating war-related injuries to offering a broad range of free trauma care, particularly for victims of traffic accidents and other emergencies.

He also outlined the organization's financial plans for the coming years, ongoing efforts to attract donor support, and future strategies aimed at expanding services across the country.

Wasi reaffirmed the Islamic Emirate's full support for Emergency and other humanitarian organizations committed to improving the well-being of the Afghan population. He emphasized the importance of their work and assured that the government remains ready to provide necessary assistance and facilitate their operations.

The meeting concluded with mutual recognition of the vital role of healthcare services in Afghanistan's development and the shared goal of strengthening access to quality medical care for all.

China donates 66,000 doses of vaccines



KABUL (Ariana News): China has donated 33,000 doses of influenza vaccine and 33,000 doses of meningitis vaccine to Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health, the ministry announced on Monday.

At the official handover ceremony, Abdul Wali

Haqqani, Deputy Minister for Public Health for Service Delivery, expressed appreciation for China's continued support.

He emphasized the importance of improving customs procedures to ensure the vaccines maintain their quality during the

import process.

A representative from China reaffirmed his country's commitment to supporting Afghanistan's healthcare system.

He stated that such assistance will continue and is expected to expand into other sectors as well.

100 tons of cherries to be exported

PANJSHIR (BNA): Local officials in Panjshir have announced the export of 100 tons of fresh cherries to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Moscow, Russia. The initiative aims to enhance trade ties and provide new market opportunities for local gardeners.

Saifuddin Mankhan, spokesperson for the Panjshir governor, reported that Governor Hafiz Mohammad Agha Hakim has held special meetings with businessmen from these countries to improve coordination and facilitate the export process. The cherries, valued at about 20 million afis, are set to be shipped this week.

Mawlawi Amin-ul Haq Matsoori, head of the provincial Chamber of Commerce and Industry, emphasized that this export will not only open new markets but also contribute significantly to the economic growth of Panjshir.

Last year, Panjshir cherries were successfully exported to India and Pakistan, generating 360 million afghanis for local farmers.

Precious stones sold for 42m Afghani

NURISTAN (TOLONews):

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum said that in the bidding process for the sale of precious and semi-precious stones from Nuristan, kunzite and beryl stones from the Mawi mine in Du Ab district were sold for over 42 million afghani.

According to the ministry's press release, the Islamic Emirate's share from this bidding amounted to over 4.281 million afghani.

The kunzite and beryl stones from the Mawi mine were sold for a total of 42,814,500 afghani.

Qutbuddin Yaqubi, an economic affairs expert, told TOLONews: "Extraction, processing, and packaging should be done in the way the world expects. If we do not properly extract, process, and package these highly valuable gems, I am certain the

world will not be interested in buying such stones."

Other experts, highlighting the importance of Afghanistan's precious and semi-precious stones, emphasized the need to establish processing factories within the country.

Ahmad Firdaws Behgozin, another economic expert in Afghanistan, told TOLONews: "Laws that help improve the extraction of Afghanistan's minerals should be enacted, and serious monitoring should be conducted to prevent illegal extraction and smuggling so that we can witness positive changes in this sector."

It is worth mentioning that Afghanistan's precious and semi-precious stones are internationally renowned for their high quality, and recently, some foreign investors have also shown interest in investing in this sector.

Afghanistan U-17 win CAFA Fair Play award



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Afghanistan national under-17 football team has been awarded the Fair Play Award at the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) competition.

The Afghanistan

Football Federation (AFF) on Monday said the award ceremony was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Afghanistan entered the tournament as the defending champions but lost all three of its matches, finish-

ing in 6th place.

The Afghan side was defeated 1-0 by Turkmenistan in their opening game, followed by a 3-0 loss to Tajikistan, and concluded with another 3-0 defeat against Iran.

Ukraine bombs Russian bases

KYIV (Reuters): Peace talks between Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul ended barely an hour after they began on Monday, a day after a massive Ukrainian drone attack on Russia's nuclear-capable strategic bombers.

The talks — the second such direct contacts between the sides since 2022 — had already begun nearly two hours later than scheduled, with no explanation of the delay. Although the atmosphere was subdued and dialogue brief, the talks did yield an agreement to conduct a new prisoner exchange and Ukraine said another round of talks was on the agenda.

In Russia, before the talks began, angry war bloggers had called on Moscow to deliver a fearsome retaliatory blow against Kyiv after Ukraine on Sunday launched one of its most ambitious attacks of the war, targeting Russian nuclear-capable long-range bombers in Siberia and elsewhere. Ukraine and Russia have issued starkly different assessments of the damage done to Russia's fleet of strategic bombers — a key element in its nuclear arsenal — but it was clear from publicly available satellite imagery that Moscow had suffered some serious equipment losses.

"The eyes of the whole world are focused on the contacts here," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had told the Russian and Ukrainian delegations at the start of talks as they faced off against each other on opposite sides of the room in the sumptuous Ciragan Palace by the Bosphorus. He said the aim of the meeting was to evaluate the conditions for a ceasefire, to discuss a possible meeting between the Russian and Ukrainian presidents, and to look at more prisoner exchange opportunities.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, who headed Kyiv's delegation, announced after the talks that a new prisoner exchange had been agreed to follow up on the biggest prisoner swap of the war brokered at the last round of talks. He said the new exchange would focus on those severely injured in the war and on young people.

Umerov also said that Moscow had handed its own draft peace accord to Ukraine and that Kyiv, which has drawn up its own version, would review the Russian document. Ukraine has proposed holding more talks before the end of June, but believes that only a meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin can resolve the many issues of contention, Umerov said.

Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said Kyiv's delegation had handed over a list of children it said had been deported to Russia and which it wanted back. Moscow says such children were moved in order to protect them from fighting. The two sides had been expected on Monday to discuss their respective and wildly different ideas for what a full ceasefire and a longer term path to peace should look like amid pressure from US President Donald Trump, who has said the US could abandon its role as a mediator if there is no progress. But Umerov said Kyiv had been unable to react to Russia's proposals for peace because it had only seen them on Monday.

While both countries, for different reasons, are keen to keep Trump engaged in the peace process, expectations of a breakthrough on Monday had been low. Ukraine regards Russia's approach to date as an attempt to force it to capitulate — something Kyiv says it will never do — while Moscow, which advanced on the battlefield in May at its fastest rate in six months, says Kyiv should submit to peace on Russian terms or face losing more territory.

Putin set out his opening terms for an immediate end to the war last June: Ukraine must drop its NATO ambitions and withdraw all of its troops from the entirety of the territory of four Ukrainian regions claimed and mostly controlled by Russia. According to a proposed roadmap drawn up by Ukraine, a copy of which was seen by Reuters, Kyiv wants no restrictions on its military strength after any peace deal, no international recognition of Russian sovereignty over parts of Ukraine taken by Moscow's forces, and wants reparations.

Russia currently controls just under one-fifth of Ukraine, or about 113,100 square km, about the same size as the US state of Ohio. Putin sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, after eight years of fighting in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces.

The United States says over 1.2 million people have been killed and injured in the war since 2022. Trump has called Putin "crazy" and berated Zelenskyy in public in the Oval Office, but the US president has also said he thinks peace is achievable and that if Putin delays then he could impose tough sanctions on Russia.

Erdogan proposes new Putin-Zelenskyy-Trump meeting: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated his willingness to host a meeting between the American, Russian and Ukrainian leaders in an effort to end the war in Ukraine.

"My greatest wish for both sides is to bring both (Russia's) Vladimir Putin and (Ukraine's) Volodymyr Zelenskyy together in Istanbul or Ankara, and even to bring (US President) Mr. (Donald) Trump to their side, if they accept," he said. Turkiye, he said, would "take steps" to facilitate such a meeting, following direct talks between the two sides in Istanbul on Monday.

Erdogan said it was a big achievement that Monday's talks even took place. Ukraine carried out one of its most brazen and successful attacks ever on Russian soil on the weekend, its drones ambushing dozens of strategic bombers at bases deep inside Russia.

"It is a success in itself that the meeting happened despite what happened yesterday," he said, hailing the talks as "magnificent." At Monday's meeting, which lasted just over an hour, Ukraine and Russia agreed to exchange severely injured prisoners of war as well as those under 25, alongside the remains of 6,000 troops killed in combat, Kyiv said. "These figures given by both Russia and Ukraine... (are) very, very important in terms of showing how important these Istanbul meetings are. And we are proud of this," Erdogan added.

Govt filed review petition with NEPRA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari on Monday announced that the government has submitted a review petition to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) for reassessing K-Electric's (KE) tariff structure.

In a tweet, after the Power Division officially filed the request for reassessing K-Electric's (KE) tariff structure, the minister said that Pakistan's power sector cannot afford to encourage the incompetence of any private or public company.

He explained that raising tariffs should not be used as a way to cover up operational shortcomings. "Our request for revision is responsible," the minister stated. "It is aimed at promoting a sustainable and healthy power distribution system." The Power Division hopes that the revision process will be transparent and fair.

Imran refuses polygraph test

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has refused to undergo a polygraph test for the fourth time in May 9 cases.

A Lahore police investigation team, led by DSP Asif Javed and including Inspectors Muhammad Tasaddaq, Saleem, Naveed, and Punjab Forensic Unit's Abid Ayub, arrived at Adiala Jail to conduct the test. The team intended to carry out a polygraph test related to the May 9 cases, but Imran Khan once again declined.

Lahore police had previously attempted three times to conduct polygraph, photogrammetric, and voice-matching tests on the former prime minister. The investigative team was set to question Imran Khan in connection with 11 FIRs registered in Lahore related to the May 9 incidents. Following his refusal, the team returned from Adiala Jail without conducting the test.

Budget 2025 26: Govt proposes tax hikes

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 is set to include significant tax increases on bank deposits, savings schemes, and cash withdrawals by non-filers, alongside a boost in development spending.

According to media reports, work is actively underway on a range of tax proposals that include a significant increase in the withholding tax on cash withdrawals by non-filers. The rate, currently set at 0.6 per cent, is expected to double to 1.2pc. Additionally, a new tax slab is under consideration for daily withdrawals exceeding Rs50,000, aiming to discourage large cash transactions and promote documentation of the economy.

Tax authorities are also mulling an increase in the General Sales Tax (GST) on locally manufactured vehicles, particularly those with engine capacities under 800cc — a category previously considered more affordable for the average consumer. The GST rate on these vehicles is likely to rise from 12.5pc to 18pc, aligning them with the broader tax regime. Further proposals include imposing levies on petrol and diesel-run vehicles, revising taxes on capital gains and profits, and adjusting the super tax. Notably, the government is also contemplating a reduction in the super tax rate, a move likely intended to ease the burden on large-scale industries and encourage investment.

Despite the tightening tax regime, the government plans to significantly boost development expenditure. The federal government is expected to allocate over Rs1,000 billion towards development projects in the next fiscal year. This includes borrowing Rs270bn from foreign sources to finance these initiatives. Provincial governments are also preparing for an expanded development footprint. Punjab has announced an ambitious development outlay of Rs1,190bn, the highest among all provinces.



GAZA: A Palestinian man is stopped by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint in Bethlehem.

Israeli strike on Gaza kills 14 Palestinians

UN chief calls for probe into deaths

DEIR AL-BALAH: An Israeli strike on a residential building in the Gaza Strip on Monday killed 14 people, mostly women and children, according to health officials.

The Shifa and Al-Ahli hospitals confirmed the toll from the strike in the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, saying five women and seven children were among those killed. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Israel says it only targets militants and tries to avoid harming civilians. It blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militant group is entrenched in populated areas.

The Israel-Hamas war began when Palestinian militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Hamas is still holding 58 hostages, around a third of them believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Israel's military campaign has killed over 54,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants. The offensive has destroyed vast areas of Gaza and displaced around 90 percent of the population.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in return for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli pullout. Israel has vowed to continue the war until all the hostages are returned, and Hamas is defeated or disarmed and sent into exile. It has said it will maintain control of Gaza indefinitely and facilitate what it refers to as the voluntary emigration of much of its population. Palestinians and most of the international community have rejected the resettlement plans, viewing them as forcible expulsion.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders said Sunday that people it treated at a Gaza aid site run by a new US-backed organization reported being "shot from all sides" by Israeli forces. The NGO, known by its French name MSF, blamed the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's aid distribution system for chaos at the scene in the southern Gaza town of Rafah.

Gaza's civil defense agency said Israeli fire killed 31 Palestinians at the site. Witnesses told AFP the Israeli military had opened fire. The GHF and Israeli authorities denied any such incident took place but MSF and other medics reported treating

GAZA (AFP): UN chief Antonio Guterres called Monday for an independent investigation into the killing of dozens of Palestinians near a US-backed aid center in Gaza after rescuers blamed the deaths on Israeli fire and the military denied any involvement. Gaza's civil defense agency said Israeli gunfire killed at least 31 people and wounded 176 near the aid distribution site in the southern city of Rafah, with AFP photos showing civilians at the scene carting away bodies and medics at nearby hospitals reporting a deluge of gunshot wound victims.

The Israeli military, however, denied its troops had fired on civilians in or around the center, and both it and the aid site's administrator accused Hamas of sowing false rumors. "I am appalled by the reports of Palestinians killed and injured while seeking aid in Gaza yesterday. It is unacceptable that Palestinians are risking their lives for food," Guterres said in a statement, without assigning blame for the deaths. "I call for an immediate and independent investigation into these events and for perpetrators to be held accountable." The Israeli government has cooperated with the group running the site, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), to introduce a new mechanism for distributing aid in Gaza that has bypassed the longstanding UN-led system. The UN has declined to work with the group out of concerns about its neutrality, with some aid agencies saying it appears designed to cater to Israeli military objectives. An eyewitness from the scene in Rafah, Sameh Hamuda, 33, had told AFP he was headed toward the aid site amid a crowd of other Palestinians when "quadcopter drones opened fire on the people, and tanks started shooting." "Several people were killed right in front of me," he said. Another witness, Abdullah Barbakh, 58, also told AFP "the army opened fire from drones and tanks." Following the reports, the Israeli army said an initial inquiry found its troops "did not fire at civilians while they were near or within the humanitarian aid distribution site."

Army spokesman Effie Defrin said in a video message that "Hamas is doing its best, its utmost, to stop us from" distributing aid, and vowed to "investigate each one of those allegations" against Israeli troops. "I urge you not to believe every rumor spread by Hamas," he added. GHF also denied any deaths or injuries took place, adding that "these fake reports have been actively fomented by Hamas." Israel has come under increasing international pressure to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza following a more than two-month blockade on aid that was only recently eased. The UN has warned the entire population of the territory is facing the risk of famine. It has also reported recent incidents of aid being looted, including by armed individuals. Talks aimed at securing a ceasefire and the return of hostages taken by Hamas during its October 2023 attack that triggered the war have failed to produce a breakthrough. Militants took 251 hostages during the attack, 57 of whom remain in Gaza, including 34 who the Israeli military says are dead.

crowds of locals with gunshot wounds at the Nasser hospital in the nearby town of Khan Younis.

"Patients told MSF they were shot from all sides by drones, helicopters, boats, tanks and Israeli soldiers on the ground," MSF said in a statement. MSF emergency coordinator Claire Manera in the statement called the GHF's system of aid delivery "dehumanizing, dangerous and severely ineffective."

"It has resulted in deaths and injuries of civilians that could have been prevented. Humanitarian aid must be provided only by humanitarian organizations who have the competence and determination to do it safely and effectively." MSF communications officer Nour Alsaqa in the

statement reported hospital corridors filled with patients, mostly men, with "visible gunshot wounds in their limbs."

MSF quoted one injured man, Mansour Sami Abdi, as describing people fighting over just five pallets of aid. "They told us to take food — then they fired from every direction," he said. "This isn't aid. It's a lie." The Israeli military said an initial inquiry found its troops "did not fire at civilians while they were near or within the humanitarian aid distribution site." A GHF spokesperson said: "These fake reports have been actively fomented by Hamas," the Islamic militant group that Israel has vowed to destroy in Gaza. — Arab News

PHC annoys increasing street crimes

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Acting Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice, Justice SM Atiq Shah, has expressed concern over the increasing street crimes in Hayatabad, stating that the residents are facing severe difficulties due to the frequent incidents of street crimes, on Monday.

The Acting Chief Justice observed that despite the alarming situation, no significant measures have been taken to control these crimes. The court noted that two police stations are insufficient for a population of 800,000 to 1 million citizens. During the hearing of a petition regarding the recovery of a woman who went missing from Darul Aman in Hayatabad, the court was informed that street crimes are on the rise in the upscale area. The SHO explained that some individuals from Khyber District break the boundary wall and escape after com-

mitting crimes.

The Chief Justice expressed surprise that there is no police post on that side. The court directed the SHO Hayatabad to submit a detailed report on how to control crimes in the area and what measures should be taken. The court also directed to involve the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) to ensure the construction of a strong boundary wall.

PHC also sought a report on the recovery of a woman who went missing from Darul Aman in 2023. The court directed the provincial government, federal government, and police to submit their reports within 14 days.

Court seeks govt response against non-provision of funds to LG: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) directed the provincial government for submission of reply regarding non-disbursement of development funds to local government representatives, on Monday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Farah Jamshed heard the petition. During the session, the court addressed the petition filed by local government representatives who claimed they have not received any development funds despite being elected for nearly three years.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate informed the court that the petitioners are chairmen from various tehsils. He emphasized that despite the passage of three years since the local body elections, the government has failed to allocate any development funds to them.

The lawyer further stated that although the court had previously issued a notice to the government, no official response has been submitted so far. PHC directed the provincial government to submit its response by the next hearing and adjourned the case till 26th June.

No N-deal if deprived of ‘peaceful activities’: Iran

CAIRO (AFP): Iran on Monday said it will not accept a nuclear agreement that deprives it of what it calls "peaceful activities", a reference to uranium enrichment, as it pressed the United States for guarantees it will drop sanctions.

Uranium enrichment has remained a key point of contention between the foes, in talks to seal a nuclear deal since April, with Iran defending what it says is its pursuit of a civil nuclear programme but with the US side calling it a "red line". Speaking in Cairo, where he met the UN nuclear watchdog's chief Rafael Grossi, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said: "If the goal

is to deprive Iran of its peaceful activities, then certainly no agreement will be reached."

Araghchi insisted that Iran has "nothing to hide" on its nuclear programme. "Iran has a peaceful nuclear programme... we are prepared to provide this assurance to any party or entity," he said. The remarks came after Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Monday called for more transparency from Iran following a leaked report that showed Tehran had stepped up uranium enrichment.

The IAEA report showed that Iran has stepped up production of uranium enriched up to 60 percent

— close to the roughly 90 percent level needed for atomic weapons. "There is a need for more transparency — this is very, very clear — in Iran, and nothing will bring us to this confidence [besides] full explanations of a number of activities," Grossi said ahead of meeting Araghchi.

Grossi added that some of the report's findings "may be uncomfortable for some, and we are... used to being criticised". Iran has rejected the report, warning it would retaliate if European powers that have threatened to reimpose nuclear sanctions "exploit" it. "Some countries are trying to abuse this agency to pave the way for escalation with Iran."