



Pakistan mulls response after India points the finger without proof

- National Security Committee to meet today after New Delhi announces suspension of Indus treaty, shuts border, halts visas, expels defence attaches
- Foreign Office condoles loss of life; Dar slams India's 'non-serious approach', terms punitive measures 'immature'
- Death toll in Pahalgalam attack rises to 26; multiple engagements reported as Indian forces hunt assailants

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD / NEW DELHI: The country's top security body will meet today (Thursday) to assess India's sharp response — in the wake of a deadly attack in Indian-held Kashmir that claimed over two dozen lives — and formulate a comprehensive policy reaction to the show of aggressive measures announced by New Delhi, which have ramped up tensions in the Subcontinent.

Among the Indian measures, the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty stood out as the most severe. The 1960 pact, brokered by the World Bank, has endured through wars and decades of hostility. Its suspension, therefore, marked a watershed moment in the already fraught relationship between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

India further lowered diplomatic ties by closing down the main border transit point, branding the attack as a grave provocation that warranted significant diplomatic, economic, and logistical pressure on Pakistan. Indian officials directly tied these measures to Islamabad's alleged support for "cross-border terrorism".

But Islamabad has denied any role and said it had nothing to do with the attack.

Prime Minister Muhammad

Shahid Sharif has convened the meeting of the National Security Committee on Thursday morning, 24th April 2025, in response to the Indian Government's statement of this evening." Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Appearing on a private television channel late on Wednesday, Dar lashed out at India's approach, call-

Held Kashmir attack timed to defame Pakistan: leaders — Page 3

Pahalgalam attacks Editorial on Page 6

ing it "immature" and "hasty". "India has not given any evidence. They have not shown any maturity in their response," Dar said. "This is a non-serious approach. They started creating hype immediately after the incident."

Pakistan's Foreign Office, in a separate statement earlier in the day, expressed regret over the loss of life.

"We are concerned at the loss of tourists' lives in an attack in Anantnag district of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. We extend our condolences to the near ones of the deceased and wish the

injured a speedy recovery," the statement said.

Diplomatic observers warn that the Indian response and Pakistan's counter-measuring could push bilateral relations to new lows, further widening a rift that has persisted since the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis. The treaty suspension, in particular, risks sparking long-term water disputes, while the downgrading of diplomatic ties could hinder any future de-escalation efforts.

Aggressive measures

The announcement of punitive measures came after Tuesday's meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Indian PM Narendra Modi.

"The CCS was briefed in detail on the terrorist attack on 22 April 2025 in Pahalgalam, in which 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen were killed. A number of others sustained injuries. The CCS condemned the attack in the strongest terms and expressed its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and hoped for the early recovery of the injured," Foreign Secretary Vikram Misra told a press conference after the CCS meeting.

The statement said: "Recognising the seriousness of this terrorist attack, the CCS decided upon the

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NAUDERO: People hold a sit-in against the proposal to build new canals on the Indus River, blocking the Larkana-Sukkur road. — (PTI)

Sindh protests take a toll on national supply chain

- Fertiliser makers sound alarm; ministry warns against possible fallout if urea doesn't reach farmers during peak Kharif season
- Industry stakeholders urge govt to resolve issue as soon as possible

By Amjad Mahmood and Asim Shabbat Khan

LAHORE / KARACHI: The national fertiliser supply chain is facing severe disruptions as ongoing sit-in and road blockades in Sindh have choked critical transport routes, stranding thousands of trucks and halting industrial operations.

The blockades have been holding up traffic for a week now, particularly in the Sukkur-Larkana division, leading to alarm among government officials and stakeholders in the business community.

The disruption comes at a critical moment in the agricultural calendar. The Kharif season, which includes crops like cotton, sugarcane, and rice, depends heavily on timely access to urea.

Delays in distribution may cause lower yields, higher food prices, and added financial pressure on farmers, whose economies have already deteriorated over the past year.

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNSR)

has also raised the issue with the Sindh government, saying that with Kharif season in full swing across the country, the non-availability of urea and DAP at this juncture may affect production and impact national food security.

The MNSR letter to Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, seen by Dawn, notes that fertiliser makers

Lawyers' sit-in enters seventh day as Sindh-wide protest against canals continues Page 15

apprehend that the persistence of this situation may lead to forced shutdowns of fertiliser plants, compromising its availability for Kharif crops.

Both inbound and outbound logistics for the fertiliser industry have slowed dramatically.

Among the hardest hit are the country's two major fertiliser producers — Fafco Fertiliser in Mirpur Mathelo and Engro Fertilisers in Bahawalpur — whose operations are now

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Punjab says canals project 'still taking shape'

By Zulgermain Tahir

LAHORE: As the canals controversy continued to rife Sindh, the Punjab government on Wednesday said that though not a single canal had been constructed on the Indus River so far, the project was still under consideration.

"Punjab does not need any external donation regarding the use of river floodwater. Punjab is fully sovereign in utilising its own resources and that Sindh has no right to object to Punjab's development projects," Punjab Information Minister Arma Bokhari told a presser here on Wednesday.

Flanked by Punjab Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Keerani, Arma Bokhari said that the proposed canal project was still under consid-

NA panel voices alarm over water availability, related risks Page 3

eration and only shows floodwater would be utilised for the purpose.

"This initiative aims to benefit farmers and promote agricultural development," she claimed. Earlier this week, the Sindh chief minister also claimed that work on the six

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Two Levies men guarding polio team martyred in Mastung

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Two Levies personnel escorting a polio vaccination team were martyred on Wednesday when unidentified assailants opened fire on them in the Terai area of Mastung district.

According to officials, the shooting was carried out when the polio team

Pakistan reports polio case from KP; tally at seven Page 12

was administering vaccines during a week-long anti-polio campaign that started on Monday.

The attackers targeted the Levies officers guarding the vaccination team, killing one officer on the spot and leaving another critically injured. The wounded officer later died during treatment at Nisals Raza Memorial Hospital in Mastung.

Law enforcement agencies rushed to the scene and cordoned off the area. Mastung Assistant Commissioner confirmed the attack, adding that a search operation had been

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WB trims Pakistan's economic growth forecast to 2.7pc

- Notes economy showing signs of stability amid constraints
- Warns slow growth will make it difficult to create jobs, reduce poverty

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank on Wednesday slightly lowered its growth forecast for Pakistan to 2.7 per cent for the current fiscal year, citing continued economic stabilisation but persistent constraints from tight monetary and fiscal policies.

The World Bank had earlier predicted Pakistan's economy to grow by 2.8pc during the current fiscal year in its Pakistan

Development Update (PDU) released in October last year.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the World Bank

New IMF projection: Editorial on Page 6

said that growth would remain subject to many downside risks but forecast that the economic growth rate would improve to 3.1pc in the next fiscal year

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SC rejects Punjab govt's plea seeking Imran's remand

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday disposed of Punjab Prosecution Department's appeals seeking physical remand of PTI founder Imran Khan.

Headed by Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, a three-judge bench also asked Punjab's prosecution department to approach the trial court concerned, if it wants, though the PTI founder will have the right to oppose any such move.

During the hearing Punjab's Special Prosecutor Zarfraz Naqvi pleaded that polygraphic and voice matching tests of PTI's founder was needed, but Justice Kakar reminded him that no such request has been made in the petition seeking physical remand of Mr Khan.

"Why did the physical remand come up

Continued on Page 5

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Two militants killed, several injured by LEAs

DERA GHAAZI KHAN: Police, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and Rangers personnel killed two militants and left several others injured in a joint operation in the Punjab-KP border area, in which two policemen also suffered minor injuries.

According to police, the personnel of DG Khan police, CTD and Rangers had an encounter with militants in Kotari Tal area in the vicinity of Wafawa police station. They say the militants, armed with rockets, hand grenades, and heavy weaponry, opened fire on the security forces. During the intense exchange of fire, two militants were killed, while several others sustained injuries, they added.

They say that despite heavy firing by the militants, the police teams responded with full force, forcing the militants to flee towards nearby hills for cover. During the encounter, an elite force official, Adnan Habib and a CTD personnel, Ghazwan, sustained minor injuries. — Correspondent

Mashhood's plea against his defeat dismissed

LAHORE: An election tribunal comprising a judge of the Lahore High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition of former provincial minister Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan against the victory of PTI-backed independent MPA Misbah Wajid from PP-172, Lahore.

Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmed, the tribunal member, announced the verdict on the petition, which also challenged a decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of not conducting a vote recount in the constituency.

The tribunal had earlier reserved its decision on the maintainability of the petition.

Ms Wajid's lawyer objected to the maintainability of the petition, arguing that such matters should be taken up with the Supreme Court rather than the Lahore High Court if the dispute involves a vote recount.

A counsel for Rana Mashhood had argued that the returning officer and the ECP as well refused to hold a vote recount and announced the final result of the 2024 general election held in the constituency. He asked the tribunal to set aside the impugned orders of the respondents and order recounting of the votes. — Staff Reporter



LAHORE: New Anarkali shopkeepers have installed uniform shutters and storefront signs under a government direction meant to check encroachments permanently. — White Star

LHC again places heritage sites under control of archaeology dept

Law officer told to forward court order to CS for action against WCLA DG for holding private events at monuments

By Waqf Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Wednesday ordered the Punjab archaeology department to take over administrative control of Lahore Fort and other heritage sites which were earlier transferred to the Walled City Authority of Lahore (WCLA).

Justice Shahid Karim was hearing a petition challenging the handover of the heritage sites, including Lahore Fort, Shalimar Gardens and Jahangir's tomb, to the WCLA by the provincial government.

At the outset of the hearing, a written reply was filed on

behalf of WCLA Director General Kamran Ladhari, in which he admitted holding of private functions at the heritage sites despite restraining orders passed by the court.

An apology on behalf of the WCLA DG was also tendered, which the judge rejected for the time being and immediately summoned the director general of the archaeology department.

Justice Karim resumed the hearing at 1pm when archaeology DG Zahir Abbas Malik appeared before the court. He stated that the conditional transfer of the management of Lahore Fort, Hazuri Bagh and Shahi Hamam was made to the WCLA following a notification issued on Oct 29, 2014.

He said, as per the condition, the ownership of the fort and Hazuri Bagh was to remain with the directorate general of archaeology, however, the WCLA was vested with the management and control of the monuments for all practical purposes.

The DG also presented a 2023 notification, which required the

archaeology department to withdraw all officials/staff posted at fort, Shalimar Gardens and Qutubuddin Aibak's tomb in Anarkali.

He said complete administrative control of the sites was also transferred from the archaeology department to the WCLA.

However, Justice Karim observed that it did not mean at all that the overall authority over the Lahore Fort was conceded by the directorate general of archaeology, Punjab, which inherently vests in the department of archaeology according to the primary law.

"The transfer of administrative control does not mean that ownership has come to rest in WCLA," the judge maintained.

The judge observed that the admission made by the WCLA DG about holding private functions in the monuments in violation of the court's orders cannot be tolerated.

The judge suspended the impugned notifications of 2014 and 2023, which transferred the

control of the heritage sites to the WCLA.

Justice Karim directed the archaeology DG to take over administrative control of Lahore Fort and other sites till the next hearing.

The judge instructed a Punjab government's law officer to forward the order to the chief secretary, who shall initiate action against WCLA DG Ladhari and other officers, and inform the court regarding appropriate action at the next hearing.

"This action ought to include revocation of appointment of those officers as they have fallen in breach of the public trust reposed in them," Justice Karim observed in his order.

The judge further directed the law officer to assist the court regarding action under the law that may be applicable to the violations committed by the WCLA.

The judge would resume further hearing on Thursday (today) at 1pm. Rana Irfan Ali, an employee of the archaeology department, filed the petition.

Fire destroys wheat crop over 85 acres

Dawn Report

NAROWAL: Wheat fields on 85 acres across Narowal, Kanur and Gujranwala were ravaged by a series of fire incidents causing losses worth millions to farmers.

Farmers blamed faulty machinery, high-voltage electric wires and negligence by authorities for the fires.

In Narowal, fire incidents destroyed wheat crop on 24 acres at nine different locations in two days, leaving an estimated financial loss of Rs7.56 million.

According to Revenue 1122, the control room received nine emergency calls, including three from Shikargarh tehsil.

In Shikargarh, two acres each were burned in villages Dirgar Rikha turning point and Sahara. In Narowal, fires destroyed wheat on four acres in Chas Gorya, three acres in Quanyampur, eight acres in Nowroli, nine acres in Dhaney, 12 acres in Malik and four acres in Sagarpur.

Officials said that four fires were caused by short circuits and six due to carelessness involving smoking.

Farmers Afzal and Shahid Jari said such incidents had occurred last year as well due to electricity wires hanging over fields. They demanded that PM Shoukat and CM Maryam compensate them for their losses.

KANUR: A fire caused by sparks from high-tension 11kV wires gutted six acres of ripe wheat crop in village Radha Javan in Chistian police jurisdiction.

Farmer Ishaq's entire harvest was destroyed despite villagers' efforts to douse the flames.

Villagers accused Lenoo of negligence, saying they had lodged repeated complaints about the hanging wires but no action was taken.

GUJRANWALA: In Gujranwala's suburban area of Zafarabad and Garmola Waran, wheat and fodder crops on around 25 acres were burnt. In Zafarabad, seven acres of Iqbal Muhammad, six acres of Shafiq Ali, seven acres of Iqbal Chaudhary and 1.25 acres of Yousaf Tarkhan were destroyed. In Garmola Waran, two acres of wheat and six acres of fodder cultivated by Nadeem were reduced to ashes.

Reports suggest that sparks from a chopper machine's wiring started the fire. Authorities have urged farmers to ensure safety measures during harvesting.

E-warehouse for wheat farmers

LAHORE: The Punjab cabinet on Wednesday approved implementation of the Electronic Warehouse Receipt System to facilitate the farmers to store their wheat. The government will bear the storage costs.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz presided over the 25th cabinet meeting.

The meeting approved an amendment to the Food Grains (Licensing Control) Ordinance, 1957, to ensure 25pc wheat procurement for mills, under which the licenses of mills which do not purchase 25pc mandatory wheat can be cancelled.

Derogation of the wheat sector was approved to protect the rights of farmers. — Staff Reporter

'Sindh Katcha area specialist' to combat gangs

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: The Punjab government has appointed a grade-19 police officer of Sindh in one of the 'troubled' districts of south Punjab — Rahim Yar Khan — to combat the criminals.

There were reports that Irfan Soomro had served the Kashmore-Kandhahar as SSP, a district plagued by violent crimes.

He was given a chance to lead the district police recognizing his deep understanding of intelligence-led police against the notorious gangs operating in the Katcha belt of upper Sindh, particularly in Kandhahar.

The Sindh officer was recommended by a senior police officer serving against a key position in

Punjab as 'the best choice' to hit the criminals of the Katcha areas of Rahim Yar Khan keeping in view his past experience.

On Tuesday, Mr Soomro replaced Rahim Yar Khan DPO Rameez Ghosla who was given the chance twice to lead the district police keeping in view the ability to fight hardened criminals.

As per the reports, the Punjab government has changed many times the command of the district police to fight against the Katcha area criminals.

It has provided long-range weapons, bullet-proof vehicles and other logistic support to the Rahim Yar Khan police to eliminate the criminals.

During the police operation in 2024, reportedly, over 70 criminals were allegedly killed while 19

police officials were martyred in Rahim Yar Khan.

An official privy to the development said the government abandoned the past practice of making appointments of the police officers serving in Punjab.

In a recent meeting, he said, it took a final decision to launch the first Sindh police officer as head of the Rahim Yar Khan police force.

Mr Soomro was among 10 officers who were transferred and posted as DPOs and against other positions across Punjab.

The official said the appointment of the police officer from Sindh came under discussion in many references when it transpired that additional IC of recently raised Crime Control Department Punjab, Sindh, Zafar Chaudhry introduced him (Mr Soomro) to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz as a brave cop for fighting criminals of riverine belt of Sindh. About other postings, he said, grade-19 police officer Hassan Iqbal was posted as DPO Rahowalgarh vice Asad Sarfaraz Khan.

Mr Khan was transferred as he had got promotion to the rank of DSG, he said adding that Mohammad Afzal, another grade-19 officer, was transferred and posted as DPO Vehari against an existing vacancy.



GOVERNMENT OF SINDH
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
JACOBABAD

No. DC/HR/396 of 2025

Jacobabad Dated: 21/04/2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform that a District Recruitment Committee meeting regarding implementation of order dated 19-11-2024 passed by the Honourable High Court of Sindh Bench at Sukkur in G.P No D-176/2024 filed by Asif Ali Jatoi and others VS P.O Sindh and others & order dated 19-04-2025 passed by the Honourable High Court of Sindh Bench at Sukkur in the G.P No D-819/2024 filed by Faiza Khan and others VS P.O Sindh and others has been fixed on 07-05-2025 & 08-05-2025 at 11:00 a.m. A District Council Hall Jacobabad as per the schedule given below:

S.N	Name of Court	Date	Time	Venue
1.	High Court of Sindh, Bench at Sukkur	07.05.2025	11:00 A.M.	District Council Hall Jacobabad
2.	High Court of Sindh, District Court Larkana	08.05.2025		

All the petitioners of above mentioned G.Ps & others of Honourable High Court of Sindh, Bench at Sukkur Larkana are invited to appear before the DRC on the above date, time and venue alongwith original relevant documents/certificates for recruitment to different posts in BPS-01 to 04 in various departments under the 5% quota reserved for differently abled persons (DAFs).

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER & CHAIRMAN-DRC JACOBABAD

847-KPH-123725

BEFORE: MRS. NAUSHABA RAZI JUDGE
IN THE BANKING COURT NO. 18, AT KARACHI
Block No. 20, Pakistan Securities, New Pakistan Office, Sindh Avenue, Karachi. DART NO. 75 OF 2025

MR. WAZIR DARRI LIMITED
Plaintiff, vs. **MR. HANIF ALI**
Defendant.

VERGAS
SUNDAY, 24TH APRIL 2025, 10:00 AM. Mr. Hanif Ali, Plaintiff, vs. Mr. Wazir Darr Limited, Defendant. This is a summary judgment hearing. The parties are invited to appear and present their evidence and arguments. The hearing will be held in the presence of the Judge. The parties are invited to appear and present their evidence and arguments. The hearing will be held in the presence of the Judge.

DEFENDENTS
The Defendant is invited to appear and present their evidence and arguments. The hearing will be held in the presence of the Judge.

BY ORDER
JUDGE
BANKING COURT NO. 18, KARACHI

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Held Kashmir attack timed to defame Pakistan: leaders

• Asif says Pakistan will respond to any Indian aggression 'in befitting manner' • Insists India can't suspend Indus Waters Treaty unilaterally • PPP says all indications point to a 'false flag operation' by India • PTI says Imran, his party 'firmly stand with armed forces' • AJK leaders term attack 'sinister play' by Indian agencies

By Syed Irfan Raza and Tariq Naqvi

ISLAMABAD / MUZAFFARABAD: As the Indian government severed diplomatic and other links with Pakistan over the Pahalgaon attack, Pakistan's mainstream political parties on Wednesday branded the attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir a "false flag operation" designed to malign Islamabad internationally. They also believed that India's aggression and illegal occupation of Kashmir had resulted in the Pahalgaon attack.

The armed attack on tourists in the Pahalgaon town left 26 people dead. The incident occurred amid a high-level visit by US Vice President J.D. Vance to India. Senator Jagan Mohan Reddy, parliamentary leader of the PMD in the Senate, termed the incident a "well-planned conspiracy" aimed at defaming Pakistan.

Speaking to the media, he said India had a history of staging such incidents whenever a foreign dignitary visits the country. "The Pahalgaon drama was orchestrated deliberately during the US Vice President's visit to India to serve their propaganda objectives against Pakistan," he added.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the Indian government should first thoroughly investigate the incident before levelling false allegations against Pakistan. He noted India's decades-long military presence in held Kashmir and its rights violations were fuelling unrest. He also alleged Indian involvement in terrorism inside Pakistan, including the recent Jaffar Express attack in Balochistan.

As it is feared that India could attack Pakistan against the backdrop of the Pahalgaon incident, Mr Asif said: "Pakistan is capable of responding to any Indian aggression in a befitting manner."

Talking to a private TV channel, the minister said that India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty — that allows for sharing the waters of the Indus River system between the two countries — is a violation of international law. "India cannot take unilateral decisions regarding the Indus Waters Treaty," he said. "We will give a comprehensive response to India after holding the National Security Committee's meeting, which is being called on Thursday (today)."

Punjab Information Minister Arma Bokhari also wanted in a video statement that any "unilateralism by India under the pretext of a false-flag operation will have dire consequences."

Condemning the "shocking terror attack", PPP Senator Sherry Rehman said, "Unfortunately, the reflexive finger-pointing already at play against Pakistan has become the backdrop response for a New Delhi that was unable to contain its own spectacular failures amidst a fundamentalist meltdown."

Regarding India's decision to suspend

the Indus Waters Treaty, she said India could not suspend the treaty unilaterally. "Unilateralism is not a foreign policy," she said, adding that all indications of the Pahalgaon attacks go towards a "false flag operation" by India.

JUI-F chief Masluma Fakhir Rehman also strongly criticised attempts to link Pakistan with unrest in Indian-occupied Kashmir, calling such accusations "baseless" and asking India to introspect on its internal failures instead of blaming its neighbours. "It's convenient for India to blame Pakistan, but that doesn't change the ground realities," he said.

PTI also denounced the attack, describing terrorists as a "shared enemy of the civilised world". In its statement, the PTI warned that any adventurism against Pakistan would be met with a united national response, reaffirming support for the armed forces. "Founding Chairman Imran Khan and PTI firmly stand with the armed forces and the people in their inalienable resolve to thwart any such aggression by the Indian government against Pakistan," it added.

Former minister Saad Rafique condemned Indian media's attempt to blame Pakistan for the attack "without any evidence". Madia Wahid-i-Mashimoon chief Alianza Raja Nasir expressed condolences, called for dialogue for regional peace and warned that escalating tensions could endanger South Asia's stability.

"Sinister play"

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), political and resistance leaders unanimously condemned the Pahalgaon attack, terming it a sinister play by Indian agencies to discredit the Kashmiri freedom struggle and falsely implicate Pakistan.

Expressing condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims, they called for international accountability to bring the real culprits to justice, while making it clear that no amount of violence could shake the Kashmiri people's resolve for their right to self-determination.

In his statement, AJK President Barister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry called the massacre "concomitant," accusing the Narendra Modi-led regime of staging another false flag operation, especially timed with the visit of US Vice President J.D. Vance to India, and blamed it to India's habitual blaming of Pakistan, as seen after the 2019 Pulwama incident.

AJK Information Minister Per Mahzar Saeed maintained the "Pahalgaon false flag operation had flapped even before the script could unfold."

The AJK chapter of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) echoed similar concerns. "We firmly believe Indian agencies are involved in this heinous act... to destabilise the region and malign the peaceful freedom movement," said APHC chairman Ghulam Muhammad Sali.

Musadik visits GB to assess GLOF impact

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik on Wednesday accompanied a delegation from the United Nations Development Programme to the areas in Gilgit-Baltistan affected by the glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) this week.

According to a statement released by the ministry of climate change and environmental coordination, the minister reviewed schemes initiated under the GLOF-II Project in Shigar Valley, including

the installation of early warning systems and protective embankments.

Musadik Malik assessed the damage caused to local communities due to glacial melt and glacial lake outburst floods.

Baltistan Commissioner Kamal Khan, Deputy Commissioner Shigar Wajidullah Palahi, Director General of Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority Zakir Hussain, and Rashiduddin, coordinator of the GLOF Project, briefed the dele-

gation about the progress and impact of the project.

Aisha Hameed Marri, Secretary to the Ministry of Climate Change, briefed the federal minister about Gilgit-Baltistan's vulnerability to climate change and its adverse impact on the lives and livelihoods of local communities. She also briefed him about the objectives of the GLOF-II project and its importance in mitigating problems arising out of disasters like the glacial lake outburst floods. — Staff Reporter



LARKANA: A vendor sells chilled falsa juice to quench the thirst of passersby at Pakistan Chowk. The temperature in Larkana rose to 44° Celsius on Wednesday. — APP

NA panel voices alarm over water availability, related risks

• Committee chairman notes agriculture, once contributing 35pc to Pakistan's GDP, now accounts for only 20pc • Directs Ministry of National Food Security to present comprehensive 20-year roadmap

By Our Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research on Wednesday has expressed concern over the declining per capita water availability, rapid population growth, and the impact of climate change factors which are posing significant threats to national food security.

The committee meeting under the chairmanship of Syed Tariq Hussain directed the Ministry of National Food Security to present a comprehensive 20-year roadmap at the next meeting together with clear targets, plans, deadlines and implementation strategies.

Despite major investments, the declining yields in major crops like cotton, wheat and rice were labelled as a failure by the ministry and the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) with ineffective seed research identified as a core issue.

The ministry was asked to submit a performance report on PARC over the past decade within one month, identifying those responsible for poor outcomes and any disciplinary actions taken.

The ministry was also instructed to ensure the distribution of imported seeds across all provinces, accompanied by proper

awareness campaigns and cultivation in controlled environments to assess yield variations and achieve a competitive advantage.

Rana Muhammad Hayat Khan, convener of the sub-committee, submitted a report regarding the sale of counterfeit seeds and delays in wheat procurement and import. The committee agreed to forward the report's recommendations to the ministry for immediate implementation.

According to the ministry, losses of 392 out of 1,200 registered seed companies have been cancelled. A Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) track-and-trace system has been introduced to enhance transparency in seed sales. The committee demanded that accountability measures be extended not only to fraudulent companies but also to officials responsible for their registration.

The committee resolved to invite officials of the newly formed National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority to its next meeting for a progress update. Legal action, the panel emphasised, must be taken against those selling counterfeit seeds.

"Just issuing challans is not enough," the committee stated.

The committee also recommended the announcement of a minimum support price to safeguard farmers from exploitation by middle-

men. Additional measures included compensation for farmers, educational campaigns, enforcement of penalties — including up to 10 years' imprisonment — development of heat-resistant seeds, improvement in sowing methods, and enhanced quality testing.

A complete ban on wheat import and export was also proposed.

The ministry briefed the committee on the Punjab government's introduction of an Electronic Warehouse Receipts (EWRs) system. Under this initiative, farmers can store their crops for up to four months with financial backing from private banks, while the government advances 50pc of the loan markup, enabling farmers to wait for favourable rates rather than being forced to sell.

Inter-provincial and inter-district movement of crops has also been permitted to improve market access, officials said. During the briefing, the ministry also presented updates on wheat-related research through its affiliated research institutions. The committee's chairman noted that agriculture — once contributing 35 per cent to Pakistan's GDP — now accounts for only 20pc.

A ministry official reported that wheat yield per acre has increased from 27 to 33 mounds over the past decade. However, the committee deemed the progress insufficient.

Omar moves SC against ECP jurisdiction in poll dispute

Raises 32 legal questions challenging commission's authority, IHC ruling and rights violations

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub Khan challenged in the Supreme Court on Wednesday the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) jurisdiction to proceed with a representation filed by his rival candidate, Babar Nawaz Khan, under Sections 8, 9, and 95 of the Elections Act, 2017.

Omar Ayub, a PTI stalwart, was elected from NA-18 Haripur in the 2024 general election.

The petitioner argued that the ECP became functus officio (lacking jurisdiction) after the statutory 60-day period from the Feb 17, 2024 notification of the returned candidate expired on April 17, 2024. Despite this, the ECP continued proceedings, which the petitioner contended was unlawful.

The petitioner challenged the ECP's deci-

sion to proceed with the matter before the Islamabad High Court, which disposed of the petition on April 9, 2025, directing the commission to provide an opportunity for a detailed hearing and decide the matter in accordance with the law.

In his appeal before the Supreme Court, the petitioner raised 32 questions of law, primarily challenging the ECP's jurisdiction, the IHC decision and alleged violations of constitutional rights under Articles 2-A, 4, and 10A of the Constitution.

Omar Ayub won the election by a significant margin, securing 190,436 votes against PM-NA Babar Nawaz Khan, who received 142,784 votes, and was notified as the returned candidate on Feb 17, 2024.

Babar Nawaz Khan had filed a representation before the ECP alleging rigging, which the commission continued to hear beyond the 60-day statutory period.

Omar Ayub contended that after the expiry of this period, the ECP lost jurisdiction, and any election dispute should instead be addressed by an election tribunal under Article 225 of the Constitution.

The petitioner also referred to the IHC's order, which had ruled that the ECP's decision was interlocutory (interim) and did not dispose

of the case. The IHC held that constitutional jurisdiction under Article 199 should not interfere with interim orders unless they were patently illegal. The court further emphasised that election disputes should be resolved either by the ECP or the relevant election tribunal, not by the high court.

The PTI leader sought to set aside the IHC's judgement and halt the ECP's proceedings, arguing that they were unlawful and beyond its jurisdiction. The petition also asserted that the IHC had passed its order in a cursory, arbitrary, slipshod, and clandestine manner and, therefore, is deemed to be set aside.

The petition contended that the IHC, while passing the impugned judgement, had erred in law, while holding that adequate remedy under the Act/law was available to the petitioner by way of putting appropriate and to contest the proceedings pending adjudication before the commission by ignoring the fact that the petitioner has a constitutional right to be dealt with.

Moreover, the petition argued that the IHC had misapprehended and misapplied the law in relation to Articles 218 and 219 of the Constitution that the high court should refrain from interfering in the election process or election disputes.

1,203 Utility Stores closed under USC's restructuring, NA panel told

Discrepancies of up to 30 years found in some of the 5,131 pension cases flagged during PAC meeting

By Amin Ahmed and Jamil Shahid

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Privatisation was informed on Wednesday that under the restructuring plan of USC, 1,203 Utility Stores have been closed while 2237 employees have been laid off till date.

A senior official of the Utility Stores Corporation further informed the committee that only 5500 stores will now be functional and that too on commercial basis. The committee inquired that if Utility Stores Corporation is run now on commercial basis and not in profit then what is justification to give priority to it.

The USC official briefed the committee about subsidies provided to the USC, profit earned and tax paid.

The representative of ministry of privatisation replied that a presentation on it will be given to the committee in the next meeting, stating that it depends on policy decision by the government and profitable entities may also be privatised. The committee recommended that the decision of USC privatisation must be reviewed in the larger interest of the country and a large number of employees and their families.

Chairman of Privatisation Commission informed the committee that for privatisation of Hesco, Pesco and Fesco, terms and conditions for privatisation are under consideration and financial adviser for the difference will be hired, audit and accounts will be maintained and power division has given time till September or October 2025, and the privatisation process will start by end of May.

The committee expressed serious reservations on appointing board of governors of

power companies and recommended that competency must be observed while appointing boards. The committee also directed that CEOs must attend the next meeting in person.

The representative of Postal Life Insurance Company Limited informed the committee that the company has about three lakh customers and Rafi Rabbani has been sought from the ministry of finance this year. The committee directed that last 4 to 5 years figures must be provided and the policy holders must be protected. The finance ministry should clarify the status of funds of PLICL, the committee observed.

On the issue of the privatisation of Pakistan Engineering Company (Peco), officials requested the committee to allow more time to resolve the issue.

The committee approved three months' time and directed to resolve the issue within that time and recommended that Chairman and MD must be appointed from majority of shareholding instead of govern-

ment nominees.

PAC meeting

The Public Accounts Committee meeting held here on Wednesday focused on audit objections related to the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis.

Chaired by MNA Junsaid Akbar Khan, a major concern raised during the PAC meeting was the payment of over Rs2.79 billion in old-age pensions based on questionable or incorrect dates of birth.

According to audit officials, discrepancies of up to 30 years were found in some of the 5,131 pension cases flagged.

Officials noted that over 10 million workers were registered, with pensions currently being disbursed among around 800,000 individuals. The secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, Arshad Mahmood, informed the committee that prior to the establishment of Nadra in 2000, identification and verification of individuals were based on systems other than Nadra-issued

ID cards.

This explanation drew criticism from the PAC Chairman, who questioned the inconsistencies between birth dates on ID cards and academic records.

The committee granted the ministry one month to resolve the issue and submit a comprehensive report in this regard.

Workers' rights and factory conditions

During the meeting, concerns were also raised about the state of workers' welfare and factory oversight. Committee member Shadia Marri emphasised the lack of job security and the distressing behaviour of some employees towards their employees.

Riaz Fatyana highlighted the alarming number of tuberculosis cases among workers working in textile factories and pointed out poor working conditions and lack of health safeguards. Mr Fatyana said that several new factories do not even have proper records and criticised the lack of documentation and regulatory oversight.

Four people killed in road accident

The Diagrams Elongate

QUETTA: Four people were killed in a head-on collision between a car and a truck on Wednesday.

According to police, four people were killed while four others sustained injuries when a car collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction on the Makran Coastal Highway.

Upon receiving the information, rescue teams rushed to the spot and transferred the injured and the deceased to Ulfal district headquarters hospital.

The deceased were later identified as Shoket, Rudner, Wahood Reisman and Zia Reisman.

The injured were identified as Ziaat Khan, Hamza, Sulaman, and Ihsanullah. All the injured people belonged to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, police said. After being provided initial treatment in Ujwal, the injured were shifted to Kotachi for further treatment.

WB trims economic growth forecast

Continued from Page 1

CV20 and 3-4pc in CV27.

In a rare move, the bank did not officially release its annual Internal PDU that was officially scheduled for launch on April 8 and postponed it at the last moment without any explanation.

When approached for comment, a World Bank spokesperson said the bank's management was at the spring meetings in Washington and hence the PDU was not released as usual, and issued a statement was issued.

According to the statement, real GDP growth is expected to be supported by recovering private consumption and investment driven by subdued inflation, lower interest rates and recovering business confidence.

In mid-Pakistan's economy was stabilizing with easing inflation and improving financial conditions, as well as current accounts and primary fiscal surpluses. Aerial continued tight macroeconomic policy, economic growth has been weak during the first half of the fiscal year.

Agriculture saw limited growth, in part due to adverse weather and pest infestations. Industrial activity declined, impacted by higher input costs and taxes, and reduced government spending.

Similarly, the growth of the services sector was muted, given limited spillovers from weak agriculture and industrial activity. While expected to strengthen, economic growth will remain tepid, making

"Pakistan's key challenge is to transform recent gains from stabilisation into economic growth that is sustainable and adequate for poverty reduction," said Najeeb-un-Nabi, World Bank's Country Director for Pakistan.

Beyond fertilizer, the two other economic fallout is also mounting. Over 3,500 trucks — many loaded with export commodities, particularly goods, and critical industrial materials — remain stranded at major river bluffs, especially near Sukhok, which contains galling up and goods unable to reach their destinations. The supply chain is rapidly becoming gridlocked.

According to M. Abdul Ahsan, secretary general of the Overseas Inventors

"Over 1,500 vehicles remain stranded near Sikkim, many carrying on port commitments, perishable items, and critical industrial inputs. The complete halt in goods movement is already affecting market supplies, with shortages looming," he said.

He claimed that approximately 800 tank barges were currently stranded in rivers, severely hampering the industry's ability to ensure consistent rapid fuel supplies.

statements, we will not release
allegations will appear in both
versions.

International matters are not to be resolved through dialogue and understanding. Negotiation and conversation are the only ways forward.

in misleading statements, we will not remain silent. Every allegation will receive a belittling response," she warned.

On the other hand, PMU-N Summit Inter-National and the alliance between PMU-N and PPP, particularly on key national issues of water resources, would remain unaffected.

"Differences on not small matters are natural and can only be resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding. Negotiation and constructive conversation are the only ways forward," he added.

Continued from Page 1

According to the minister, councils had not been constructed yet and serious efforts were underway to build consensus. "Differences cannot be resolved through threats — dialogue is the only way forward," she said.

Mr Bokhari further said the PPP had ruled Sindh for the past 16 years, and hence there still faced fundamental issues. "If PPP resorts

Continued from Page 1

The special prosecutor, however, replied that since the PJI board "did not cooperate", permission was being sought through the apex court. Justice Karar wondered what kind of cooperation was needed from a person who is in jail, adding the government should seek permission from the trial court and get the test done.

The special prosecutor explained that on July 14, 2024, the investigating teams went to the jail to interrogate the founder of PFI, but the accused refused to cooperate.

At this, Justice Sainuddin Pathan observed that if all these statements were in the USR, then the prosecution department should go and get the forensic test done. However, such tests have never been conducted in any ordinary murder case, observed Justice Pathan also wondering why the prosecution was never got as active in ordinary murder cases?

Justice Kajor observed that thus if the court made any observations the trial might be affected. He

He recalled that only a few days ago a criminal case was heard in which the appeal was accepted for preliminary hearing in 2017. The accused in the case spent seven years in death cell before being acquitted by the apex court.

In its order, the SC disposed of the appeals for the physical removal of the PTL founder stating the prosecution was free to approach the trial court for the polygraphic test, photographic test and voice matching test of the founder of PTL. However, the legal team of Mr. Kohn could raise legal and factual objections when such an application was received in the trial court, the order said.

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ONE BELOW PRESSURE COIL

TENDER NOTICE			
Bids are invited for the following:			
Tender No.	Description	Closing Date/ Time	
PDGEM/ PT/00729/ 25	Supply of miscellaneous electrical items	12 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDGEM/ PT/00731/ 25	Supply of deformed steel bars & gate Mesh	12 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDGEM/ PT/00732/ 25	Supply of HDPE, pit liners	12 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDGEM/ PT/00733/ 25	Enhancement of Pre-qualification of OMAs for supply of HSD & petrol	20 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDPMO/ PT/00735/ 25	Supply and fabrication of new tube bundle (E-351)	12 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDPMO/ PT/00734/ 25	Construction of access track, well area & camp location-GS-WEN-Shahdaspur-Sindh	09 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDGEM/ PT/00696/ 25	Medical services (Doctor & Nurse) at Kashmore	12 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
PDPMO/ PT/00737/ 25	Pre-qualification of vendors for fence lighting works at well sites for all PPL locations except Su	09 May, 2025	1500 hrs.
All bids will be opened 30 minutes after the bid closing date/ time			
Extension in Bid Closing & Opening Dates			
Closing and opening dates of the following tenders have been extended as follows:			
Tender No.	Description	Published On	Revised Closing Date/ Time
PDGEM/ PT/00728/ 25	Teaching services - Sha Model School & Girls College	04 Apr, 2025	12 May, 2025 1500 hrs.
PDGEM/ PT/00639/ 25	Enhancement of Pre-qualification of manufacturers or their authorized representatives/ distributors for supply of tents & tarpaulins	04 Apr, 2025	12 May, 2025 1500 hrs.
Bidders who have already submitted/ sent their proposals (bids) may take them back and resubmit the same before the revised closing date and time mentioned above.			
All bids will be opened 30 minutes after the revised bid closing date/ time.			
Tender notice / detailed instructions are available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk . Tender documents are available online and bids are also required to be submitted online through PPL's e-procurement portal at https://procurement.ppl.com.pk for details see "Instruction for Bidders Section" of tender documents. PPL reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal.			



Pahalgam attack

IN the aftermath of Tuesday's militant attack on tourists in India-held Kashmir's Pahalgam area, South Asia once again stands on a knife's edge. Displaying a knee-jerk reaction to the tragedy, in which over 25 people were killed, the Indian foreign secretary has highlighted the alleged "cross-border linkages of the terrorist attack", dragging Pakistan into this deplorable episode. New Delhi has responded by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, which has survived wars and periods of tension, further downgrading diplomatic relations, and closing the Attari border crossing. Pakistan, which had initially expressed concern and condolences over the attack, will calibrate its response today, as the prime minister has convened a meeting of the National Security Committee to review the situation.

The assault has been claimed by 'The Resistance Front', a hitherto unknown entity; media reports have quoted the outfit as claiming the attack to protest against demographic changes in the disputed region. This is probably the biggest attack targeting civilians in IHK in 35 years. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has termed the assault as a possible "false flag operation". No cause can justify the targeting of innocent non-combatants, and the incident must be roundly condemned. However, India must also look inwards and review its brutal rule in held Kashmir, which has bred immense discontent. And when all peaceful avenues for a just resolution to the Kashmir dispute are blocked, it is not surprising that some inside the occupied territory take up guns to express their anger. Ever since doing away with the disputed region's limited autonomy in August 2019, the BJP-led government has pretended that 'all is well' in IHK. That is not the case. Even voices within India are questioning the government's claims of having established calm. For example, India's opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi, has asked the rulers to move beyond "hollow claims" of peace in occupied Kashmir.

Genuine peace can only come to Kashmir — and the rest of South Asia — when this nearly eight-decade-old dispute is resolved as per the wishes of the Kashmiris, with buy-in from Pakistan and India. If the Hindu nationalist government in New Delhi thinks it can stamp out all peaceful calls for freedom and justice through brute force and intimidation, then there will be no end to blood-soaked episodes. The tragic events in Pahalgam should serve as a wake-up call for India's rulers: if they want peace in IHK, and peace between Pakistan and India, then sincere efforts must be made to resolve the Kashmir question at the negotiating table, involving the Kashmiris as well as Pakistan. From here, Pakistan must proceed with caution and prepare a calm yet firm response to India's allegations, and threats. While de-escalation is the preferred course of action, India should also know that any misadventure will be met by Pakistan resolutely.

New IMF projection

THE downgrading of the IMF's growth forecast for Pakistan by 40bps to 2.6pc is perturbing, especially considering the country's elevated poverty levels. More than 42pc of the population currently lives below the poverty line, while the World Bank estimates that 1.9m more people will fall into this category this year. An update to the *World Economic Outlook* notes that Pakistan's economic growth is not enough to bring down poverty, despite a stabilising economy and the easing of inflation. Economists believe that the economy must grow by 6-8pc a year to cut poverty and create jobs for 2-3m more workers. The new IMF growth projections for Pakistan are based on the multilateral financial institution's concerns about the potential impact of the high reciprocal US tariffs on its economy. Revising growth projections for the global economy as well as individual countries days after US President Donald Trump slammed his reciprocal tariffs on all of America's trading partners and higher tariffs on dozens of countries — including Pakistan — running a trade surplus with the US, it notes that the tariffs have triggered a new climate of uncertainty.

At the moment, the IMF says, the situation is complex and fluid. Countries like ours continue to wonder what sort of deal, if any, they can strike with the Trump administration to maintain their share in the world's largest consumer market. It is unclear then how Pakistan plans to negotiate with, and what it can offer, the Trump administration to get a favourable deal. However, some reports suggest that the government may offer American companies greater access to unexplored deposits of rare earth elements and dismantle barriers to US imports. While it is important to save — in fact, expand — our share in the US market, our policymakers also need to revisit their economic strategy. The post-tariff situation poses many challenges as the world enters an uncertain era amid escalating global trade tensions, but it also offers opportunities. However, the latter can only be exploited if the focus shifts to quicker implementation of structural reforms to attract FDI to boost industrial and agricultural productivity for diversifying and increasing exports through technology transfers. Unfortunately, to avoid a backlash from the powerful business lobbies and others, the authorities continue to look for short-term economic fixes rather than taking the more difficult route of mustering the political will to execute much-needed structural reforms.

Stranded goods

AS controversy over the new canals continues to rage, traders across the country have begun raising the alarm over economic contagion from the crisis. With protesters blockading key nodes in the logistics routes between Sindh and Punjab, hundreds of goods trucks and fuel tankers have been stranded on the roads for days, with reports suggesting that the lines 'stretch for miles' in some areas. "The entire supply chain is paralysed," according to the KCCI president. "The situation is not only hurting businesses and industries but also jeopardising employment and trade" — a concern shared by trade leaders in other parts of the country as well. Exporters of perishable items are in a particularly vulnerable position, with their goods at risk of spoiling on the roads before they can reach the ports. Others are worried that foreign buyers may cancel their orders due to the delays. Meanwhile, the Oil Companies Advisory Council has warned of potential fuel shortages upcountry if the situation is not addressed.

As goods movement both north and south remains suspended, a wide range of industries and enterprises are facing disruptions and unnecessary financial losses due to what is essentially a political failure. While the federal government and the PPP have recently agreed to collaborate on addressing Sindh's concerns over the proposed canals, many businesses engaged in commerce and international trade may not be able to wait out a lengthy negotiation process. It is imperative, therefore, for the federal government to take immediate steps to reassure protesters that their concerns have been heard and will be justly and promptly addressed. Likewise, the Sindh government, if it is satisfied with the steps being taken at the federal level, must play its part in pacifying the protesters and ensuring that the blockades can be removed quickly and peacefully, without further confrontation. The suspension of the goods traffic will eventually start hurting ordinary people. It is crucial, therefore, for decision-makers to move quickly.

OPINION



BY ALI TAUQEEER SHEIKH

Underspending climate funds

Several documents have addressed the issue of underspending and implementation delays.

PAKISTAN'S inability to efficiently utilise allocated development funds is severely hampering our economic progress and climate resilience efforts. With more than \$2 billion underspent annually, the country's absorption capacity has become a critical bottleneck. Instead of reforming archaic processes, we have begun to blame our malaise on the absence of bankable projects.

Multiple documents have addressed the issue of underspending and project implementation delays in Pakistan. Numbers from the Economic Affairs Division show that rolled-over foreign assistance funds declined from around \$1.2bn in 2017-2018 to \$0.1bn by 2022-2023. The annual rollover is higher than yearly IMF tranches.

The World Bank Implementation Status Reports flag implementation delays and disbursement challenges. As of 2023-2024, its Pakistan portfolio was \$10-11bn, with disbursement rates averaging 15-20 per cent below target for several consecutive years. Its *Pakistan Performance and Learning Review* has noted slow implementation, with some \$1.5-bn in expected disbursements delayed. World Bank portfolio reviews have indicated that the percentage of projects requiring extensions has increased from 35pc in 2016-2018 to nearly 55pc in 2020-2023.

The ADB's *Pakistan Country Partnership Strategy (2021-2025)* has likewise highlighted implementation challenges as requiring attention. Its *Country Operations Business Plan* shows \$800 million in delayed disbursements across infrastructure projects.

Several bilateral donors have expressed similar concerns of implementation delay. The EU's evaluation reports have noted implementation delays affecting their development cooperation portfolio. Country evaluations by the UK's FCDO, Germany's GIZ and Japan's JICA have identified absorption capacity as a recurring challenge. USAID, now closed, in its *Pakistan Performance Measurement Plan* documented challenges with timely fund utilisation.

Pakistan's engagement with the Adaptation Fund, GEF and the Green Climate Fund has been particularly concerning. GCF's \$37m Transforming the Indus Basin with Climate Resilient Agriculture and Water Management project, for example, had disbursed less than 45pc of funds by its original completion timeline. GCF documents have explicitly mentioned absorption capacity as a constraint on scaling up

climate finance in Pakistan.

One specific implementation challenge involved delays in establishing appropriate financial mechanisms. For several climate funds, Pakistan has experienced delays averaging six to eight months in simply establishing designated bank accounts with controls and reporting mechanisms.

These delays and absorption capacity issues have affected Pakistan's competitiveness in accessing climate finance, especially as funds like the GCF increasingly stress implementation track records in their funding decisions. As global climate finance turns more competitive, our history of project delays has become a consideration in funding decisions.

Perilous cycle of emergency repurposing: Pakistan has established a concerning pattern of repurposing underspent development funds for emergency response over the past decade. During the 2019 floods that affected over 20m people, Pakistan redirected some \$1.2bn from ongoing development initiatives towards emergency relief. When Covid-19 struck in 2020, Pakistan mobilised around \$600m by tapping into underspent development funds across multiple donor portfolios.

After the 2022 floods, this pattern continued to an even greater extent. The RISP became a critical mechanism for delivering cash assistance to affected populations, with significant portions of this emergency response funding coming from repurposing previously allocated but unused development funds. Around \$650m from the World Bank's portfolio and \$500m from ADB's ongoing projects were redirected towards the flood response.

Perhaps most concerning is that this recurring practice has created perverse incentives. With underspent funds becoming a de facto contingency resource for multiple disaster events, there is reduced urgency to address the underlying absorption capacity issues causing the underspending. This creates a dangerous cycle where development implementation challenges persist, leading to underspending that facilitates emergency response funding, while original development aims remain unaddressed.

This redirection of underspent development funds towards emergency response undermines Pakistan's broader development agenda. When money intended for education, health, municipal services, infrastructure, or climate resilience is

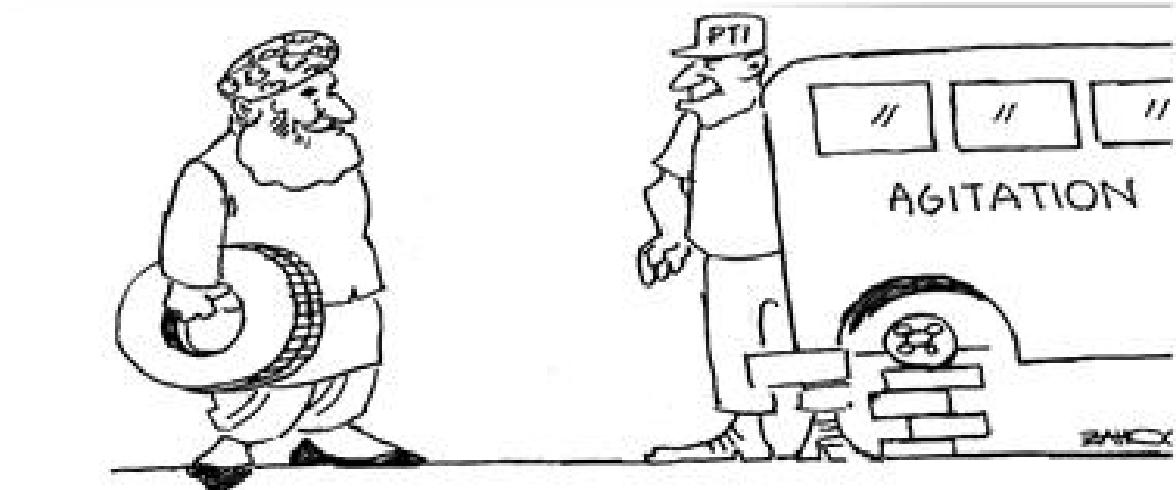
repurposed, it postpones projects that would have addressed the underlying vulnerabilities that make disasters so devastating — increasing vulnerability to future disasters. The practice also erodes the confidence of donors, who end up questioning the value of investing in long-term initiatives in Pakistan.

Thermostat broken: The term 'throw-forward' used by Pakistan's Planning Commission refers to the accumulated cost of incomplete development projects that have been initiated but remain unfinished, with their unspent costs carried forward into future fiscal years. By early 2024, an IMF report revealed that the federal development portfolio added 244 new projects worth Rs2.26 trillion in FY23 to a backlog of 989 projects costing Rs10.13tr. The backlog included hundreds of incomplete and maladaptive projects across infrastructure, social development and production sectors, with damaging implications for economic growth and public welfare.

This massive throw-forward reflects a chronic pattern of project initiation exceeding completion capacity. Politically motivated infrastructure projects account for the lion's share. The Planning Commission's 2023 report on implementation challenges for development projects described underspending as "a structural challenge affecting Pakistan's development trajectory". Internal assessments detail how system bottlenecks contribute to chronic underspending. It has expressed a growing concern, noting that the throw-forward has been increasing at a rate that outpaces growth in the annual PSDP allocations. This creates a troubling scenario where even if no new projects were initiated, it would take more than two decades of development budgets just to complete existing projects.

These malpractices add to Pakistan's mounting debt. Pakistan's ability to efficiently utilise available funding will be crucial in securing additional resources. Addressing the root causes of implementation delays and building a robust absorption capacity is essential for sustainable development and climate resilience. By undertaking reforms to break the cycle of underspending and emergency repurposing, Pakistan can maximise the impact of international assistance and strengthen its position in the global competition for climate finance. ■

The writer is a climate change and sustainable development expert.



BY KHURRAM HUSAIN

Canals and minerals

THE system is now under mounting pressure and has run into an entirely unnecessary impasse. The 'system' here consists of the unique configuration of power that emerged from the united elections of February 2024. In this configuration, everybody has been given just enough of a slice of power to obtain their buy-in, but not enough for any of them to become spoilers.

The PPP gets Sindh, Nawaz Sharif and family get Punjab, and the PTI gets KP, while Shehbaz Sharif says his agenda will be to sit in the prime minister's chair fulfilled. Balochistan remains an orphan in this configuration, like it has in most previous ones. It is the one province that needs an organic and rooted political process more than any other to arrest its spiral into insurgency.

Each party in this configuration brought its own limited agenda to the table. The PPP just wants to stay in power in Sindh. The Nawaz family wants to swing back the Punjab vote, which it lost to the PTI. It is not clear what exactly the PTI leadership in KP wants. They can't seem to make up their minds whether they are part of the system of rule in the country, or an insurgent force out to topple it. And at the centre, the government of Shehbaz Sharif just wants to let its term by balancing the demands placed upon it by all its partners in the Assembly and its patrons in power.

Into this delicate configuration, where it is more or less each to their own, come two entirely unnecessary demands that have become lightning rods for discontentment. One is the canals project in Punjab, which has stirred the street in Sindh in a way not seen in decades. For almost a week now, the towns and cities of the province have been abuzz with protests, joined by civil society organisations including the big bar associations of Karachi.

The National Highway has been blocked in at least three places, halting the movement of cargo of raw materials to industry upcountry, finished goods for export orders from upcountry to the ports, oil movement, and all else besides. The Oil Companies Advisory Council has warned that 800 tankers are stranded between Sukkur and

Larkana, and oil shortages could develop in Punjab and KP if the road is not opened up quickly.

The entire supply chain for industry is now disrupted as the protests have moved into their second week, and are escalating. Strikers have been announced by goods carriers, highway and key arteries have been blocked, and now there is talk of a province-wide general strike in the days ahead.

The PPP has found itself in the crossfire in all this. They gave a weak response to the initial environment of the so-called Green Pakistan Initiative, which aims to build a series of canals in the Cholistan desert to irrigate arid land.

The entire supply chain for industry is now disrupted as the protests are escalating.

Withdrawals of water from the Indus river system are a highly contentious issue in Sindh, which is the lower riparian and has already suffered heavily due to the drying up of water flows. It makes no sense to irrigate a desert with river water that is needed for agriculture downstream. But in this configuration of power, where every member of the power system is in the game for their own interests, somehow it made sense to somebody in the so-called Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to launch this project.

The minerals bill in the KP Assembly has turned into a similar lightning rod around which the discontents of this system — and they are legion — have been mobilised. The issue arose from the desire of the establishment to try and attract investment in the mining and minerals sector in Pakistan. In pursuit of this desire, bills were introduced in the provincial assemblies of Balochistan and KP. Both bills carry "the unde-

table imprint of the civilisational SIFC" according to an editorial in this paper, mainly because they allow for a door through which the federal government can encroach upon the mineral wealth of a territory, which is otherwise legally a provincial subject.

The Balochistan Assembly rubber-stamped the bill, but in KP it ran into stiff opposition. Initially, it was approved by the provincial cabinet, and the leadership of the PTI seemed to agree on ensuring its passage. But an uproar ensued when the provincial Speaker introduced it in the KP Assembly, with stiff opposition coming from the ANP and legislators from the merged districts. They were later joined by the JUI-F.

But here's the rub. The combined voting power of all these parties is not enough to stop the passage of the bill should the Speaker put it up for a vote. With barely 20 members out of 145, they would be swept aside easily if the ruling party decides to see the bill through. But despite two attempts by the Speaker to hold meetings and hammer out a consensus, and despite high-level attempts by the PTI leadership of the province, the bill is still stalled mainly because the PTI leadership is unable to persuade its own members to vote in its favour. In the last attempt to forge a consensus, the Speaker said no further attempts to advance the bill could be made without the explicit authorisation of the party's incarcerated chairman Imran Khan.

Neither controversy was necessary. The canals are a vanity project and not worth stirring up the whole system for. And investments in minerals can be arranged easily with a few tweaks to the existing legislation from 2017, with no need to bring in new legislation. What is at stake here is obviously a federal government that wants to lay claim to deeply held provincial prerogatives — mineral wealth and water allocations. And for this reason alone the entire configuration of power built after the elections of 2024 is now being tested. ■

The writer is a business and economy journalist.

OPINION



BY F.S. AIJAZUDDIN

Cool escapes

MOUNTAINS measure time in millions. The night of Nanga Parbat's peak from the plane as we neared Gilgit reminded me that PIA's aircraft and I had grown older: the Himalayas had not.

On an earlier trip to the northern areas years ago, I had missed a detour to Fairy Meadows. Guidebooks persuaded me that what lies above is "a lovely high plateau with level upon level of meadows and direct view of Nanga Parbat's north side". The climb had been described as "the second most dangerous journey in the world". (The first must be the perilous path to the prime minister's office in Islamabad.)

The expedition up to Fairy Meadows took about four hours — two in a rattling jeep over stone-strewn hairpin bends, and then another two straddled on a hairy horse reluctant to plod the narrow, hair-width track of rocks and mud.

The reality of Fairy Meadows today is a messy terrain field, ringed by an urban sprawl of middle-class hotels, designed for domestic tourists. Pervertedly, it is to discourage them that locals make the approach so daunting. Locals could improve the road but refuse to, as that would jeopardise the livelihood of over 100 taxi drivers and horse-owners.

The journey down followed a path edged by precipices. A prayer muttered before and after each life-threatening turning is helpful.

The drive from Gilgit to Hunza is life-affirming. En route, a view of Rakaposhi married by a high-flying cyclist on a wire. Hunza is as one remembers it — greened certainly, but still soft, silent, serene. The tourist season has yet to start, as shopkeepers are keen to catch the odd visitor as a chameleon does flies, for food.

Time dining is best at any local eatery. The most famous is run by a matriarch whose old day vegetable soup and shag-shag parathas stuffed with yak mince merit a trek up a cobble hill.

A day trip to Khapureh is to recall the busier days of Pak-China friendship. The route takes one past the newly formed Attabad Lake, churned by a dam for tourists who want a boat trip this far from Karachi. Four tunnels will boost of Pak-China friendship. The pink and white blossoms on apricot trees, the rugged layered compressed geology, and the breath-taking vistas evoke a soulless homage to nature, and to those who sacrificed their lives to build the Karakoram Highway.

The scenery is bliss until one reaches barriers and bureaucracy. Our driver whispered to the guard that he was escorting "official guests". Other cars with less illustrious drivers had to queue.

The drive to Khapureh Pass I had made

earlier had been in the summer. Then, the rolling fields were green and flush with flowers. This time, there was snow everywhere. The mass of whiteness almost dwarfed the massive Chinese gateway.

Khapureh is a sad example of the clash of civilisations. The Chinese side is patriotism in adversity. It is orderly, sober and designed for its tourists. They are allowed up to normal's land, where they stand waving red flags as they would have once Mao's red book.

Our side is poverty in adversity. An armed guard warns inquisitive tourists against crossing into no-man's land. Another reminds the first to do his job. They cry to close the wire gate. Like a CAA airport trolley, it has a broken wheel.

The journey from Khapureh down to Hunza is a leisurely descent through indescribable natural beauty. The last of the snows fight for life in deep crevasses. Streams of colourful sediment record earlier flows. God created these northern areas for artists and mobile cameras.

Close to Hunza is the Abit Fort in abiding to Subin Fort. The area has been converted with inflatable into a tourist attraction with chalet accommodation offering stunning views.

No promontory in Hunza though can match the panorama available from Eagle's nest at Dokan. Once one had to drive along through potato fields to obtain an eagle-eye view of the valley nestled between soaring mountain peaks. Today, Dokan is a smattering of low-rise hotels and fast food eateries.

Should one regret the change that tourism has brought to our northern areas? Fifty years ago, Hunza was the place to see, and be seen. It is still a second holiday home to those tired of Orchard Street.

An expert on tourism once advised the government not to expect foreign tourists until our domestic tourism has been developed to acceptable standards. Today, tourist sites like Gilgit and Hunza are experiencing a growing surge of Pakistanis, desperate to escape the cauldrons simmering in the plains between Karachi and Rawalpindi.

PIA may not remain forever PIA. The ancient petroglyphs of Haddokshi hopefully will remain for another millennia. Perpetuity though is on the side of our majestic mountains. ■

The writer is an author. www.fsaizuddin.pk



BY BINA SHAH

Our friend Sabeen

IN March, the founder of OpenAI, Sam Altman, announced his company had trained a new model that was "good at creative writing". It was asked to write a metafictional literary short story about AI and grief. The AI produced a technically correct piece of writing: writers and proponents of AI debated its literary merit and its usefulness to humanity for a week on social media. In my opinion, the piece was devoid of human emotion, merely a paean to the cleverness of machines and those who build them. But the poem who would have been able to give the most considered view because she was an great humanist as she was a tech evangelist, was not available for comment. She had died 10 years ago, and all of us who loved her are still grieving her loss.

Sabeen Mahmud was killed on this day in 2015. She was the founder of Karachi's cultural centre The Second Floor; she led a social and cultural renaissance in a country polarised by political and ethnic violence and suffocated by religious intolerance. In a city where it was often difficult to breathe, The Second Floor was where breathing was not just encouraged, it was mandatory — along with thinking. Perhaps this kind of haven is hard to imagine today, when everyone has the world on a computer in their pocket. But Sabeen lived in a moment when we were not encouraged to think for ourselves or express our individuality. This was the early 2000s, when dictatorship was benevolent and moderation was enlightened. Under the platitudes fostered the same hard hatred and extremism that has shaped our country ever since its inception.

Although Sabeen's murder was a great shock, it was no surprise that the person who rubbed our friend of her life was an educated man, who adopted the guise of a man of faith with the seal of a killer. We Pakistanis live and die by our hypocrisy and contradictions. We take cover in the grey spaces that exist between the black and white of right and wrong. We think that by fulfilling the technicalities of morality, we can dupe God. Killing someone is allowed if it is done in the name of the right 'cause'. This was the bargain Sabeen's killer made with the devil: it stole Sabeen, just like thousands of Pakistanis with hopes, dreams, aspirations, everything they could have achieved and contributed, experienced and enjoyed, unfulfilled, incomplete.

Sabeen accomplished a great deal in the short 40 years she lived on this planet. Everyone who knew her has a different story to tell about her optimism, her courage, her encouragement, her empathy. It's

important that we pass on that knowledge to others who didn't know her, and who may not have even heard of her. This especially applies to young people, who Sabeen loved to guide and support, who are looking for role models and real-life inspiration. They can't find it in our society among those they interact with every day. Instead, they find it on a phone screen, written by an influencer, or a machine. What Sabeen gave us all, far more valuable than any money or assets, was hope that we could change for the better in whatever we agreed to do and be. She was an activator of dreams, a catalyst for action, a living example of love and solidarity.

If it were up to me, I would rewrite the history books to include Sabeen's name among those we revere. I would award her the Sitara-i-Jamiat posthumously, so that her contribution to Pakistan would be properly recognised by each and every citizen of this nation. I would name roads and schools after her. I would write her name in the sky every year on her birthday. She would probably not have wanted any of these accolades; she would have found them cumbersome and strange. She would still deserve them.

Sabeen was someone this country needed then, and now more than ever: a mentor and a friend, not necessarily in that order. I may not be as eloquent as an AI machine, but I do think often about grief when it comes to remembering Sabeen.

Looking her brought me face to face with how it feels to lose a loved one — heavy, hopeless, unmoored from everything I thought was certain in this world, anchored to the temporality of our physical bodies, unable to escape the finality of our mortal end. I miss her terribly — her laugh, her smile, her irritations, her crumple. I would not want to resurrect her with AI, as is the fate these days in those strange, ghostly clips which re-animate dead celebrities. I'll leave resurrection up to the Divine. What I will do, though, is use my human gifts — remembrance, emotion, longing, love — to evoke the memories of what Sabeen was like, as a revolutionary and as a friend. And I'll use my abilities as a writer — a human one — to make sure you know all about her too, long after both of us are gone. ■

The writer is an author. Her latest novel is *The Monsoon Wife*.

FROM THE PAST PAGES OF DAWN

1975 | Fifty years ago

Sikkim annexed

NEW DELHI: The Lower House of the Indian Parliament voted 299 to 11 today [April 23] to annex Sikkim as an Indian province and end the 100-year-old monarchy there. The only opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment ... came from the Marxist Communists. They favoured ending the reign of Chogyal (ruler) ... But said the Himalayan State should have been allowed to retain its internal autonomy. ... Opening the debate, Deputy Leader of the Marxist Samir Mukherjee accused the Indian Government of "absorbing Sikkim". He said the action would not only create "misgiving among the small neighbouring countries" but would also have international repercussions. ... News agencies

[Moscow, as reported by news agencies from Washington] with no hope of more military aid for the Saigon regime, and evacuation plans well advanced, the United States was today [April 23] prepared for the imminent fall of Saigon. The Provisional Revolutionary Government ... rejected Saigon's latest offer of new peace negotiations until a new Government was formed. ... As hope for American support was lost completely British and West German Embassies announced they were packing up.

1950 | Seventy-five years ago

Support to Dixon

KARACHI: "We shall give Sir Owen Dixon our fullest support in his efforts to carry out the functions that the Security Council has entrusted to him," said Chaudhri Zafarullah Khan, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, on his arrival at the Karachi Airport yesterday [April 23]. ... Back to Karachi from the United States via London after a protracted absence of seven months and 13 days — Zafarullah Khan told Press correspondents that the United Nations Representative in Kashmir ... was to arrive in this sub-continent before the middle of May. He was expected in Lake Success before the current month was out, he added, where he would probably spend a week or ten days. ...

The task of the UN Representative, the Foreign Minister told Pressmen, as laid down in the latest Security Council resolution on Kashmir, was to bring about an agreement on demilitarisation on both sides of the cease-fire line, and to implement it.

Asked what would be the way out if differences arose ... regarding interpretation of the demilitarisation agreement ... Chaudhri Zafarullah Khan replied that the UN Representative had "full authority" to interpret the Agreement. ... News agencies

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@ dawn.com

Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All letters should carry the writer's address, CNIC and phone numbers.

Let's revolutionise our policymaking



THIS is with reference to the article "Reinforced leader" (March 29) which rightly asserted that the stagnant, unaided and conservative policymaking process, primarily shaped by a bureaucracy that is resistant to change, has hindered the country's progress. The issue is not limited to the power sector alone. In fact, a closer examination of other policies, such as those related to trade, taxation and fiscal matters, reveals the same flawed approach to policymaking.

In Pakistan, our policymakers rarely conduct empirical analysis, or assess the effectiveness of specific policies or initiatives. As a result, policies often lack the direction and capacity to address critical gaps, leading to frequent shifts and inconsistencies.

It is essential to recognise that modern administrative systems, largely driven by consumers, supported by technology, automation and artificial intelligence (AI), do not operate in this way.

As such, the traditional policymaking processes, with their outdated bureaucratic practices, have become obsolete, and can no longer be sustained. Modern policy-making is based on scientific principles and international best practices, with reforms shaped by comprehensive evaluations.

Unfortunately, our bureaucracy has failed to adapt to modern governance practices, remaining passive, conservative and archaic. This is evident in policies related to tax and trade where business processes remain largely unexamined and inefficient.

The recent power policy shift related to solar installations illustrates this harsh proposition. Consumers had invested in solar panels in response to the government's nationwide campaign to promote the solar option. But the policymakers now propose adjustments.

Effectively, reducing the buyback rate is unlikely to resolve the persistent issues in the power sector. The government's justification for this abrupt policy shift,

aimed at providing relief to grid consumers and reducing capacity payments, seems far-fetched, and has created market uncertainty.

The government should shift its focus to a more holistic approach for the energy sector, as seen in leading countries, rather than solely focussing on reducing the buyback rates. This can be achieved only through radical, comprehensive reforms based on a vision and long-term planning.

Focused efforts on privatising and modernising the generation, transmission and distribution sectors, coupled with investments in smart grid technology and advanced metering systems, are essential for enhancing energy efficiency. Above all, a competent and professional workforce, tasked with ensuring efficient power generation, and a functional distribution network are essential for transforming the current energy landscape.

This transformation is only possible if our parliament, rather than the bureaucracy, takes the lead in policy formulation. Parliament must ensure that only long-term, consistent, proactive, innovative, need-based, people-centric, adaptive, problem-solving and result-oriented policies are formulated and implemented.

Shahid Ali Abbasi
Karachi

Publicity hounds

WHILE everyone seeks attention to some degree, excessive and unhealthy attention-seeking can be dangerous and may indicate underlying issues, like low self-esteem or mental health conditions. Such attention-seekers are rightly called publicity hounds.

The so-called social media influencers do such inappropriate things regularly to get attention. The sudden rise in the use of social media and the desperation to go viral have come at the cost of social, cultural and religious values that are often undermined.

To stop this trend, parents as well as teachers can play a critical role. Parents must ensure that their children respect social and cultural values. For the last few years, our educational institutions have stopped focussing on the character-building aspect of students. This has led to the moral degradation in society.

Mohamed Ahmed
Faisal

Water conservation

THE city of Cape Town in South Africa was named the world's first drought-stricken city after it ran out of groundwater, and the government conceded its inability to provide fresh water to the inhabitants. The repeated alarms sounded by experts about

more cities meeting the same fate have been generally not paid heed to. Today, several countries, including Pakistan, find themselves in the danger zone.

As a nation, our efforts to build dams have largely been influenced by our desire to generate electricity rather than by the utter need to addressing water storage capacity issues. Reports reveal that the water storage capacity of our large dams is decreasing rapidly. With the groundwater table gradually going down, we are simply waiting to be hit by a catastrophe.

The government must initiate awareness campaigns to encourage people to use water cautiously, and to stop its wastage. Let us fight this looming crisis together.

The authorities should take on board all the stakeholders, including students, professionals and households, to save water and our future before it is too late.

Nasir Malik
Gilgit-Baltistan



Sindh land erosion

GIVEN the impending water scarcity that Pakistan faces, it makes no sense to construct more canals and fill them by diverting water from currently fertile areas to the uninfertile Cholistan.

The Sindh government should have invested in building water storage dams along the path of the Indus River, allowing only minimal water to flow into the sea. The current water flow into the sea can at best decelerate soil and sea erosion, but it is not a viable solution.

Natural forms of preventing erosion include planting or maintaining native vegetation, such as mangrove forests and coral reefs, or building dykes, seawalls and groynes in order to forestall the erosion process.

A groyne is a rigid hydraulic structure along the shore that interrupts water flow, and limits the movement of sediment. Seawalls have a total life span of 50 to 100

years, while groynes last 30 to 40 years.

Unfortunately, the coastal areas in Sindh are being cleared of their natural habitat, and this process is facilitated by some elements within the Sindh government in collusion with real estate tycoons and developers. Hundreds of thousands of acres have been lost this way.

Water scarcity is an existential threat that needs to be tackled by all the federating units. The Sindh government should initiate aggressive measures to ensure water conservation and fair distribution of its water share.

Also, there should be a freeze on the development of private and government-sponsored housing societies and luxury projects, like golf courses, including the so-called "welfare" projects meant for the paying elite and political cronies.

Malik Tariq Ali
Lahore

Approach to learning

THERE is much discussion these days about the excessive burden of homework on young children. As a prospective educator, I strongly believe that learning should be a child's innate hobby, not a stressful chore. Our rigid education system burdens young minds with repetitive homework that limits creativity and exploration.

In the words of John Dewey, education is "not preparation for life; education is life itself". Unfortunately, our system emphasises rote memorisation instead of fostering curiosity which makes learning a tiresome task rather than an exciting journey.

Maria Montessori emphasised that the act of playing is actually "the work of the child", which draws attention to the importance of experiential learning. Homework in schools should be replaced by more stimulating projects that enhance critical thinking skills instead of written work.

According to Albert Einstein, education is not the learning of facts, "but the training of the mind to think". Education is not solely about memorising the information. Rather than propelling a mechanical approach to revision, we should endorse inquiry-based learning where students are given the freedom to select topics that appeal to their interests.

It is time for the educators and policymakers to shift their focus from mechanical homework to meaningful, experience-driven education. By reducing excessive homework and incorporating interactive, play-based strategies, we can nurture young minds to love learning instead of fearing the process. A well-structured, learner-centred approach will improve academic growth, and instil a love for learning.

Yasmin Munir Lathi
Karachi

► **STRICT CRITERIA:** Those running the affairs of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPS) have been making it almost impossible for post-graduate doctors to acquire the Fellowship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (FCPS). Almost every year, a number of doctors fail to clear the FCPS (final) examination by one or two marks. While the CPS calls it "merit", the same doctors often manage to attain the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS) in England. The relevant authority should look into the matter. *Name withheld on request*
Karachi

► **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT:** According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), municipal solid waste generation was predicted to grow from 2.3 billion tonnes in 2023 to 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050. Pakistan generates approximately 49.6 million tonnes of solid waste annually due to poor infrastructure and waste collection practices. The government should focus on waste reduction, recycling and reusing. *Sand Ali Raq*
Mardan

► **FIRECRACKER MENACE:** The use of firecrackers in Peshawar is a massive nuisance for the people. The incessant noise disturbs everyone, especially the elderly and those with health conditions. While the children do not realise the nuisance they create, their parents remain oblivious to this activity, which is more condemnable. The authorities should take action against this nuisance. *Jahangir Abbas*
Upper Chitral

► **UNNECESSARY ADVERTISING:** An advertisement about the government decision regarding the reduction in per-unit electricity charges continued to appear in different newspapers for several days. The decision had already been announced by the prime minister, which meant there was no need to spend taxpayers' money on advertising the same. This redundancy needs to be curbed strictly and urgently. *Dr. e Nadeem*
Islamabad

External Ombudsman

Veteran journalist Muhammad Ali Siddiqi is Dawn's External Ombudsman (DEO). His duty is to attend to our readers' complaints, and to respond to them professionally. DEO is the investigating authority to whom all complaints can be referred, and it is DEO who takes notice of any alleged violations of Dawn's code of ethics, and informs the Editor for appropriate action. *Emath ali@siddiqiombudsman@gmail.com*

Kurram elders pledge to surrender weapons

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Elders of both warring parties in Kurram district during a jirga on Wednesday assured authorities about immediately starting the process of voluntary surrender of weapons in connection with implementation of an agreement.

The jirga, which took place at district headquarters Parachinar, was attended by General Officer Commanding 5th Division Kohat Maj Gen Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Commissioner Syed Mubeen Durrani Shah and DGO Abbas Majid Mirani as well as the elders from both sides.

A statement issued here said that officials had detailed discussions with selected tribal elders of the parties there along with the jirga in which the parties assured them to fulfil their national responsibilities in implementation of Kohat Peace Agreement and thanked all government institutions for demolishing about 1,000 bunkers.

In addition to a meeting of Kohat Commissioner and district departments to review social and development activities in the district, visits to different areas will be made.

Commissioner Mubeen Durrani Shah expressed the hope that overall situation in Kurram district would further improve and normal life would be fully restored. "God willing, Kurram district will once again become a cradle of peace," he added.

Military officials said that both sides in Kurram were serious about establishing peace and were trying to make the peace sustainable by utilising all resources.

Kurram district has been in a state of a brutal conflict since the November last year attack on a convoy that left more than 40 people dead. Roads leading to Parachinar remained blocked for more than six months, resulting in shortage of medicines, edibles and other basic necessities in the area.

Earlier towards the end of last month, both the sides of the conflict had signed an eight-month peace agreement while a fragile ceasefire was broken in January this year.



A CRAFTSMAN shapes a pot at his workplace in Phendu village on the outskirts of Peshawar. — DCP

MPC rejects minerals bill as 'direct attack' on provincial autonomy

Threatens protests if proposed law pushed through assembly

By Ali Hamid Bacha

PESHAWAR: A multi-party conference organised by the opposition Awami National Party on Wednesday rejected the draft Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill, 2025, describing it a "direct attack on provincial autonomy" and demanded limiting the role of all institutions to the constitutional sphere.

It warned that if the government tried to push the bill through the assembly, street protests would be staged across the province.

The meet was held at the ANP's secretariat Bacha Khan Market here, with party provincial president Mian Iftikhar Hussain in the chair.

Leaders of political parties, business community and civil society organisations shared views about the proposed legislation on the occasion and signed a joint declaration.

A delegation of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fard was led by Maulana Attar Rahman, while the Pakistan Peoples Party leaders led by provincial president Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha also attended. A delegation of the National Democratic Movement led by Bashra Gohar also showed up, while the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was represented by Arbab Sher Ali, Ali Anwar and other leaders.

The Jamiat-ul-Islami's delegation was led by Prof Muhammad Ibrahim, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawan's by Murtaza Javed Abbasi, that of the Quami Watan Party by Tariq Ahmad Khan, the Mashoor Kisan Party's by Adil Mahmood, that of the Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party by Khurshid Kakaji and the Awami Workers Party's by Bariyar Imamullah.

Representatives of the chamber of commerce, lawyers, mineral experts and civil society, business organisations, Mines and Minerals Owners Association and other ANP central and provincial leaders also participated.

The ANP provincial chief expressed satisfaction with the views of participants against the proposed law.

The declaration said that the



ANP provincial president Mian Iftikhar Hussain addresses the multi-party conference at Bacha Khan Market, Peshawar, on Wednesday. — White Star

Rhyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill, 2025, was rejected in its entirety as it was a "direct attack on the provincial autonomy, authority over local resources and supremacy of the provincial assembly as granted under the 18th Constitutional Amendment."

It added that the bill was an attempt to grant the Centre the control over the province's mineral resources in an unconstitutional move, which would cause mistrust between the federation and provinces.

The declaration said only residents and their elected representatives had the authority over the province's resources and no federal institution or bureaucracy could be allowed to grab that.

It added that the multi-party conference categorically rejected any "authority of the Special Investment Facilitation Council and the Federal Minerals Wing over the affairs and mineral resources of the province" as it considered the SIFC a "conspiracy to completely control the province's agriculture, minerals, tourism, environment and information technology sectors by the federal government and the military establishment and condemn it."

"We completely reject the establishment of an unconstitutional and illegal council like the SIFC," it added.

The declaration demanded that the role of all institutions be limited to their constitutional roles.

"The MPC categorically rejects the role of the army in the country's politics. It demands that details of all commercial businesses by the Pakistan Army along with their assets be made public, while all commercial activities of the army be stopped so that they can focus on their constitutional responsibilities."

The declaration said that the proposed law was not only a violation of constitutional principles but also a "robbery" on the rights of local communities, working class and those associated with mining.

The meet demanded that the provincial assembly unanimously reject the minerals bill and a constitutional and legal struggle be launched against it.

It announced that a vigorous and organised public campaign would be launched against the proposed act.

"If the bill is forcibly enacted, a protest movement will be launched across the province," it warned.

The declaration urged writers, legal community, civil society and youth to be part of this constitutional, political and public struggle against the proposed legislation.

The participants emphasised that the struggle was not limited to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but it was rather a national struggle for the rights of federating units, the supremacy of the Constitution and the establishment of a balance between the Centre and the provinces.

They endorsed the opposition of political parties in Balochistan to the minerals bill passed by the provincial assembly and demanded its immediate withdrawal to remove mistrust among people.

Bannu schoolteacher kidnapped

By Our Correspondent

LAKE MARWAT: A schoolteacher was kidnapped in the Marwat area of Bannu district on Wednesday, the police said.

An official said they received information about the incident and were investigating the matter. "We are trying to locate the whereabouts of the teacher," he added.

According to local elders, Farmanullah was bundled into a vehicle by unidentified armed men while he was going to school in Narmikhel area on a motorcycle.

They said the kidnapped teacher had no enmity with anyone in the area.

It was also learnt that the teacher would also work as a quack to provide medical treatment to local people.

Elders of Marwat area asked the local administration and police to ensure safe recovery of the abducted teacher within 24 hours.

Information dept gets new secretary

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Wednesday posted Mohammad Khalid as secretary information and public relations department.

A notification issued from the establishment department here said Mr Khalid, (BS-20), having posted at the establishment department, had been posted secretary information and public relations department. It said Mr Khalid replaced Shafiq Sohal, (BS-20), secretary administration department, of the additional charge.

The post had been lying vacant since March 22, when the provincial government transferred the then secretary information Ashraf Khan over violation of government advertisement policy. The move came after several public sector advertisements carrying Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur's pictures appeared in newspapers, attracting criticism from the government. — Bureau Report

Security arrangements for Kaghan visitors reviewed

MANSEHRA: The district administration on Wednesday reviewed arrangements related to security and healthcare of tourists and provision of essential services to them during their visit to the Kaghan Valley.

"As the summer season has set in, we have relocated the police station to Naran and will shortly deploy the tourism police in the entire valley," district police officer Shafiqullah Khan Gandapur told a meeting at the New Circuit House.

The meeting, chaired by deputy commissioner Khalid Iqbal, discussed ways to improve hospitality and security services as well as the reopening of the

remaining section of the Mansehra-Naran-Jalabad Road and the road leading to the Saiful Mahk Lake.

"We have re-deployed our personnel in Naran to ensure foolproof security for tourists. As more sections of the MNJ Road have been cleared to traffic, additional police posts are being made operational," the DPO said.

He said that police would also be deployed at Babusar Top, while traffic wardens had been assigned duties along the MNJ Road to manage traffic flow in the valley.

Assistant director of the Kaghan Development Authority Asad Shabaz

informed the meeting that efforts were under way to reopen the Lake Road, allowing tourists to visit the snow-covered Saiful Mahk Lake.

"We expect that visitors will be able to travel to the Saiful Mahk Lake in four-wheelers within a week or so," he said.

Mr Shabaz said that water supply schemes, greenbelts, ambulances and rescue services had been revitalised in the valley.

President of the Hoteliers Association Seth Matinullah said the tourism industry was fully prepared to welcome tourists.

"We have decided to offer quality food and hospitality services to all visitors

coming to enjoy the valley's natural beauty," he said.

The road link between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, which has been closed since mid-November, is also expected to reopen soon.

HED D: The police on Wednesday arrested two men for attempting to sexually assault a girl in Lohar Banna Baglian area of Balakot tehsil.

Balakot Circle SP Jehanzeb Khan told reporters that both accused fled after the girl resisted their assault but on a deserted place. He said that the girl's mother later approached him for strict action against the accused. — Correspondent

PA demands extension in deadline for Afghan refugees' repatriation

Urges Centre to empower KP to hold peace talks with Afghanistan

By Umar Farooq

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Wednesday demanded of the federal government to reconsider its current Afghan policy for necessary changes and extend the deadline for the repatriation of Afghan refugees.

It also asked the federal government to empower KP to hold direct and meaningful talks with the interim Afghan government for long-term peace in the region.

The demands were made through two resolutions during a sitting chaired by Speaker Babar Sakoon

Swat here.

A resolution tabled by PTI member Sharafat Ali noted that the house was seriously concerned about the law and order situation in the province.

It added that the federal government's Afghan policy had failed as the security situation in the country as well as Pak-Afghan relations had worsened. "It is imperative to take solid steps for restoring peace in the region," he said.

The resolution read that the house demanded of the federal government to "reconsider and change Afghan policy immediately."

It recommended that the KP government be empowered by the federal government to hold "direct and meaningful talks with Afghanistan to play its positive role for long-term peace in the region."

Another resolution, tabled by Mr Ali and passed unanimously by the

house, demanded extension of the deadline set for the repatriation of Afghan refugees.

It noted that Afghans had been living in Pakistan for decades, so sudden repatriation would not only create problems for them but could also render a negative impact on the current brotherly relations between the neighbouring countries.

Earlier, treasury MPA Rajab Ali Khan Abbasi said local and international tourists visited Galyar highlighting the country's positive image worldwide, but the residents faced immense shortage of drinking water.

He said that water browsers were filled with spring water and those sands of gallons of water was supplied to the Marri water board on a daily basis, with the practice continuing for decades.

The lawmaker said that people in the area faced issues and were com-

pelled to buy water and it was the legal right of the residents to receive water on priority.

Law minister Afiah Alam Afridi declared the issue serious and said a pipeline was laid down during the British rule for water supply to the Marri and surrounding areas.

He added that the provincial government had claimed Rs6 billion of the water supplied from Galyar but the payment had yet to be made.

He said that a special committee should be formed and the calling attention notice should be sent to it for resolving the issue once and for all.

MPA Naeir Ahmad Abbasi complained that residents were not provided water. He warned that the people would never allow anyone to use water as they're forced to purchase it.

"We don't want heads to disconnect water supply from the pipe-

line," he said, adding that water from KP had been provided to Marri for the last 129 years and that, too, for free of charge.

However, ANP member Arbab Usman noted that it was an inter-provincial issue and involved consumption areas as well.

He said the house should issue directions as the issue couldn't be sent to the committee as it lacked power to take up the issue with other provinces.

The chair observed that once the committee made any decision, it would be binding on the provincial government courtesy the house to pursue the issue.

Mr Usman also said that around 40,000 cases were pending with the Peshawar High Court.

"If this is the case at the high court, what will be the situation at the lower courts? A process should be started to monitor the situation,"

he said, requesting the chair to form a committee on the matter.

The lawmaker said e-courts were required at merged tribal districts, while consumer and civil courts should be streamlined.

He said judges should be directed to decide cases within a specific timeframe.

The law minister informed the house that the sanctioned posts at the high court totaled 20, while 13 judges were working there. He added that 10 additional judges were appointed to the high court, taking the strength to 23.

The assembly also passed the KP Right to Information Amendment Bill, 2025. Special assistant to the chief minister for technical education Tahir Anjum tabled the KP Trade Testing Board Bill, 2025, in the house.

The chair later adjourned the sitting until 2pm on April 28.

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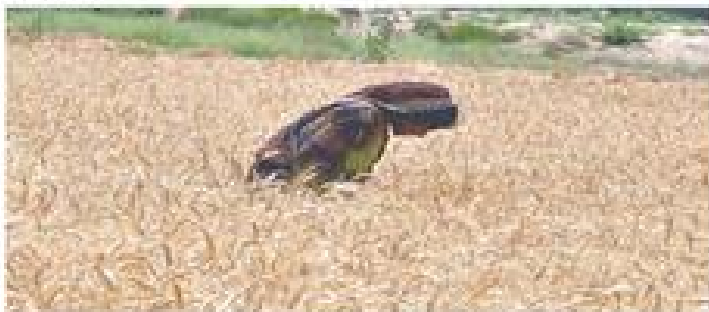
Punjab growers threaten to cut wheat sowing next season

• Accuse provincial rulers of ruining agriculture, reject incentive package • Ministers highlight initiatives to support farmers

By Amjad Mahmood

LAHORE: The agricultural sector in Punjab has become a battleground for conflicting narratives, with farmers expressing deep distress while the provincial government toots its efforts to support them. Khulid Khokhar, President of the Pakistan Kisan Ittehad, held a press conference in Lahore, vehemently criticising the government's handling of the agricultural crisis. "The threat of farmers and cultivators has been strangled," he declared, emphasising the farmers' love for their country and questioning their ability to meet basic needs like their children's education.

He announced a protest measure, stating, "Next year we will cultivate less wheat in protest," and rejecting the Punjab government's aid package, asserting, "We do not want the package, you have ruined agriculture." Mr Khokhar also urged political parties to refrain from post-harvesting the wheat issue, lamenting the lack of focus on national interests within the assemblies. He regretted that while



PAKISTAN Kisan Ittehad president says the situation is no different in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as the provincial governments were also not procuring wheat from farmers during the ongoing harvesting season.—PPF

the PPP and PTI were criticising the PMLN government in Punjab, the situation was no different in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the PPP and PTI were in power, and the provincial governments, too, were not procuring wheat from the farmers during the ongoing harvesting season. In a counter-response, Punjab Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Syed Adnan Hussain Kirmani, alongside Information Minister Arma Bakhtari, addressed a press conference. Mr

Kirmani defended the government's actions, stating, "Politics is being played in the name of wheat," but insisted that the government is committed to supporting farmers. He criticised the opposition, questioning their record in provinces where they held power and highlighting Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's personal involvement in monitoring the wheat market in Punjab. Mr Kirmani detailed the government's initiatives, including a record budget

allocation for farmers, substantial subsidies on fertilisers, seeds, and tractors, and the disbursement of Rs52 billion in interest-free agricultural loans through the "Kissan Card." He highlighted the increased area sown and a record wheat sowing as evidence of the government's success. He also criticised the previous government, referring to it as "Waseem Akram Plus," for neglecting the farmers' welfare. A key focus of the government's strategy is

empowering the private sector, Mr Kirmani said, announcing Rs100m in interest-free loans to the private sector and those mills, mandating them to purchase 25pc of the wheat stock.

He also highlighted the implementation of Electronic Warehouse Receipts (EWR), enabling farmers to store wheat for up to four months and access immediate cash through bank loans using warehouse receipts. The Punjab cabinet has further solidified its commitment by approving an amendment to the Food Grains Licensing Control Order 1957, mandating 25pc wheat procurement by flour mills, with the threat of license cancellation for non-compliance.

The cabinet also approved the implementation of EWR, with the government bearing storage costs, to provide farmers with greater flexibility and financial security. Minister Kirmani concluded by stating that wheat procurement will commence from all locations to help stabilise prices and ensure farmers receive their due compensation.

Govt looks to end FED on property transactions

FBR chairman says IMF has no objection to move

By Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has submitted a summary to the federal cabinet requesting the withdrawal of Federal Excise Duty (FED) on property transactions.

"We will issue a notification after the cabinet approves the summary," FBR Chairman Rashid Langrial told Dawn on Wednesday.

In the Finance Act 2024, the government has imposed 3 per cent FED on filers, 5pc on late filers and 7pc on non-filers. This levy is believed to have slowed down the transactions in the real estate sector.

Mr Rashid said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has already given a green signal for the FED withdrawal as the International Monetary Fund has not raised any objections to the move.

However, the chairman said that he did not have the actual figures of the FED collection from the property transactions.

Real estate experts predict a spike in market activity if the FED is abolished since it will make property transactions more affordable for buyers and sellers.

They further said that transfer prices are already high so that this relief will make a big difference.

People hesitant to buy a home due to heavy taxation may feel more comfortable after FED removal, leading to more investment and stable property values in the near few months.

The FBR chairman stated that the notification would be issued shortly. The FED on property transactions is already in vogue because people have questioned it.

Regarding revising the property valuation table for tax purposes, Mr Langrial stated that the valuation table will be addressed following the budget. "We will not make any changes in the current fiscal year," he asserted.

Currently, property transactions are subject to multiple taxes, including Capital Gains Tax (CGT), Capital Value Tax (CVT), Advance Tax (20pc & 25pc), and Urban Immovable Property Tax.

The CGT applies to profits from property sales, with rates varying for filers and non-filers.

The CVT is an annual tax on the fair market value of property. Advance tax is collected on sale and purchase, with higher rates for non-filers.

The Deemed Rental Income Tax (Section 70E) also assumes a notional rental income on properties exceeding Rs25 million, taxing it at 25pc.

Senate panel seeks plan to stem invoicing fraud

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance on Wednesday directed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to present a workable plan to tackle the widespread over-invoicing and under-invoicing of imports and exports, following confirmation of a Rs115 billion fraud and trade-based money laundering under the guise of solar panel imports.

A meeting of the committee, chaired by former finance minister Saleem Mandiwala of the PPP, adopted a report of the Subcommittee on Remitting Issues Related to Solar Panels. It recommended granting one month to the SBP and FBR to finalise a report outlining a future course of action to curb over-invoicing and under-invoicing, according to an official announcement.

The subcommittee, led by PTI

Senator Mahan Aftab, uncovered startling revelations of over Rs100m in fraud and money laundering carried out under the guise of solar panel imports by more than 80 companies — some of them dummy firms. It also criticised the SBP for not being forthcoming on the subject.

According to the subcommittee, the FBR disclosed significant findings of over-invoicing and trade-based money laundering linked to solar panel imports. In one case, the FBR revealed that the owner of a company involved in these imports had falsely presented himself as a salaried individual in official documentation.

On a broader scale, the FBR highlighted alarming instances of over-invoicing and suspicious transactions, the Senate Secretariat said. The companies in question had collectively transferred approximately Rs100m for solar imports, of which Rs100m was identified as over-invoicing. In total, the FBR

flagged 80 suspicious companies, with 63 of them alone accounting for the Rs100m in inflated transactions.

As a result of the over-invoicing revelations, the FBR has lodged 11 FIRs against the implicated companies.

The committee members, while discussing a private member's bill titled "The Income Tax (Amendment) 2025", introduced by Senator Zeshan Khanzada, unanimously agreed to recommend that the matter be referred to the National Assembly speaker to determine whether the bill qualifies as a money bill.

The committee also deliberated on the federal government's rightising policy, with members expressing concerns over its clarity and execution. While the objective of reducing bureaucratic excess was acknowledged, several questions were raised regarding its potential impact on current government employees. Senator Sherry Rehman

emphasised the need for transparency, inquiring whether the abolishment of posts would affect only vacant positions or also include existing staff, particularly long-serving contract employees. She stressed the importance of receiving a macro-level assessment of the policy's financial and human resource implications by early June.

Committee Chairman Saleem Mandiwala reiterated the necessity of clearly identifying both the departments being merged and the employees affected, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the policy's ramifications.

Officials informed the committee that relevant data was still being compiled, with a final report expected by June 30.

The SBP deputy governor briefed the meeting on the government's ongoing efforts to restructure power sector circular debt and reported that negotiations were underway with banks to raise approx Rs1.2bn.

Seven top NTDC officials removed for slackness

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The board of directors of the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) removed seven top officials on Wednesday due to shortcomings, project delays, and poor performance.

The decision was taken on the directive of Power Minister Sardar Asim Lodhari, who had recently expressed concern over project delays and the performance of these officials, according to a statement issued by the power division instead of NTDC.

Those removed from their positions included Deputy Managing Director Planning Qaiser Khan, Chief Financial Officer Waseem Sander Shukh, two general managers and three chief engineers and were made officers on special duty (OSD) — a term used for the suspension of official duties till completion of enquiry. One of the sacked general managers included Nisar Akhtar.

Two chief engineers who were removed from their roles in the Planning and Human Resource departments — Sajjad Haider Syed and Sohail Mumtaz Bajwa — were given current charge of general managers. The names of others were not disclosed.

The additional charge for the post of general manager designated at Lahore and GM Planning Hyderabad was given to Shahid Shaif Rial and Muhammad Rafique was given charge of Hyderabad general manager in addition to their duties for an initial period of three months or till regular postings. Likewise, Sohail Mumtaz Bajwa was allowed to continue the additional charge of general manager Human Resource.

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SELLING IN322.00

GBP
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SELLING IN276.69

SAR
BUYING IN174.95
SELLING IN175.63

GULF
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SELLING IN276.69

YEN
BUYING IN272.95
SELLING IN276.69

GOLD
BUYING IN272.95
SELLING IN276.69

SILVER
BUYING IN272.95
SELLING IN276.69

FBR sets deadlines for e-integration

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has asked all registered taxpayers to integrate their invoicing systems electronically.

Through SRO709 of 2025, the FBR set compliance deadlines for corporate and non-corporate taxpayers to complete the integration.

According to the notification, the corporate registered persons must start

sending digital invoices no later than May 1, 2025, while non-corporate registered persons must complete electronic integration by June 1.

The SRO further explained that all registered persons must connect their existing invoicing hardware and software directly with the FBR's centralised computerised system. This integration must be facilitated either through a licensed integrator approved by the FBR or via Pakistan Revenue Automation Private Ltd.

PSX loses 1,204 points after IMF trims forecast

By Muhammad Kashif

KARACHI: Renewed concerns about Pakistan's economic outlook and rising geopolitical tensions caused a wave of panic selling by cautious investors, forcing the benchmark KSE 100 index to fall below the 118,000 barrier on Wednesday. Alston Mohamed of Arif Habib Corporation said the PSX closed sharply lower after the IMF slashed the GDP growth forecast to 2.4pc for FY25 amid the Trump tariff blow.

He added that Fitch Ratings forecast on the weakening rupee, political noise, and investor fears over the fallout of Indian-occupied Kashmir security sector played a catalytic role in the bearish close at PSX.

Topline Securities Ltd observed that the bears made a forceful comeback, snapping the four-day

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THE TOP FIVERS			
GAINERS		LOSERS	
PIA Holding CoB	247.28	Unilever Foods	128.70
Khyber Tobacco	28.68	Hindustan Pakistan	84.02
Reliance Cotton	23.61	Lucky Core Ind	63.88
National Foods	20.57	Baggar Engg	40.51
India Motor	17.74	S.S. Oil Mills	30.37

INDICATORS			
	Wednesday	Tuesday	Change
KSE 100-SHARE INDEX (Points)	117,894.15	119,098.35	▼ 1,204.2
KSE 20-SHARE INDEX (Points)	26,018.66	26,400.20	▼ 381.54
MARKET CAPITAL (Rs billion)	14,340,740	14,448,567	▼ 107,827
TRADING VALUE (Rs billion)	87362	88,894	▼ 1,532

winning streak. The index witnessed heightened volatility, losing 1,309 points intraday before settling at 117,826 — marking a sharp decline of 1,204 points or 1.02 per

cent day-on-day. The brokerage house attributed the reversal in sentiment to escalating regional geopolitical tensions, which prompted investors to adopt a

cautious stance and lock in recent gains.

The downward trajectory of the index was significantly influenced by negative contributions from key stocks, including

United Bank Ltd, Hub Power, Habib Microfin, Bank, Mari Energy, and Engro Holdings, which collectively dragged the index down by 526 points. Ali Nazki, Head of Sales

at Insight Securities, said a negative PSX performance, contrary to the widespread expectations of a bullish spell after Mr Trump's soft statement that China tariffs will drop substantially — but it won't be zero, left investors surprised.

The day commenced on an optimistic note as the index hit an intraday high of 118,511, but the downward growth revision by the IMF from 3pc to 2.4pc for FY25 dampened investor sentiments.

In addition, Fitch's forecast, highlighting concerns that the rupee may slide to Rs285 against the US dollar by June and likely fall further to Rs295 by the next fiscal year's end, also kept bulls at bay as investors opted to have a cautious approach.

Market participation showed an trading volume tumbled 18.51pc to 605.17 million shares, while the traded value fell 5.05pc to Rs27.75 billion day-on-day.

Germany halts flights carrying Afghans deemed vulnerable

BERLIN: Two flights meant to carry Afghans to Germany will not go ahead as planned this week, a government spokesman said on Wednesday amid a growing row over the initiative.

Berlin has been periodically flying in Afghans deemed at risk of persecution and those who worked for German institutions, since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

But calls have grown louder to halt the flights since the conservative CDU/CSU alliance won an election in February, promising a radical crackdown on irregular migration.

Four flights carrying Afghans have landed in Germany since the election, and the state of Saxony announced last week that two further flights were planned for April 23 and 29. However, German foreign ministry spokesman Sebastian Fischer said, "As things stand at present, no further flights are planned in the next two weeks."

"Flight planning is always very complex and depends on a wide variety of factors, including whether enough people from the admission programmes have successfully completed the visa process."

Germany's incoming government, a coalition between the conservatives and the centre-left SPD due to take office on May 6, has pledged to end the flights from Afghanistan as part of plans to curb migration.

The CDU/CSU of future chancellor Friedrich Merz has heavily criticised the outgoing government for continuing to operate the flights since the election.

"We don't want any more flights from Afghanistan to Germany. We want criminals and dangerous individuals flown back to Afghanistan," said senior CDU lawmaker Jens Spier. —AFP

US judge orders VOA funding restoration in blow to Trump

WASHINGTON: A judge on Tuesday ordered President Donald Trump's administration to restore funding to Voice of America and other US-funded media, saying its abrupt shutdown of the outlets broke the law.

The federal judge in Washington agreed to a request led by the outlets' employees for a preliminary injunction, a temporary order as a court examines the legal challenge in greater depth.

Trump, who has long jostled with the press and questioned the editorial rules that prohibit interference in government-funded media, issued an executive order on March 14 to eliminate the outlets.

The following day, Karl Lake, his first-hand supporter turned adviser, began issuing notices to terminate all funding, which was appropriated by Congress.

Lake and other Trump officials are "likely to direct violation of numerous federal laws," wrote Royce Lamberth, a judge for the US District Court for the District of Columbia.

The US Agency for Global Media, which supervises taxpayer-funded media, is allowed by law to redirect funds among its various outlets by five per cent at best, he wrote. —AFP



PRETORIA: South African teachers participate in a protest against budget cuts and austerity measures, on Wednesday. —Reuters

Ukraine peace deal 'very close', says Trump

US president ready to accept recognition of annexed land in Crimea as Russian territory

LONDON: US President Donald Trump said a deal to halt the Ukraine war was "very close" on Wednesday but his son at Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy over his refusal to formally cede Crimea to Russia.

Trump's comments came as Vice President JD Vance warned that the United States would "walk away" unless Russia and Ukraine agree a peace deal, and as envoys from Washington, Kyiv and European nations gathered for do-or-die talks in Britain.

US media has reported that Trump is ready to accept recognition of annexed land in Crimea as Russian territory, but Zelenskyy told journalists this week it was Ukrainian territory and recognising it as Russian "is against our constitution".

"It's inflammatory statements like Zelenskyy's that makes it so difficult to settle this war," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, adding that Zelenskyy's remarks will do nothing but prolong the "killing field".

He added: "We are very close to a Deal, but the man with 'no cards to play' should now, finally, GET IT DONE." Earlier, Vance told reporters in India that the US has "raised a very explicit proposal to both the Russians and the Ukrainians".

"It's time for them to either say 'yes', or for the United States to walk away from this process," he added. Vance said land swaps would be fundamental to any deal.

"That means the Ukrainians and the Russians are both going to have to give up some of the territory they currently own," he added. The reports said the proposal was first raised at a meeting with European nations in Paris last week. But French President Emmanuel Macron's office said on Wednesday that "Ukraine's territorial integrity and European aspirations are very strong requirements for Europeans".

The latest round of diplomacy comes after a fresh wave of Russian air strikes that shattered a brief Easter truce.

A Russian drone strike on a bus transporting workers in the south-eastern city of Mariupol killed

nine people and wounded at least 30 more, the Dnipropetrovsk regional governor said on Wednesday.

Ukrainian authorities also reported strikes in the regions of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Poltava and Odessa. In light of the attacks, Zelenskyy called for an "immediate, full, and unconditional ceasefire". In Russia, one person was reported wounded by shelling in the Belgorod region.

'Work for peace'

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy had been due to lead a meeting of foreign ministers in London on Wednesday but the talks were downgraded to "official level" — a sign of the difficulties surrounding the negotiations.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that "it has not yet been possible to reconcile positions on any issues, which is why this meeting did not take place".

US Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg attended, as did Macron's diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Borne. Lammy met his Ukrainian counterpart Andriy Bohdan and Defence Minister Rustem Umerov. Zelenskyy aide Andriy Yermak also attended the London talks. —AFP

Global coral bleaching crisis worsens after hottest year

NEW YORK: More than four-fifths of the world's coral reef areas have been affected by devastating mass bleaching spurred by record-high ocean temperatures, turning many once-vibrant reefs a ghostly pale hue, scientific authorities said on Wednesday.

Bleaching is triggered by anomalies in water temperature that cause corals to expel the colorful algae living in their tissues. Without the algae's help in delivering nutrients to the corals, the corals cannot survive.

The world's fourth mass bleaching event, which scientists declared one year ago, has shown few signs of slowing down, according to the International Coral Reef Initiative and data from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration which track reef health. Instead, it has grown to be the most widespread on record, with 84pc of reef areas — from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic to the Pacific — subjected to intense heat stress for a duration expected to cause bleaching as of March 2025.

Last year was the hottest on record and the first to reach over 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times, contributing to unprecedented ocean heat pulses and triple the previous record number of marine heatwaves around the world.

"The magnitude and extent of the heat stress is shocking," said Melanie McField, a marine scientist working in the Caribbean. "Some reefs that had thus far escaped major heat stress and we thought to be somewhat resilient, succumbed to partial mortalities in 2024."

"Bleaching is always worse — as if a silent snowfall has descended on the reef," she added. Previous events in 1998, 2010, and 2014-17 saw 21pc, 37pc and 68pc of reefs subjected to bleaching-level heat stress respectively. Marine biologists had warned early last year the world's reefs were on the verge of a mass bleaching following months of record-breaking ocean heat fuelled by human-induced climate change and the El Nino climate pattern, which yields unusually warm ocean temperatures along the equator and in the Pacific. —Reuters

Musk to reduce White House role as Tesla profits plunge

NEW YORK: Elon Musk will significantly scale back his Trump administration work in May to focus on Tesla, the billionaire announced on Tuesday as the electric vehicle maker reported a 21 percent drop in first-quarter profits.

"Probably in the next month, my time allocation to DOGE will drop significantly," Musk said at the outset of an earnings conference call, referring to his work for the "Department of Government Efficiency."

The comments came as Tesla reported profits of \$409 million following a drop in auto sales that analysts said reflected brand damage due to Musk's work for President Donald Trump in shoring the US federal workforce. Revenues fell nine percent to \$19.3 billion.

The company retreated from its 2025 guidance, citing unpredictability over trade policy and demand. "Uncertainty in the automotive and energy markets continues to increase as rapidly evolving trade policy adversely impacts the global supply chain and cost structure of Tesla and our peers," the company said. —AFP

How US peace plan for Ukraine and Russia might look

WASHINGTON: The United States has piled pressure on Ukraine and Russia to find a peace agreement, with President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance threatening to walk away if a deal is not made.

Some official demands have already been made public, and media outlets have reported on several unannounced plans for a US-led accord.

Ukraine gives up territory

Axios, citing a US plan presented to Ukrainian officials last week, said that Washington could offer "de facto" recognition of Russia's occupation in Ukraine's

Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

Vice President JD Vance on Wednesday insisted US support to "freeze the territorial lines at some level close to where they are today." But Kyiv has rejected that idea.

"Our people will not accept a frozen conflict disguised as peace," said Yulia Svyrydenko, Ukraine's first deputy prime minister, in a post on X.

Russia gets Crimea

According to The Washington Post, the United States has offered to recognise Crimea — which Moscow annexed in 2014 in a widely condemned move — as Russian territory.

That would meet a major demand of

President Vladimir Putin, but the suggestion has enraged his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"There is nothing to talk about. It is against our Constitution. This is our territory," Zelenskyy told journalists this week. Trump backed out at Zelenskyy on Wednesday, saying his position will "do nothing but prolong" the war.

Kyiv can't join Nato

The United States could guarantee to Russia that Ukraine will never join Nato, Axios reported, noting that admission to the European Union would still remain a possibility. Blocking Ukraine from joining the military alliance

has long been a demand of Putin.

Security guarantee

According to Axios, Ukraine would get a "robust security guarantee" involving an ad hoc group of European and potentially non-European countries. It does not specify how this peacekeeping operation would function, or if the United States would be involved, the outlet reported.

Sanctions and reconstruction

The Trump administration could lift long-standing sanctions on Russia under a future agreement, Axios and the Washington Post reported, citing the US proposals submitted to Ukrainian officials. Axios stated that

Ukraine would get compensation and assistance for post-war rebuilding, but did not specify how this would be funded.

US gets minerals

The US plan refers to a Trump-backed proposal that would give the United States royalty payments on profits from Ukrainian mining of resources and rare minerals, Axios reported.

Trump has framed the minerals deal as compensation for military and financial aid given to Kyiv by his predecessor, Joe Biden.

Axios said the US president also wants the United States to operate the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant — the largest such facility in Europe. —AFP



ARADIPPOU (Cyprus): Nicos Koutis, a thrill-seeker, balances 448 wine glasses on his head in an attempt to break the previous Guinness World Record set by a fellow Cypriot. —AFP



BELLVILLE: A burger with Donald Trump's name carved into it, is seen at a Texas eatery. The eatery, called Trump Burger, is celebrating the first 100 days of the US president's second term with his name carved everywhere, including cardboard cutouts and T-shirts displayed for sale. —AFP



A FLYING car is on display during the 21st Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition. —AFP

Auto Shanghai showcases new EV era featuring flying cars

SHANGHAI: The world's largest auto expo opened its doors on Wednesday in Shanghai, showcasing the new electric world order, featuring a humanoid robot and a concept flying car.

The expo comes at a time when mounting trade barriers, driven by steep tariff measures under Trump administration, risk deepening China's global isolationism. With nearly 1,000 exhibitors present, foreign carmakers are racing to show they can keep pace with the ultra-competitive Chinese firms that dominate the sector's electric frontier. Beijing's historic backing of EV and hybrid development has seen the domestic market flourish, with firms on Wednesday taking the opportunity to demonstrate cutting-edge technology and sophisticated design.

"Chinese brands are really on the forefront of pushing the technology now,

and have been for a few years," said Stefan Rosen, the head of design for Lydix & Co, a joint venture between China's Geely and Volvo.

"I know that foreign firms are trying to catch up... but I would say still the industry is led through China," he said. Huge crowds gathered at domestic champion BYD's booth as it unveiled five new Ocean series cars, as well as a luxury SUV under its sub-brand Yangwang, and a concept sports car under another, Denza.

BYD has enjoyed a giddy few months of surging sales after annual revenue surged in 2024, eclipsing its rival, US titan Tesla, which is not present at the show.

"It's a very competitive field," Nping's co-president Brian Gu said at the start-up's booth, where as well as cars, a humanoid robot and a concept flying car were on display. —AFP



BEIJING: Honour guards march during a ceremony attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Ram Alghor of Azerbaijan at the Great Hall of the People, on Wednesday. —Reuters



SINGAPORE CITY: Pritam Singh, leader of the Opposition, arrives with Workers Party chief Sylvia Lim at a nomination centre on Wednesday, ahead of the general election. —Reuters

HRW accuses Israel of indiscriminate attacks on civilians

BEIRUT Human Rights Watch accused Israel on Wednesday of "indiscriminate" attacks on civilians during its recent war with Hezbollah, saying two deadly strikes in east Lebanon should be investigated as war crimes. A Nov 27 ceasefire sought to end more than a year of hostilities between the two sides that began with Iran-backed Hezbollah's cross-border fire at Israel in support of its Palestinian ally Hamas.

More than 4,000 people were killed in Lebanon, most of them during two months of all-out war that erupted in September, according to Lebanese authorities.

Among the dead were hundreds of Hezbollah fighters and a slew of senior commanders. HRW said "two unlawful Israeli strikes" on the town of Yutim in the eastern Bekaa Valley that killed more than 30 people "were apparent indiscriminate attacks on civilians."

"At least one of the attacks used an air-dropped bomb equipped with a United States-produced Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) guidance kit," it said. "The attacks should be investigated as war crimes."

On Sept 25, a strike "killed a family of 23 people, all Syrians, including 13 children," HRW said, while another on Nov 1 on a residential street "killed 10 people, including two children, one of them a year old." HRW said it "did not find any evidence of military activity or targets at either site" and that the Israeli army did not issue evacuation warnings ahead of the strikes. The rights watchdog said it had contacted the Israeli military about its findings but had "not received a response." Agency has also contacted the military for comment on the report.

HRW's Ramzi Kato said in the statement that "more and more evidence is emerging that Israeli forces repeatedly failed to protect civilians or adequately distinguish civilians from military targets during its strikes across Lebanon."

Washington's supply of weapons to Israel "has made the US complicit in their unlawful use," HRW added. It urged the Lebanese government to give "the International Criminal Court jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes" and provide "a path for justice for grieving families".—AFP

Russia allows Taliban to have ambassador in Moscow

MOSCOW Russia said on Wednesday it will allow the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan to have an ambassador in Moscow, in a symbolic move days after it lifted a "terrorism" designation for the group.

Moscow has taken steps to normalize relations with the Taliban administration since the group seized power in Afghanistan in 2021 after the withdrawal of US troops. The Russian foreign ministry said Russian officials had held talks with Afghanistan's foreign and internal ministers.

"The representatives of the Afghan leadership were informed that, following the decision announced by the Supreme Court of Russia to suspend the ban on the activities of the Taliban movement, the Russian side has decided to upgrade the diplomatic mission of Afghanistan in Moscow to the level of an ambassador," it said in a statement. It added the Afghan side "expressed their deep gratitude for this step. Russia sees a potential economic partner in the Taliban authorities, who praised Moscow for scrapping the 'terrorism' label last week.

Taliban officials have visited Russia for high-profile events in recent years. Russia's decision to suspend the ban on the group does not equal a formal recognition for the Taliban authorities, which are seeking international legitimacy.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday that "the new authorities in Kabul are a reality." "We need to take this into account in order to carry out pragmatic, not ideological policy," the minister told journalists. The Afghan government is not officially recognized by any country or world body and the United Nations refers to the administration as the "Taliban de facto authorities".—AFP

Think tank accuses Iran of fortifying 'buried nuclear sites'

• UN watchdog asks Tehran to 'clarify tunnels near N-site' • Beijing backs Tehran-Washington talks

WASHINGTON Iran is ring-fencing two deeply buried tunnel complexes with a massive security perimeter linked to its main nuclear complex, a report said on Wednesday, amid US and Israeli threats of attack.

The Institute for Science and International Security released its report based on recent satellite imagery as the US and Iran prepare to hold a third round of talks this weekend on a possible deal to reimpose restraints on Tehran's uranium enrichment programme.

US President Donald Trump, who pulled the US out of a 2015 pact designed to prevent Tehran from developing nuclear weapons, has threatened to bomb Iran unless a deal is quickly reached that would ensure that same goal. Trump's withdrawal prompted Iran to breach many of the pact's restraints. Western powers suspect it is pursuing the capability to assemble a nuclear weapon through enrichment of uranium to high fission purity, which Tehran denies.

David Albright, the institute president, said the new perimeter suggested that the tunnel complexes, under construction beneath Mount Kollang Gae La for several years, could become operational relatively soon.

Tehran has barred access to the tunnels to inspectors of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) who are monitoring its nuclear programme. The head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency called on Wednesday on Iran to explain tunnels built around its Natanz nuclear site, while voicing hope over ongoing US-Iran talks.



CHINESE Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang (right) welcomes Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Wednesday.—AFP

"I've been raising this issue repeatedly, and I will continue to do so," Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told reporters on a visit to Washington.

Grossi, who visited Tehran last week, said that all countries need to inform the IAEA of intentions for facilities around nuclear sites but that Iran has a stance "unique in the world" that it does not need to inform the agency ahead of time. "We're asking them, what is this for? They are telling us, it's none of your business,"

Grossi said.

Grossi said it "cannot be excluded" that the tunnels would store undeclared material but said he did not want to speculate on intentions. "Iran does not have nuclear weapons. This is very clear. We cannot confuse people. Iran has conducted in the past certain activities that were relevant—could be relevant—in the process of developing nuclear weapons," he said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, the chief negotiator with the US, said in a post on X in apparent response to the new report that Iran and its "Special Interest groups" were looking to "desorb diplomacy." Iran has said that advanced centrifuges would be assembled in one complex in place of a facility at the nearby Natanz plant, the centerpiece of its nuclear programme, destroyed by sabotage in 2020.

The complexes, Albright said, are being built at depths much greater than Iran's deeply buried uranium enrichment facility at Fordow, near the holy city of Qom. Iran's nuclear energy chief Mohammad Eskandari, referring to concerns about the vulnerability of its nuclear programme, on Tuesday appeared to refer to projects such as the construction of the new security perimeter around the tunnel complexes.

Meeting with Chinese FM

China supports Iran holding talks on its nuclear program with the United States and opposes the use of force and

"illegal" unilateral sanctions to try to resolve the issue, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Iran's foreign minister on Wednesday.

Beijing is willing to deepen coordination and cooperation with Tehran on international and regional affairs, Wang told Iran's Abbas Araqchi during talks in the Chinese capital, according to a ministry statement. "The Chinese side commends Iran's promise not to develop nuclear weapons and respects Iran's right to utilize nuclear energy peacefully," Wang said.

The meeting came ahead of further US-Iran nuclear talks this Saturday and after Washington imposed sanctions on some Chinese entities for buying Iranian oil in recent weeks. The Iranian foreign ministry said on Wednesday that Araqchi had informed his Chinese counterpart of the latest situation of the "indirect" talks between Iran and the US and thanked China for its constructive stance on Iran's nuclear programme and the lifting of sanctions.

China buys some 90 per cent of Iran's oil exports, traders and analysts have said. The two countries have built a trading system that uses mostly Chinese yuan and a network of middlemen, avoiding the dollar and exposure to US regulators.

Wang and Araqchi also discussed US tariffs during Wednesday's meeting. "The US's abuse of tariffs has completely lost popularity and isolated itself from the international community," Wang said.—Agencies

Jordan outlaws Muslim Brotherhood

AMMAN Jordan announced on Wednesday it was banning the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, a transnational Islamist movement, accusing it of manufacturing and stockpiling weapons and planning to destabilize the kingdom.

The move comes after authorities said they arrested 16 people, including members of the Brotherhood, over an alleged sabotage plot. "It has been decided to ban all activities of the so-called Muslim Brotherhood and to consider any activity carried out by it a violation of the provisions of the law," Interior Minister Muneer al-Fayez told reporters.

"It has also been decided to close any offices or headquarters used by the group, even if it is in partnership with any other parties," he added.

The Muslim Brotherhood has continued to operate in Jordan despite the country's top court in 2020 ruling to dissolve it, with authorities turning a blind eye to its activities. The Brotherhood's political wing, the Islamic Action Front, is Jordan's main opposition party and the largest in parliament, having won 31 out of 138 seats in September elections.

Fayez said Jordan would also be "confiscating the group's assets in accordance with relevant judicial rulings, prohibit the promotion of the group's ideas under penalty of legal accountability, and consider membership in it a prohibited act." The capital Amman is home to several Muslim Brotherhood offices.—AFP

Movie mogul Weinstein's retrial begins

NEW YORK Harvey Weinstein's retrial on rape and sexual assault charges got underway on Wednesday, as a prosecutor and a defence lawyer offered starkly contrasting explanations for the disgraced movie mogul's encounters with women who hoped to make it big in Hollywood.

Prosecutor Shannon Lacey told jurors in a New York state court in Manhattan that Weinstein exploited his status as a Hollywood gatekeeper and power broker to prey upon and sexually abuse women, then assured their silence by holding their careers hostage.

"Harvey Weinstein had enormous control over those working in TV and film because he decided who was

in and who was out," Lacey said in her opening statement. "He had all the power. They had none."

Prosecutors have portrayed Weinstein as a serial predator who promised career advancement in Hollywood to women, only to then crash them into hotel rooms and private apartments where he overpowered and attacked them.

Weinstein's lawyer Arthur Adelsky rejected that characterization, saying the Oscar-winning producer had "mutually beneficial" relationships with his accusers, who ended up with auditions and other show business opportunities.

"They realized very quickly Harvey Weinstein, he's got the key to that room

where they all want to go," Adelsky said in his opening statement, referring to career advancement.

Weinstein, 75, dressed in a dark suit and navy tie, listened after being brought into the courtroom in a wheelchair.

He has pleaded not guilty to two counts of first-degree criminal sexual act and one count of third-degree rape, and could face decades in prison if convicted.

Attorney Alvin Bragg was in attendance as the retrial began.

Weinstein is being retried one year after New York's highest court overturned his 2020 rape and sexual assault conviction and 21-year prison sentence, citing errors by the trial judge.—Reuters

Who will be the next pope? Some hints to watch for

Vatican declares nine days of mourning

VATICAN CITY No one knows who the world's Catholic church will choose to succeed Pope Francis as the new leader of the global Catholic Church. But for those watching intently, there are some hints about who might emerge as the next pontiff.

The process to choose a new pope is long and secretive. Most of the world's 252 cardinals are coming to Rome to take part. Those under the age of 80, about 135 prelates, are expected to enter into a conclave to elect the next pontiff.

Once it starts, which by Church law should be no earlier than May 5, the cardinals will be completely shut off

from the modern world until a new pope is named.

In the meantime, they can attend public events and give interviews about what they are looking for in the next leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

"Reading the pre-conclave signs to identify papal candidates is tricky, because the signs are usually very subtle," said John Thavis, a Vatican correspondent who covered three papacies.

Pope Francis died on Monday aged 88. There is no clear front-runner to succeed him.

As the pope was recovering from pneumonia over the winter weekend, he asked retired cardinals over the age of 80 to preside in his place at the Vatican's various celebrations of the holiday, possibly because he did not want to signal any favourite successor.

The pope's funeral, on Saturday, April 26, will be the first big moment to watch for signs of who might be next.

Tens of thousands, including dozens of world leaders such as US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, are expected in St. Peter's Square for the ceremony. Millions more will be watching across the globe.

The cardinals attending will listen closely to the sermon given by Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the ceremonial leader of the College of Cardinals and a retired Vatican official.

At the funeral of Pope John Paul II in 2005, the retired was delivered by German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who offered what many thought was a stirring, eloquent on the late pope's life and legacy. Eleven days later, Ratzinger would be

elected as Pope Benedict XVI.

Re is 91 years old, cannot enter the conclave and is not a papal contender. But insiders expect he might still try to offer a guide for his conferees to follow in the way he chooses to describe the Pope Francis' papacy, or in any words he uses to describe the needs of the Catholic Church today.

Hints emerging slowly

The papal funeral marks the first of nine days of mourning for the global Church. Another Mass of mourning will be held in St. Peter's Square on Sunday. That will be led by Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, often cited as a leading papal contender.

"The choice is he who enters the conclave a pope leaves a cardinal," said Christopher Bellitto, an historian at Kean University in New Jersey who specialises on the Church.

"Only prophets know what is going to happen." Other hints for possible successors to Pope Francis will likely come out more slowly.

In 2013, as the cardinals gathered in Rome after Benedict's surprise resignation, some of the US prelates preparing to take part in the conclave started giving press conferences. The wider group of the world's cardinals later asked them to stop doing the briefings.

Even if there are no press conferences this time, cardinals spending time in Rome often celebrate Masses at churches across the city. The sermons they offer on these occasions could give indications of what they are thinking.

"Any signs will come in his and pieces, or phrases used to describe what cardinals are looking for in the next pope," said Thavis.

"Words like 'openness' and 'reform' may fit certain cardinals, while 'administrative skills' and 'solid theology' may describe others," he said.

Behind closed doors

The biggest hint will come in the daily meetings the cardinals have in the week leading up to the conclave. In these meetings, known as "general congregations", the cardinals have an opportunity to speak freely and even, perhaps, to offer a vision for a future papacy under their own leadership.

In 2013, Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio offered a "short reflection" at one of these meetings. He said the Church, beset by sexual abuse and financial scandals, had become "sick" and too "self-referential", according to a text that was later published. He said the Church needed to

do a better job of trying to open itself up to the modern world. A few days later, Bergoglio would be elected as Pope Francis.

Nine days of mourning

The Vatican on Wednesday announced that nine days of mourning for Pope Francis will start on Saturday, the day of his funeral.

There will be prayer events every day at St Peter's Basilica for the so-called "miserere", which will last until May 4. The announcement came as Catholic cardinals met to discuss the next steps following the death of the Argentine pontiff on Monday aged 88.

No date has yet been set for the conclave, the secret meeting of cardinals aged under 80 to elect a new pope. But it has to take place between 15 and 20 days after the pontiff's death.—Reuters

Pakistan mulls response after India points finger without proof

Continued from Page 1

following measures," detailing how the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 will be held in abeyance "with immediate effect, until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism."

"The Integrated Check Post Attari will be closed with immediate effect. Those who have crossed over with valid endorsements may return through that route before May 1, 2025," it said.

Additionally, Pakistani nationals will not be permitted to travel to India under the Saare Visa Exemption Scheme. "Any SVES visas issued in the past to Pakistani nationals are deemed cancelled. Any Pakistani national currently in India under SVES visa has 48 hours to leave India."

Furthermore, defence attachés and advisers at the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi had been declared "Persona Non Grata" and given a week to leave India.

"India will be withdrawing its own Defence/Military/Air Advisers from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad... The overall strength of the



MOURNERS light candles in Amritsar as they pay tribute to tourists who were shot dead in Pahalgam.—AFP

High Commissions will be brought down to 30 from the present 55 through further reductions," Muneer said.

The statement also said that security forces had been put on high alert. "As with the recent extradition of Tehseer Rana, India will be unrelenting in the pursuit of those who have committed acts of terror, or conspired to make them possible," the foreign ministry statement said.

'Local and global' response

behind the scenes on our level," Singh did not identify those he believes are responsible for the killings, but said that "India's government will take every step that may be necessary and appropriate."

A hospital list verified by police recorded 26 men who were killed on Tuesday afternoon, when gunmen burst into a tourist camp in Pahalgam, and rained rounds of bullets with automatic weapons. All those killed were listed as residents of India, except one man from Nepal.

Meanwhile, an encounter was reportedly underway between Indian security forces and suspected militants in the Tarnagarna area about 100 km from Pahalgam, at the time of going to press.

In a separate incident in Baramulla on Wednesday, the army killed two people after a "heavy exchange of fire", saying the gunmen were part of an "infiltration bid". AFP reported.

World leaders express support

"Strong expressions of support and solidarity have been received from many governments around the world," Muneer said.

US President Donald Trump was among the first to express solidarity with New Delhi. Following his lead, a whole host of US lawmakers and officials, including

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the armed attack and extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feibang said he was shocked by the attack in Pahalgam, while the leaders of France, Germany, the UK and the European Union also expressed their grief. The Israeli foreign ministry and the UAE foreign ministry also sent messages of solidarity with the government.

Analyst Michael Kogelman said the attack posed a "very serious risk of a new crisis between India and Pakistan, and probably the most serious risk of a crisis since the brief military conflict that happened in 2019."

Rajit Sajad Spill in Islamabad and our correspondent in New Delhi also contributed to this report

Two Levies men martyred in Mastung

Continued from Page 1

launched to trace the attackers.

The operation, conducted jointly by the Levies, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Frontier Corps, led to the arrest of two suspects. One injured suspect reportedly managed to flee, with efforts ongoing to apprehend him.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

The attack follows a similar incident last week, when three police personnel were killed and 20 others injured in a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) blast targeting a police vehicle.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti condemned the attack, honoring the bravery of the Levies personnel who lost their lives while protecting the police team. He pledged that terrorists and their facilitators would be brought to justice and vowed that all efforts would be made to ensure the success of the police eradication drive.

The chief minister extended prayers and heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyrs, assuring them of full government support during this difficult time.

Balochistan government spokesman Shahid Rind also strongly condemned the attack and stated that a thorough investigation was underway. He reiterated the provincial government's resolve to ensure the police campaign continues without disruption and paid tribute to the martyred officers for their sacrifice.

One of the martyred Levies officers, Masood Ahmed, was laid to rest with full official honours at Pahalgam graveyard. The funeral was attended by Mastung Additional Deputy Commissioner Haji Abdul Mannan Taroon, Assistant Commissioner Muhammad Akram Harifal, Levies Superintendent Agha Rahmat Shah, Roadside Major Pir Muhammad Akmal and officers from both the police and Levies forces.

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Mahmoud Abbas urges Hamas to lay down arms

• Wants PA to control besieged Palestinian territory; likely to name successor soon • Israeli attacks claim 18 more lives; European powers call for end to aid blockade

GAZA CITY: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called upon Hamas on Wednesday to lay down arms and hand the running of Gaza to his Palestinian Authority (PA) in order to answer international doubts over the PA's role at a key moment for the region.

Abbas also urged Hamas to free all Israeli prisoners in Gaza, saying their captivity provided Israel with excuses to attack the territory. Hamas gave "the criminal occupation excuses to commit its crimes in the Gaza Strip", he said, adding that he was the one paying the price, not Israel.

"Hamas must hand over (its) Gaza responsibilities and hand over its arms to the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority and transform into a political party," the PA chief said while addressing the central council of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority in Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Ties between Abbas's Fatah party and Hamas have been tense. While he had previously called upon Hamas to join its forces under the PA's control, he has not done so since the start of the Gaza conflict in October 2023.

The PA chief is expected this week to name a successor amid pressure from Western and Arab powers concerned about the PA's ability to play a vital role in peace efforts.

Hamas has often criticised Abbas for "collaborating with Israel".

Diplomatic efforts to craft a plan for Gaza's future have focused on pushing aside Hamas, but Israel said it would not accept any role for the PA, which exercises limited autonomy in the occupied West Bank.

Pressure to name a successor

Abbas, 85, took over the Palestinian leadership after the death of veteran PLO leader Yasser Arafat in 2004. He has for years resisted naming a deputy or successor, but the conflict in Gaza has intensified pressure for him to do so.

Last month, Arab states proposed a plan for Gaza to be temporarily run by a

committee before being returned to the PA's control.

The UK, European Union and Gulf monarchies expected to play a role in financing any reconstruction of Gaza have repeatedly urged PA reform.

Talks aimed at reaching a new ceasefire have so far failed to produce any breakthroughs, though a Hamas delegation is currently in Cairo for renewed negotiations with Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

Attack on shelter for displaced

On Wednesday, Israel continued to pound Gaza, with rescuers saying 18 people had been killed since dawn, including 11 in a strike on a school-turned-shelter for displaced people.

"The school was housing displaced people. The bombing sparked a massive blaze, and several charred bodies have since been recovered," an eyewitness said, describing the attack on Yaffa school, in Al Tuffa area of Gaza City.

Aid agencies estimate that the vast majority of Gaza's 2.4 million residents have been displaced due to the bombardment and 51,365 killed by Israeli forces in less than two years.

UK, France and Germany's appeal

Britain, France and Germany called on Israel on Wednesday to stop blocking humanitarian aid into Gaza, warning of "an acute risk of starvation, epidemic disease and death".

"We urge Israel to immediately restart a rapid and unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza in order to meet the needs of all civilians," their foreign ministers said in a joint statement. "The Israeli decision to block aid from entering Gaza is intolerable."

They also criticised Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz for politicising humanitarian aid and described Israeli plans to remain in Gaza as unacceptable. Katz said earlier Israel would continue preventing aid from entering Gaza.

The UN also warned many community kitchens providing food for displaced people were also shutting due to depleted stocks. —Agencies

Pakistani astronaut to be part of Chinese space mission

Space agency says selection process for payload specialist has begun

BEIJING: Two Pakistani astronauts will undergo training in China, with one expected to join a future mission aboard the Tiangong space station, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) confirmed Wednesday.

The development follows a bilateral agreement signed in late February between China and Pakistan. CMSA said the selection process for the Pakistani astronaut has already begun.

"Consistent with the stringent criteria used for Chinese astronaut selection, a three-stage process (preliminary, secondary, and final) will govern candidate selection," CMSA spokesperson Lin Xiang said at a press conference.

Lin added that a Pakistani astronaut will join the mission as a payload specialist and conduct scientific experiments for Pakistan, in addition to standard crew duties.

The announcement came alongside China's confirmation of its latest crewed spaceflight. The Shenzhou-20 mission is scheduled to launch at 5:17pm on

Thursday from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre, Lin said.

Leading the mission will be Chen Dong, a 46-year-old veteran astronaut and former fighter pilot who, in 2022, became the first Chinese astronaut to spend more than 200 cumulative days in orbit.

"Every space journey is very unique, so I look forward to bringing in more experience and breakthroughs in the flight," said Chen, who is embarking on his third spaceflight.

Joining Chen are first-time fliers Chen Zhongrui, 40, a former air force pilot, and Wang Jie, 35, a former space technology engineer.

The current crew aboard Tiangong is expected to return to Earth on April 29 after completing handover procedures with the Shenzhou-20 team, according to Mr Lin.

The Shenzhou-20 crew will carry out scientific experiments in physics and life sciences and install protective equipment against space debris.

China has been barred from participating in the International Space Station since 2011, when the US prohibited NASA from collaborating with Chinese space agencies. Since then, Beijing has sought to build partnerships with other countries — including Pakistan — in its expanding space programme. —AFP

China says 'door open' to trade talks after Trump signals tariffs will fall

Xi warns trade wars undermine legitimate rights and interests of all countries, impact world economic order

BEIJING: China said on Wednesday the door was "wide open" for trade talks with Washington, a day after US President Donald Trump signalled the possibility of a "substantial" lowering of tariffs on Beijing.

Bringing further relief to global markets spooked by his aggressive trade policies, Trump also announced he had no intention of firing US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has imposed additional tariffs of 145 per cent on many products from China. These include duties initially imposed over China's alleged role in the ferment supply

chain and later over practices Washington deemed unfair.

Beijing has responded with sweeping counter-tariffs of 125pc on US goods, but said it was willing to engage in trade talks. "China pointed out early on that there are no winners in tariff wars and trade wars," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said at a daily news conference in Beijing. "The door for talks is wide open."

Chinese President Xi Jinping also warned on Wednesday that trade wars "undermine the legitimate rights and interests of all countries, hurt the multilateral trading system and impact the world economic order", state media said.

The reticence from Beijing comes after Trump acknowledged that 145pc was a "very high" level and that would "come down substantially". "They will not be anywhere near that number" but "it won't be zero", he said.

"Ultimately, they have to make a deal because otherwise they're not going to be able to deal in the

United States." Those comments came after Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told a closed-door event on Tuesday that the tariffs amounted to a reciprocal trade embargo. Bessent said he expected a de-escalation in the near future, according to a person who was in the room.

Such a development should bring markets some relief, he added at the JPMorgan Chase-hosted event. "Doing very well."

Bessent said there was much to be done at the end of the day with Beijing but he noted the need for fair trade and said China needed to rebalance its economy.

The Treasury chief stressed that the goal is not to decouple with China, noting that container bookings between both countries have slumped recently as trade tensions heated up.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt also told reporters that Washington was "doing very well" in respect to a potential trade deal with China. —Agencies

Pakistan reports polio case from KP; tally at seven

Official says Torghar district will be covered in ongoing and next vaccination drive

By Ikram Junaid

ISLAMABAD: Amid the ongoing vaccination drive across the country against poliovirus, a new polio case was confirmed from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday.

The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health confirmed the poliovirus case from Torghar district of KP. It was this year's second case from the province and seventh case from across Pakistan.

An official of polio programme said, "The second nationwide polio campaign of the year is currently in progress in the country from April 21 to 27, aiming to vaccinate 45.4 million children under the age of five across the country. This will be followed by another nationwide

campaign from May 26 to June 1. "District Torghar is included in both these vaccination campaigns, along with all other districts of the country."

The official appealed to parents to ensure their children aged five years and less must receive repeated doses of the polio vaccine to protect them from the crippling disease.

"The ongoing polio campaign is a critical opportunity to safeguard children against this viral disease," he said.

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by the virus that

invades the nervous system, and can cause paralysis or even death.

While there is no cure for polio, vaccination is the most effective way to protect children from this crippling disease. Each time a child under the age of five is vaccinated, their protection against the virus is increased. Repeated immunisations have protected millions of children from polio, allowing almost all countries in the world to become polio-free.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only countries which are reporting polio cases.

Aurangzeb to lead panel to improve govt performance

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a high-level committee headed by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb to improve government performance.

A source in the Prime Minister's Office told Dawn that a notification has been issued regarding the formation of the committee.

The committee would implement a formula of "performance-based review", the source said, adding that the policy already introduced in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) would also be implemented in other state institutions and federal ministries.

The committee would devise short and long-term performance plans for the state institutions and ministries and prepare its report for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif within 30 days, according to the source.

The committee to be headed by the finance minister would have other members including federal ministers for energy, climate change, chairman FBR and others.

PM returns from Turkey

On Wednesday, PM Shehbaz returned to the country after completing his two-day official visit to Turkey.

Soon after his return, the premier expressed deep concerns over the news of an earthquake in Turkey. He said he was praying for the safety of Turkish brothers and sisters.

"Pakistan stands ready to offer all possible assistance to help in this natural calamity," the PM said in a statement.

On the other hand, PM Shehbaz strongly condemned the terrorist attack on polio vaccination team in Mardin.

In a statement, the PM expressed deep sorrow over the martyrdom of Lavees personnel deployed for the security of the polio vaccinators.

He said the terrorists who harm the lives and properties of innocent people were enemies of humanity and would be brought to justice. He said such incidents could not deter the government's unwavering commitment to eradicating polio from the country.

Powerful quake rocks Istanbul

ISTANBUL: A 6.2-magnitude earthquake hit the Sea of Marmara near Istanbul on Wednesday, with the impact felt across Turkey's largest city where people rushed onto the streets.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage, officials said, but the quake was followed by at least eight others, Turkey's AFAD disaster management agency said. The initial quake struck at 12:47pm at a depth of 6.92km under the sea, which lies to the south of the city, AFAD added.

"An earthquake of 6.2 magnitude occurred in Silivri, Sea of Marmara, Istanbul," Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said on X, adding that it was felt in the surrounding provinces.

It was followed by eight others with magnitudes of 3.5 to 5.5.

As buildings shook, people rushed onto the streets where crowds of worried-looking people stared at their mobile phones for information or made calls.

"I just felt earthquake, I've got to get out," a shaken-looking doctor said while rushing out of a fourth-storey apartment where he was working near the city's Galata Tower, who did not want to give his name.

Footage posted by the state news agency Anadolu showed the minaret of a mosque in the Beylikduzu district just west of the historic peninsula swaying during



RESIDENTS rush onto streets and parks after a 6.2 magnitude quake in the Marmara Sea, on the outskirts of Istanbul.—AFP

the initial quake, but there were no reports of any buildings collapsing in the sprawling city of 16 million people, Yerlikaya told TRT.

"Until now, nobody's called the emergency line to report their home collapsing," he said, though the Istanbul governor's office warned people to avoid any structures that looked like they might have been damaged.

Footage on Turkey's NTV television showed one three-storey building collapsed in the Fatih district, also near the historic

peninsula, with the broadcaster saying the building was empty and had been abandoned decades ago.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he was "following the developments closely".

The tremor could be felt as far away as Bulgaria, according to AFP journalists in the capital Sofia.

Around 20,000 people were killed in two quakes that devastated Turkey's densely populated northwest in 1999 as the eastern strand of the fault line ruptured.—AFP

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SPORT

Late Nunes strike lifts City to thrilling win over Villa

MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Matheus Nunes scored a priceless stoppage-time winner to salvage a crucial 2-1 Premier League victory over Aston Villa on Tuesday in their breathless chase for a Champions League berth next season.

The teams appeared to be heading for a draw after Bernardo Silva's penalty cancelled out Bernardo Silva's goal in the first half, but Nunes fired home Jeremy Doku's cross in the 94th minute to lift City two places to third in the table on 61 points.

Pop Guardiola's men, however, have played one more game than the three teams directly behind them, while Villa, who have lost 15 consecutive games at the Etihad Stadium, remained seventh on 57 points.

"We are not used to [scoring late winners], so I'm really, really happy for the goal that we scored at the end, because we

are in the last four or five games, and a Champions League contender for qualification," Guardiola told Sky Sports.

With the race for a top-five finish approaching a tense climax, Portugal midfielder Nunes, converted to right-back late, could not have picked a better time to net his first league goal for City.

With four games left, City will remain at least fifth even if fourth-placed Nottingham Forest, fifth-placed Newcastle and sixth-placed Chelsea each win their game in hand.

After winning the Premier League six times in the previous seven seasons, City have been reduced to fighting for a place in the Champions League at a time of year when they are usually in the title hunt.

City's decline has already been remarkable enough, but securing a first season without Champions League action since

2018-19 would be a new low and this was a vital step in avoiding that fate.

City will turn their attention to the FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest at Wembley on Sunday, while Villa must bounce back from a painful loss in time for their own last-four clash with Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Goalkeeper Villa were eliminated from the Champions League quarter-finals last week after narrowly failing in their bid for a dramatic fightback against Paris St Germain in the second leg.

"Over 90 minutes [Man. City] dominated more, but we played a good competitive match," Emery said. "Take a lot of positive things and now is a moment to be positive. We can't waste time now, we have to keep going."

City were ahead in the seventh minute when Omar Marmoush raced by Villa

right-back Matty Cash before cutting the ball back for an onrushing Silva, whose striking strike from 10 yards was too powerful for Emiliano Martinez's goalkeeper attempt to keep out.

Rashford, who had a shot clatter off the post 18 seconds into the game, pulled Villa level from the penalty spot in the 18th minute, after VAR determined Robert Diaz clipped Jacob Ramsey from behind with his right leg. Rashford calmly sent keeper Stefan Ortega the wrong way before shooting home.

City had 14 shots to Villa's seven before clinching a deserved victory when Doku drove down the left hand side and squared the ball for Nunes arriving at the back post.

Guardiola's frenzied fist pumping dance of joy underlined the significance of a crucial result in a turbulent season that could still have an upturning finale. —Agencies



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Matheus Nunes (L) scores during the Premier League match against Aston Villa at the Etihad Stadium. —Reuters

Olmo keeps Barca's title charge on track

BARCELONA: Barcelona inched closer to the La Liga title with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Mallorca on Tuesday which took them seven points clear of Real Madrid at the top of the table to seven points with five games to go.

Spain international Dani Olmo scored home inside the first minute of the second half to help Barca turn up the heat on second-placed champions Real, who have a game in hand.

Harini Flick's side, aiming for a potential quadruple, outplayed the visitors but could not extend their lead at the Olympic stadium as goalkeeper Leo Roman made save after save.

"Their goalkeeper had a great game," Barcelona midfielder Gavi told Movistar Plus. "We had the chance to take advantage and took it. It's football. We insisted, worked hard, kept going and the goal finally came. We played a great game overall and I'm very happy for the players who stepped up."

Barca dominated proceedings despite Flick deciding to rest several key starters ahead of Saturday's Copa del Rey final against rivals Real. The coach handed former teenage prodigy Ansu Fati his first start since October and deployed Hector Fort on the left of the defence, with Ferran Torres up front in place of injured top scorer Robert Lewandowski.

Barcelona created several chances in the first half but Leo Roman put on a show between the posts to keep them at bay.

They finally managed to break the deadlock shortly after the interval thanks to a fine piece of individual skill from Olmo, who took the ball in a tight space inside the box and quickly fired a left-foot shot into the bottom corner before Mallorca's defenders could challenge him.

The win lifted Barca to 76 points at the top of the standings with Mallorca seventh, in a Europa League qualification spot, on 44 points.

After Saturday's Clasico in Sevilla, trouble chasing Barca will face last-placed Valladolid before hosting Real in a month-longer showdown that could decide the title on May 11. —Agencies



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Dani Olmo (second L) scores during the La Liga match against Mallorca at Estadi Olimpik Lluís Companys. —Reuters

Former England star Flintoff reveals mental battle after car crash

LONDON: Former England star Andrew Flintoff has revealed the extent of the mental health struggles he has endured since his first car crash on the set of television programme Top Gear.

In one of his first interviews since sustaining severe facial injuries in the accident in 2022, Flintoff admitted he initially found it hard to return to public life.

The 47-year-old ex-England all-rounder said it took him "10 goes to leave my bedroom" due to anxiety on his first morning as

an assistant coach with the national team in 2023.

"That day in Cardiff, it took me 10 goes to leave my hotel bedroom. I couldn't get out of the room," he told The Times in an interview with former England captain Mike Atherton.

"I was so anxious and worried. I eventually went down to breakfast, sat down and

chatted with Nevea Tooley and then Jos

Barber.

"I had to go back to my room to get my

baseball mitt and I was waiting for the lift

again and heard footsteps. I knew it would be (England captain) Ben Stokes.

"I didn't really know him then. I've built a great relationship with him since, but I was anxious about that, standing in the lift with him."

"In the dressing room, Joe Root came over, one of the best men you'll ever meet, and everyone made me feel so welcome."

"Slowly but surely I started to find my feet. And sitting on the balcony and being pictured. Even the press were nice about me."

It's amazing what an accident can do."

Flintoff was driving a Morgan Super 3

three-wheeled sports car when it overturned

and crashed off of the Top Gear test track

during filming.

The open-topped car is capable of hitting

130mph and the cricketer wasn't wearing a

helmet when it flipped over.

Flintoff suffered severe facial injuries

and broken ribs in the crash.

"It's always going to be there, but in a

strange way, I've got an acceptance of it now."

I'm not fighting it," he said of the physical

and mental scars of the accident.

"I still get flashbacks at night and anxiety

and other stuff but I know it's happening

and I'm accepting it."

Flintoff retired as a player in 2010 aged 31

after playing in 79 Tests between 1996 and

2009.

Initially invited to help with England

Under-19s after the crash, he was appointed

as England Lions head coach in September

2024. —AFP

PSG draw at Nantes to stay unbeaten

NANTES: Paris St Germain had to settle for a 1-1 draw at Nantes in a rearranged Ligue 1 game on Tuesday, keeping the champions on course to become the first team to go unbeaten through an entire season in the French top flight.

The stalemate stretched PSG's unbeaten away league run to 20 matches, beating the long-standing record across Europe's top five leagues set by AC



NANTES: Paris St Germain's Vitinha kicks the ball past Nantes' Jonathan Lepoint during the Ligue 1 match at the Stade de la Beaujoire-Louis Fonteneau. —AFP

Milan between 1991 and 1993, with the Champions League semi-final against Arsenal on the horizon.

"It's important to talk about this record and the players from that era. We are at Milan's level. We're talking about the record for unbeaten away games," PSG coach Luis Enrique said. "A team of our calibre can't afford to make mistakes. We can still improve and do even better. We should have won the match, and our small detail made all the difference."

In a slow first half the hosts were content to sit back and play on the counter, but Vitinha struck a low half-volley off a Leo Kangin pass to put PSG ahead after 23 minutes.

Nantes looked more aggressive after the break as Jean-Charles Castelletto drew a free-kick from PSG goalkeeper Guiseppe Donnarumma on the hour mark.

Douglas Augusto finally found the equaliser seven minutes from time with a great shot from the edge of the box following an excellent run from Matthijs Aldini.

Goalkeeper Ramon went agonisingly close to setting a winner for the visitors, but his stoppage-time header hit the crossbar.

PSG, who wrapped up the title earlier this month, held a 25-point advantage over second-placed Olympique de Marseille, while Nantes are 14th on 31 points, four points above the drop zone.

"I am proud because I didn't expect such a performance from my players. We didn't just defend well but we also played good football and created chances," said Nantes coach Antoine Kombouare.

"We never let our heads go down. It is a really well-deserved point," added Kombouare, who described PSG's unbeaten away record as "monstrous". —Agencies

Sinner doesn't deserve any hate, says Draper

LONDON: British Jack Draper has given his backing to world number one Jannik Sinner over the doping controversy which saw the Italian accept a three-month ban and said he does not deserve any of the hate he gets.

Sinner accepted the ban in February following a deal with the World Anti-Doping Agency, which had challenged a tribunal's decision to clear him after two positive tests.

The 23-year-old three-time Grand Slam champion has not played since winning the Australian Open in January.

"When people ask about him, or anyone, I'll tell the truth. I think Jannik is a really, really genuine, nice person," Draper told the Guardian and BBC in a joint interview published on Tuesday.

"In this situation I'm sure that he would have absolutely no idea of anything. That's just the way life goes sometimes there's mistakes."

"In terms of actually how I feel about him as a person, I think it's important for people to know and recognise that the guy's very, very kind-hearted and a good human being. So he doesn't deserve any of the hate that he gets."

World number six Draper, also 23, practised with Sinner at the Tennis Club de Bessieres in France. Sinner was cleared to return to training from April 11.

"If you can train with anyone, it's got to be probably the best in the world, right? He's obviously had a bit of time off, but he's playing at an incredible level still," Draper said.

"I'm looking forward to having him back on the tour, because I think his presence has been missed. It was great to be with him for a few days and get some good sparring." —Reuters

Player dies after collapsing ahead of South African league game

DURBAN: South African footballer Sibusiso Zondi died on Tuesday after collapsing in the warm-up before a non-competitive match, his club Durban City said.

The 22-year-old was taken to hospital ahead of Durban's game against Mthatha FC and the match was abandoned as fans were told Zondi had died.

The cause of death was still to be determined.

"It is with deep sadness that we confirm the passing of Sibusiso Zondi, aka Siga, a loved member of the Durban City family," the club said in a statement.

"Sibusiso was more than a talented footballer. He was a team mate, a friend, a brother, a son and an inspiration to all who knew him."

"Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with his family, friends, teammates, coaches and everyone affected by this tragic loss. We will continue to support those close to him during this difficult time."

The defender made his professional debut in September 2021 and had been a regular for his club this season as they sit top of the standings and are on course for promotion to the top flight of South African football. —Reuters

HBL Pakistan Super League

United juggernaut rolls on with thumping win over Sultans

Dawn Report

MULTAN: Just a day after Multan Sultans finally found themselves in the driving seat, Islamabad United came in their way.

And the most clinical side in the ongoing HBL Pakistan Super League edition so far, did what it has done all season — win matches. On Wednesday night here at the Multan Cricket Stadium, United registered their fifth victory in as many games.

Sultans, who got their only win on Tuesday — a 13-run drubbing of Lahore Qalandars — meanwhile, saw their play-off hopes dwindle further after the seven-wicket loss against the holders.

United opener Andries Gous (80 off 45, six fours and five sixes) came forward with his best show this season, with the American batter hitting his maiden PSL half-century to help his team easily chase down 189 with

17 balls to spare.

He thrived on a tricky wicket for batting after Shahbaz Farhat departed following a 22 off 14 (three fours and a six) — with Ubad Shadi getting the better of the right-hander with a fast bowler — before Gous and the incoming Gade Mavro boosted the side to 69-1 in the powerplay.

The pair brought up its 50-run partnership off 31 balls after Mavro slog-swept leg-spinner Usman Mir for a huge six over square leg in the seventh over.

Usman came in Gous' radar in the ninth, as the United States batter smashed the lucky bowler past long-off for four before slugging him over deep midwicket.

After United had reached 105-1 by the 10th over — which had seen Mavro (65 off 28, five fours and two sixes) and spinner Bhikhar Ahmed get involved in a heated exchange — the former New Zealand batter

MULHAN SULTANS

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KARACHI

Sunset 06:59 pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 06:01 am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 26°C
Maximum 35°C
Humidity 52%
Outlook Sunny

METRO South



United juggernaut rolls on with thumping win over Sultans
Pg.18 SPORT

Infant dies, seven hurt as water tanker hits van

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: An infant boy was killed while seven others, including six women, were injured when a water tanker hit a van in Gulshan-e-Iqbal on Wednesday evening, police and rescue services officials said.

Street Town 810 Ali Khan Abbasi told Dawn that the heavy vehicle hit the van near Agha Ali marriage hall.

The killed child was identified as one-and-a-half-year-old Sabir Nadeem. The injured were Aul Barkan, 30, Sakhtamar Faisal, 37, Erum, 26, Azra Ghani Khan, 50, Kamala Hussain, 50, Sakina Nadeem, 25, and Nadeem, 21.

The officer said that the accident occurred apparently due to speeding. However, the police were further investigating the case.

The SHO claimed that the driver responsible for the incident was arrested and the tanker seized.

The body and injured were shifted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre.

Police Surgeon Dr Sumariya Syed told Dawn that the condition of two women was critical as they had sustained serious injuries.

Meanwhile, police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested a man and his daughter for their alleged involvement in a robbery case.

Central SSP Zouhar Shafiq Siddiqui said the New Karachi police arrested a suspect who used his daughter to snatch a motorcycle at gunpoint. He added that they were arrested with the help of CCTV footage.

The suspect was identified as Bilal Siraj and his daughter as Sharmila.



EXCAVATORS work at the construction site of the Karimabad underpass. — PPI

10 years after Sabeen Mahmud's murder, family chooses her legacy over justice

• Mother of slain activist says she devoted all these years to serving people instead of seeking justice solely for Sabeen • Appeals of five militants sentenced to death by military court in 2016 still pending before high court over jurisdiction issue

By Sumair Abdullah

KARACHI: Ten years after the murder of prominent social activist Sabeen Mahmud, there seems to be little hope for justice as her family has shifted focus towards carrying forward her legacy instead of seeking accountability.

On April 24, 2015, Sabeen Mahmud was shot dead in a targeted attack on the left T2F, a literary and cultural space she had founded, after hosting a seminar on the disappearance of political activists in Balochistan.

The Counter-Terrorism Department had arrested five militants after a couple of weeks to the murder and in 2016, a military court handed down death sentences to them. However, even after nine years, the military

court's verdict is yet to be implemented.

Mahmud Mahmud, mother of the slain activist who accompanied her daughter on the fateful day and suffered bullet wounds, told Dawn when the attack took place, several rights activists and senior lawyers visited her and urged her to pursue the case.

"I asked them, will my efforts fit the justice system of this country? If the answer is yes, I am ready to dedicate 10 to 20 years of my life to it. I want justice for Pakistan, not just for Sabeen," she said.

She recalled being told that pursuing the case would bring her closure, but she questioned, "Can any mother truly find closure in her lifetime?"

"I felt it was better to devote these years to serving people instead. I have been working on mental health, parenting, and have also worked with women prisoners, conducting

sessions where many of them promised me they would show more love and understanding towards the emotions of their own and other prisoners' children," she added.

Remembering her bond with her daughter, 74-year-old Mahmud said it was more like a friendship, adding that Sabeen was a bright young woman whose value system was rooted in honesty and justice.

She dedicated much of her 40 years to working on social issues, and during that time, she would often receive threats, her mother said.

Talking about that fateful day, she recalled: "I hadn't been to T2F for some time, but that day I felt a strange unease, as if I must go." Mahmud, who was in the car when the attack took place, said as their vehicle

Continued on Page 14

Sindh nominates ex-irrigation official as Irsa's federal member

By Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: The Sindh government has recommended the name of a retired government official to the federal ministry of water resources for appointment as the federal member from Sindh in the Indus River System Authority (Irsa).

Irsa has four members from each province in addition to a federal member. Sindh had its federal member in Irsa 15 years ago when Qasim Ahmed Dahir served in the position between Oct 2007 and Oct 2010.

The name of retired chief engineer Shafiq Hussain Wadhu was chosen by Sindh Irrigation Secretary Zafar Khoro and Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro last week.

With the approval from the Sindh chief minister, the official summary for his name is said to have been sent to the federal water ministry.

Mr. Wadhu was recommended for a period of three years in pursuance of a Chief Executive Order issued by Gen Pervez Musharraf on July 10, 2000.

The Sindh High Court in its order passed on a petition on April 18, challenging the appointment of the incumbent 'federal member' in Irsa Asjad Imtiaz, observed that it was expected that before next date of hearing, a federal member from Sindh would be appointed as already had been decided by the court in its judgement on May 12, 2017 on a petition.

Mr. Asjad has been serving on the position since October 2022 for yet another term.

According to a source in Irsa, the summary for the appointment of the retired engineer was not allowed to be processed in the past. Routinely, sitting federal member Asjad Imtiaz continued to hold the office.

PPP Senator and Member Zameer Ghumro filed a writ of quo warranto before the SMC through Qasim Ali Malik, challenging Mr. Asjad's appointment and asked the court to declare his appointment illegal. The petitioner also challenged water availability certificate (WAC) issued by Irsa on Jan 26, 2024 for the Cholistan canal project. Upon which the court had passed an interim order suspending the certificate.

CS orders probe into demolition of heritage building

KARACHI: Another heritage building located in the suburban part of Clifton is being partially demolished.

Taking serious notice of the demolition of the heritage Khures House in Clifton, Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah on Wednesday directed the commissioner to conduct a detailed inquiry into the matter and submit a comprehensive report within 72 hours.

He also instructed that if any irregularities were found during the investigation into the demolition of the heritage building located on plot No. FT-4/14, Bath Island Road, strict action must be taken against the responsible individuals and officials.

The chief secretary expressed grave concern over the incident and emphasised that the protection of cultural and historical heritage was of utmost importance.

He warned that any negligence or unlawful actions concerning heritage properties will not be tolerated and will be met with appropriate legal consequences. — Staff Reporter

Sindh reports year's ninth rabies case amid vaccine shortage, rise in canine population

Around 5,400 dog-bite patients treated at two Karachi hospitals, officials say

By Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Amid government failure to address vaccine shortage and control canine population, the number of rabies cases recorded this year in the province rose to nine on Wednesday when a man affected by the disease was brought to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC). Six of the nine patients hailed from the interior parts of Sindh, sources said.

They added that the patient with a his-

tory of dog bite was brought to the emergency department with hydrophobia — a clinical sign of human rabies.

"He was bitten by a dog over a month back in Qambar. The family told us that the patient couldn't get vaccinated at their hometown. This was the sixth rabies case at the hospital," a JPMC doctor told Dawn on the condition of anonymity.

The patient briefly remained in the isolation ward before the family took him away against the doctors' advice, he added.

Sources said another patient with a history of dog bite was brought dead to the hospital the same day. "Since the cause of death wasn't known, we can't say he died of rabies," an official said.

The sources said six rabies patients who had arrived at the JPMC hailed from Badin, Sukkur, Ghotki, Qandhar, Mowach

Goth in Karachi and Bakh Chowki.

Officials said the JPMC and Indus Hospital treated over 5,400 victims of dog bite — 2,400 and over 3,000 — during the current year.

Sources said the Indus Hospital has seen three rabies cases this year. Of them, two patients hailed from the interior areas of Sindh. Last year, over 15,000 dog bite cases were treated at the hospital, which also saw eight deaths caused by rabies.

The Civil Hospital Karachi has seen over 10,000 dog bite cases last year with no death from rabies.

According to sources, doctors of dog bite victims daily report at the city's tertiary care hospitals.

A majority of them are brought with deep wounds requiring immediate administration of life-saving rabies immunoglobulin (RIG) along with the

vaccine. Unfortunately, the required medicines are available at a few hospitals in the province, leading to deaths in several cases.

People's misery is compounded by the fact that the provincial government has failed to put in place a humane system — mass dog vaccination and sterilisation — to control growing canine population despite the loss of so many precious lives every year.

According to experts, deaths from rabies infection are preventable with prompt post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) by stopping the virus from reaching the central nervous system.

Rabies can be completely prevented if the wound is immediately and thoroughly flushed and washed with soap and flowing water, followed by an effective antirabies vaccine series and RIG injection into each bite wound.

There's no better education than being in jail, says ex-PM

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi says popular support is with Imran Khan; laments state of affairs in Karachi

By Peerzada Salman

KARACHI: Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said there is no better education than being in jail.

At an open question and answer session titled *Nazak Mo or Naz Diverions* with the students of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) on Wednesday evening, Mr. Abbasi while referring to his time as the prime minister, said that he had never aspired for any position.

He said that most of the time of a prime minister's day was spent in firefighting. There's no time to reflect because everyone's looking towards the leader, no time to

learn, no instead of being the first among equals, the PM becomes a sovereign.

"The best time to reflect is in jail. There's no bigger education than being in jail. [Imran] Khan sahab has got time to reflect. His period as prime minister wasn't a good one. He came [to power] through the same path that this [present] government has come. Khan sahab needs to think what he has to do."

"There's no doubt, popular support is with him. It's the support that came towards him because others failed. But during his tenure moral values were trampled... He has a big role to play only if he is able to learn something," he said.

Talking about his association with Karachi, he said when he was imprisoned in 1999 by Gen Musharraf, he was kept at the University of Karachi. He was born in Karachi and went to four schools in the city. He was also in Landsi Jail for two years. He took sad to see the same Karachi is in today.

Carrying on with the argument, Mr.

Abbasi said the PPP is in power in Sindh for the last 17 years, but he's surprised to know that there's no water in Badliya Town for people to use.

"Karachi is the most critical city for Pakistan. If Karachi doesn't work, Pakistan won't work. The biggest problem that Pakistan is faced with is that there's no capacity in our leadership. Politics is not a profession, it's a responsibility."

The former prime minister said politics is all about contribution. It's not about taking, it's about giving.

"Do the children sitting here in the hall know that for the first 23 years of Pakistan's existence no elections were organised? In 1970, fair elections were held but we didn't accept it. The constitution was made after 25 years of the country's inception. I say, you hold one fair election, there's a possibility people will make mistakes. Hold another fair polls, things will get much better. In the third, people will give you an objective decision," he said.

Mr. Abbasi, who is the head of the Awami

Pakistan party, said the establishment is part of the country. Everyone's role in the Constitution is defined. The country has seen martial laws so undemocratic values have become part of the system.

"How can you fight it? The first thing that you need to do is to have moral authority. Then build intellectual capacity. The establishment means well for the country. But when it sees that it can't trust politicians, when politicians don't have the intellectual capacity to understand the country's problems, then those who impose martial laws they think it's their responsibility to set things right. The day you have moral authority and intellectual capacity, you'll be able to stand in front of the establishment."

The event was moderated by IBA's Executive Director Dr S. Akbar Zaib. After he put a couple of initial questions to the guest, the floor was opened for the students to ask questions.

In response to the first query raised by a student on his party's ability to deal with the establishment, Mr. Abbasi said what's

needed to be taken into account is that whether you want confrontation or work within the system.

"Politicians need to gain capacity and build moral authority, and then face the establishment. The decisions taken on the streets are never right... Today Pakistan needs massive reforms. Don't you need more provinces? These things have to be discussed. Look at the water issue currently being debated. To date, no one has been able to discuss it objectively," he replied.

He said he hasn't made a manifesto for his party because no party implements their manifesto. "[Instead] we have made a vision document."

Mr. Abbasi said in parliamentary democracy, two-thirds majority is constitutional — a recipe for failure — because after that you're able to amend the constitution and become a sovereign (kudshah). "I have said this before: you will have to make new provinces in the country... It needs to have a national consensus, though. If it's a sensitive matter, then decide on hurry."

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Moot warns against unregulated use of chemical fertilisers

HYDERABAD: Experts at the 1st International Soil Science Conference that concluded in Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, on Wednesday warned that unregulated use of chemical fertilisers was impacting soil productivity and called for formulation of a national soil protection policy focusing on climate resilience, conservation of natural resources and promotion of local agriculture. They recommended that soil fertility and human health as well as integration of modern technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI) into university curricula should be considered national priorities. They said that agricultural land was not only vital for crop production but it also played a critical role in environmental balance, food security and biodiversity. They said that comprehensive national policies must be developed to ensure soil protection, advocated reducing excessive use of chemical fertilisers and promoting organic fertilisers, bio-saline techniques and biological measures. They recommended developing GIS-based soil maps and launching mobile laboratories, training programs, and awareness campaigns at district and union council levels. Among the speakers were SAU Vice Chancellor Dr Abdul Ali Syed, Sindh University VC Prof Dr Khaliq-ur-Rahman Khurshid, Nuclear Institute of Agriculture's director Dr Mahboob Ali Syed, former dean of Faculty of Crop Production Dr Shamsuddin Tazki, Dr Alish Wadhwani, Gandhiji, Dr Mohammed Saleem Soofi, Dr Haseenullah Babar, Dr Ziaul Hassan Shah, Dr Naveed Talpur. — Staff Correspondent

Lawyers' sit-in enters seventh day as Sindh-wide protest against canals continues

Dawn Report

SUKKUR: Lawyers' sit-in at Baharai Bypass on National Highway in Khairpur entered the sixth consecutive day on Wednesday as activists of nationalist and religious parties continued protests against federal government's plan for the construction of six canals on the Indus River by blocking highways and roads with sit-ins and staging rallies in several Sindh towns. In Thatta, activists of Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam-Faid staged a sit-in on National Highway at Madi Bypass where the party's Sindh general secretary, Mansura Rashid Mahmood Soomro, demanded immediate withdrawal of corporate farming and canals projects. He warned that the party's protest movement would intensify if an horizon failed to reverse the decision and announced a phased plan of his party to block highways across Sindh, beginning with Kandhkot-Kandhkot section of the highway on April 24, followed by Shikoti on April 25 and Sukkur on April 26. He said that federal ministers had now approached the party seeking dialogue but the talks would begin only after a formal notification had been issued cancelling the canals project. He said the canals projects were unconstitutional as they had bypassed key regulatory bodies, including the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNC), the Council of Common Interests (CCI), and the Indus River System Authority (IRSA).

In Nawabshah district, activists of Jama Sindh Quami Mahaz staged a demonstration on National Highway at Kandhkot where the party chairman Sarwar Qureshi said that the people of Sindh rejected the canals project and asked the federal government to shelve it immediately. He said that everyone living in Sindh, speaking any language or following any sect was a Sindhia and it was his or her responsibility to raise voice against the project. In Amri, activists of several nationalist parties blocked Amri-Qari Ahmed road and demanded immediate withdrawal of the canals project. Members of a paramedical association boycotted duties in Haidari and other centres where black ambulances and boycotted duties. In Larkana, activists of Peoples Youth Wing and Sindh Peoples Students Federation staged a procession in Kennedy Market. Aqar Lodhiani, chairman of district council, requested PPP's support for democracy claiming that the party had been protest against the canal since its inception. Members of civil society and activists of different political parties continued their sit-in at sugar mill bypass in Nushahar on the third consecutive day on Wednesday. The students of Government College Mandera also joined the sit-in. In Badliya, activists of Awami Tehreek and Sindhya Tehreek staged a rally in Sanghi Pharo. The party chief Yasir Thari and other leaders demanded abolition of Special

Investment Facilitation Council and repeal of the Board of Investment Amendment Act 2023. Thari said that institutions like the CCI were dominated by Punjab's rulers, sidelining the interests of smaller provinces. Corporate farming under SIFC was displacing local farmers, he said. He criticised the PPP for misleading Sindhia with concocted statements about canals, asserting that the people of Sindh would continue their peaceful struggle. He reiterated the party's demands for revocation of Indus water availability certificates, repeal of the Pies Act, Board of Investment Amendment Act 2023, and 24th Amendment. Now, federal ministers were trying to weaken the movement by offering negotiations on the issue but Sindhia people would not fall for these misnomers offer and defeat their conspiracy. PPP leaders meet protesters. Lawyers' leaders asked PPP delegation, who visited them at the Baharai Bypass, Khairpur district, that the ruling party should give an ultimatum to the federal government and take a decision either to stand by people or with the federal government. The delegation comprising PPP provincial president Nisar Khush, veteran leader Khurshid Shah and his son Farukh Shah invited lawyers' leaders to participate in the party's procession in Sukkur. The lawyers' leaders said to the dele-

gation that PPP should give an ultimatum to the federal government. "Corporate farming is a provincial issue and Sindhia minister can cancel the agreements," they said. Advocate Shafiq Rahim, head of the lawyers' committee, said the decision to take part in PPP procession would not be made by a single individual. "Whatever decision the lawyers' committee takes, we will inform the PPP by the evening," he said. AT-GDA activists join lawyers' sit-in. A large convoy of Grand Democratic Alliance activists led GDA Sindh General Secretary Sarwar Rahim, GDA Sukkur President Sagor Inayat Barrio and others reached Baharai and joined lawyers' sit-in. A large number of workers of Awami Tehreek and Sindhya Tehreek led by advocate Rajid Hussain Mahesar, AT central general secretary, and Umar Khatun, Sindhya Tehreek's central president, participated in the sit-in at Baharai. Another sit-in in progress in Kandhkot. Another sit-in staged by Lawyers' Alliance and All Parties Movement on Kandhkot section of the National Highway entered the third day. Lawyers Abdul Ghani Bjarani, Akram Rafiqani, Dilawar Dahan, Zameer Sagor Bjarani and others, who led the sit-in, stressed until and unless the order to cancel the controversial canals was issued, the protest would continue.

SHC orders departmental proceedings against IO in teacher's murder case

Dawn Report

LARKANA: A single bench of the Sindh High Court Larkana circuit asked the SSP of Qambar-Shahdadkot on Wednesday to initiate departmental proceedings against Sub-Inspector Rashid Ali, the investigation officer (IO) in the murder case of Sadaf Hashoo, for negligence in the probe and submit a report on or before the next date of hearing. A young teacher, Sadaf was allegedly killed by her fiancé, a serving police officer, in Qambar-Shahdadkot 14 days ago after she declined to marry him. Rashid Ali, upon being confronted, was asked whether any digital evidence, including video content circulated on social media, had been collected. He expressed his inability in this regard. It appears that the said officer has failed to perform his duties diligently and has conducted a substandard investigation. He has also failed to arrest the accused named in the FIR, the court said. It is further noted that on the last date of hearing, the SSP Qambar-Shahdadkot was directed to constitute a police team under his direct supervision. The bench said that today (Wednesday), Qambar SSP Sarfaraz submitted that despite their best efforts, the

accused had not been apprehended yet. This demonstrates that the SSP Qambar-Shahdadkot has not fulfilled his responsibilities as expected by this court. During the course of proceedings, the Qambar-Shahdadkot SSP appeared before the court and undertook to effect the arrest of the accused mentioned in the FIR prior to the next date of hearing. He has requested time for the arrest. The request was allowed. Accordingly, SSP Qambar-Shahdadkot was directed to ensure the arrest of the mentioned accused before the next date of hearing. In case of failure, he shall appear before this court in person on the next date of hearing. Furthermore, on the last date of hearing (April 21, 2025), the RGP was directed to initiate a formal inquiry into the conduct of the Larkana SSP for alleged gross negligence and dereliction of duty, which purportedly contributed to the tragic murder of Ms Sadaf Hashoo, an educated young woman. Pursuant to these directions, Larkana SSP Ahmed Faizal Chaudhry appeared on Wednesday and submitted para-wise comments, which were taken on record. He submitted that the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of Qambar-Shahdadkot district and that substantial efforts were made by his department to protect

the life of the deceased. He also asserted that as the incident did not fall within his jurisdiction, no tape could be attributed on his part. He further submitted that full protection was provided to the deceased. In light of the above explanation, the reply submitted by SSP Larkana is found to be satisfactory, the court said. Consequently, the inquiry against him, as directed in the previous order dated 21.04.2025, is hereby recalled and withdrawn, the order said. WAF condemns incompetence of Sindh police. The Women's Action Forum (WAF) has condemned the incompetence of Sindh police over failure to arrest the murderer (s) of Sadaf Hashoo. In its statement issued in Hyderabad, the WAF said that inability to apprehend the killer even after 15 days had become a glaring example of district police's failure and ineptitude.

THE ANTI-TERRORISM COURT NO. XVIII, AT KARACHI

JUDICIAL COMPLEX, CENTRAL PRISON KARACHI.
SPL. CASE NO. 01 OF 2024
Old case No. 57/2019
State Vs
Abdul Sami Inani S/o Sadeq Ali Qureshi Accused
FIR No. 90 / 2019,
U/S 302/324/34 PPC,
Rw Sec-7 of ATA,
P.S. Model Colony, KHI.

PROCLAMATION UNDER SECTION 87 Cr.P.C. REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF PROSECUTION WITNESSES.

- WITNESSES, witnesses:
1. Ameer S/o Muhammad Iqbal R/o House No. 405B, Sheet No.21, Bus stop P-C, Model Colony, Karachi.
 2. Syed Iftikhar Ali S/o Syed Sattar Ali R/o House No.38/C1, Main Canal, Karachi.
 3. Muhammad Akbar S/o Muhammad Aslam R/o House No. RGV-350, Model Colony, Karachi.

In above mentioned Case/Crime, are not attending the court despite repeated summons and NBW have been issued by this court, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the above named prosecution witnesses cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said witnesses have absconded to avoid the service of the said warrant. Proclamation is hereby made that the above said witnesses are required to appear within seven (07) days, from publication of the proclamation in the newspapers, at 09.30am before this Court to answer the said complaint on 05-05-2025.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court, This 21st day of April, 2025.

JUDGE ANTI-TERRORISM COURT NO. XVIII, KARACHI

SP-APPY 1240/25

BEFORE MR. NAUMAN RAZI (JUDGE) IN THE BANKING COURT NO. 11, AT KARACHI. Plaintiff: Pakistan National Bank Limited (P.N.B.) vs. Defendant: Mr. Syed Iftikhar Ali. The court has ordered the defendant to appear before the court on 05-05-2025.

BEFORE MR. ABUL BAZI (JUDGE) IN THE BANKING COURT NO. 11, AT KARACHI. Plaintiff: Pakistan National Bank Limited (P.N.B.) vs. Defendant: Mr. Syed Iftikhar Ali. The court has ordered the defendant to appear before the court on 05-05-2025.

In Loving Memory of our Beloved Abba / Dada SYED JAWAD AHMED JAFARI Who left us on this day 19 Years ago. You are very kindly requested to recite Surah al Fatiha for the departed soul. To be forever Loved and Missed. Thank you. Nabeel, Areeb, Maseel, Shuja, Sahil Families of Syed Muhammad Khiter Jafari & Syed Alay Ali Jaffery (Atakhana Yagdar Bara Imambara Petharsar)

Tender Notice Public Tender for the Sale of Dry Ash, Wet Ash, Slag & Gypsum from a Thermal Power Plant. M/s Port Qasim Electric Power Company (Private) Limited invites qualified enterprises to participate in the purchase of Dry Ash, Wet Ash, Slag & Gypsum. This tender aims to promote the environmentally friendly, efficient, and cost-effective utilization of coal ash in the following sectors: Road construction, embankments, dams, and port projects; Cement factories; Land or mine filling; Building construction; Agricultural applications. Bidding Requirements: This tender covers the sales of Dry Ash, Wet Ash, Slag & Gypsum under a Sale and Purchase agreement. Interested bidders must submit the following qualification documents, including but not limited to: 1. Company Profile: The company must have been established on or before 2023 and hold a valid business license. 2. No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), explicitly authorizing the bidder to handle coal ash. 3. No Objection Certificate (NOC) issued by the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) Environment & IM Department. 4. Various Qualification Certificates, including but not limited to: 1. National Tax Number (NTN) Certificate. 2. Sales Tax Registration Certificate. 3. Tax Verification Document issued by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) (downloaded copy). 4. Certificate of Incorporation. Tender Document Acquisition: Interested bidders must submit the required qualification documents via email to pqaepc@powerchina.cn to request the tender documents. The submission deadline is MAY 1, 2025, at 18:00 Pakistan Standard Time (PST). Contact Person: 1. Mr. Muhammad Bilal 2. Li Jingyuan Contact Tel: 0333-6002977 Email: lijingyuan@powerchina.cn Contact Tel: 0370-1127311

PUBLIC AUCTION ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY AT WINDER, BALUCHISTAN FOR SALE. Offers are invited on 'As is where is basis' for the sale of land bearing Plot No. 1044 to 1048, measuring 26,250 square meters, situated at Winder Industrial Trading Estate, Winder, District Lasbela, Balochistan together with plant, machinery, all fixtures and building constructed thereon, being in Execution No. 24 of 2018 (First Default) Investment Bank Limited versus New Allied Electronics (Pvt) Limited and another for recovery of an amount of Rs.750,354.00/- alongwith cost of fund and Execution No. 58 of 2018 (United Bank Limited versus New Allied Electronics (Pvt) Limited and others) for recovery of an amount of Rs.157,814,396/- as principal amount and Rs.80,697,531/- as market upto 31-05-2021 and cost of fund from 01-06-2021 till realization of the entire decretal amount. Reserve Price Rs. 553,624,190/- CONDITIONS: (i) Offers to be accompanied with 25% of the Reserve Price in the shape of pay order in favour of Official Assignee of Karachi alongwith copy of the ChOC to reach the undersigned on 27.05.2025 at 10:30 A.M. (the date and time fixed for auction), which will be opened immediately upon receipt in presence of the parties who wish to be present. (ii) The undersigned shall call the bidders immediately for improvement of offer with further payment of 25% of the enhanced improved offer amount. (iii) The bid amount of purchase money shall be paid by the purchaser highest bidder on or before the court closes on the fifteenth day from the day of auction of the property had on 27-05-2025, exclusive of such day, on or if the fifteenth day be a Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office day after the fifteenth day. (iv) In default of payment of the balance of purchase money within the period allowed, the property shall be re-sold after the issue of a fresh notification of sale. The purchaser, after accepting the purchase of the sale, may if the Court thinks fit, be taken by Government and the defaulting purchaser(s) shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may be subsequently sold. (v) The public auction proceedings are subject to acceptance and confirmation of the Hon'ble High Court of Sindh, Karachi. (vi) For the reasons to be recorded, the undersigned may cancel the offer or affirm the same for not more than seven days. (vii) The public auction shall be held for only the right, title and interest of the Judgment Debtors/Debtors namely M/s. New Allied Electronics (Pvt) Limited and the purchaser must satisfy himself as to the said Judgment Debtors' title to the property. (viii) The possession of the property being auctioned has been lying with the Judgment Debtors who have deposited security goods thereon. (ix) The prospective bidders may inspect the file details or any attached of the Judgment Debtors' title to the property in the office of the Official Assignee of Karachi against written request. (x) The details of the grant and machinery are set-out in the evaluation report dated 24.07.2024 submitted by IRTS Associates (Pvt) Ltd., which report shall be open for inspection to prospective bidders for 15 days prior to the date of auction i.e. 27.05.2025. (xi) The prospective bidder shall read the terms and conditions of lease of the subject property and endorse each bid in his bid offer. (xii) All terms and conditions of the existing lease of the subject property shall be binding upon the prospective/bidder/bidder to which he may inspect the lease documents of the property in the office of Official Assignee on or before the date of auction against written application. (xiii) All dues, taxes and outstanding on the property may be required by the purchaser himself from respective Departments and shall be the sole responsibility of the purchaser to pay off such dues/taxes and outstanding as the property above described is being put to auction on as is where is basis with all liabilities to be borne by the purchaser on express terms. (xiv) Inspection of property shall be held by undersigned on 13.05.2025 from 11:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Further information, if any may be obtained from the undersigned. Telephone No. 021-99203129. (DR. CHAUDHRY WASIM IQBAL) OFFICIAL ASSIGNEE OF KARACHI 5th FLOOR, NEW BUILDING, HIGH COURT OF SINDH, KARACHI.

Sindh Bank Career Opportunities. Sindh Bank Limited invites applications from suitable candidates for the following positions at its Head Office, Karachi. Position: Assistant Company Secretary. Experience: Preferably minimum 3 years relevant banking experience. Qualification: Minimum Graduate, preference will be given to LLB. Age: Up to 40 years. Position: IS Auditor (Karachi), Internal Auditor (Management Audit Karachi), Sharia Auditor (Karachi & Lahore), Audit Quality and Assurance Officer - Back Office (Karachi), Internal Auditor - Audit Team Member (Karachi, Islamabad and Sukkur). Experience: Preferably minimum 3 years relevant banking experience in Audit functions. Qualification: Minimum Graduate, preferably ACCA / MBA / M.Com, from PUC recognized university. Candidates having relevant certifications will be given preference. Preferable qualifications for Shariah Audit will be a degree in Shari'ah at Al-Azhar or PhD in Kulliyatul Shari'ah. Age: Up to 45 years. Position: Service Quality Officers. Experience: Preferably minimum 3 years relevant banking experience in Service Quality functions. Qualification: Minimum Graduate. Age: Up to 45 years. Position: Unit Head Financial Reporting. Experience: Preferably minimum 3 years relevant experience in Finance Department of Commercial Banks/Financial Institutions. Qualification: Minimum Graduate, preferably ACCA / A.MBA Finance/M.Com from IIRC recognized institutions. Age: Up to 50 years. Interested candidates may apply through our Web Portal at https://www.sindhbank.com.pk/careers latest by May 4, 2025. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interview. No TA/DA will be admissible. Female candidates are encouraged to apply. www.sindhbank.com.pk SAY NO TO CORRUPTION UAN: 0920-10-117433

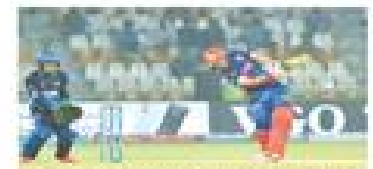
ISLAMABAD

Sunset 06:48pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 05:23am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 21°C
Maximum 31°C
Outlook Sunny

METRO North



United juggernaut rolls on with thumping win over Sultans

Pg.18 SPORT

Car owners face double whammy after freak hailstorm



A DENTER uses a grinder to smoothen the surface of a car damaged during the recent hailstorm in Islamabad. In the other picture showroom owners cover vehicles with foam and sheets in G-8 sector. — Photos by Mohammad Asim & Kabir Ali



Prices of spare parts shoot up, car dealers, mechanics estimate 'over 1,000 vehicles' damaged

By Kabir Ali

ISLAMABAD: The recent unprecedented hailstorm in the federal capital has brought a boom not only to the spare parts dealers of Islamabad but also to the dealers in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, since the local markets had run out of stock for wind-screens and lights.

However, this situation has put the car owners in a tough spot, who have to pay extra for repairs while also compromising on the quality of products.

At the same time, the freak weather event has also exposed loopholes in the insurance sector of the country, as most of the victims have not been compensated by the companies.

While no official data has been compiled by the authorities, the mechanics and the spare parts dealers in the twin

cities estimate that more than 1,000 vehicles suffered minor or major damage due to the hailstorm.

On April 16, all areas of Islamabad city in the foothills of Margalla witnessed an unexpected hailstorm, when hailstones as large as golf balls (around 1.5 inches in diameter) hammered the city, damaging cars and other types of property.

Fearing the recurrence of the same weather pattern, most car dealers are now keeping their vehicles - parked on the roads - covered with mats and other material. The hailstorm left a trail of damage in its wake, mostly damaging vehicles.

In a rare spirit of corporate solidarity, the new auto entrants in the Pakistani market announced generous repair discounts for the affected vehicle owners.

Social media campaigns were launched by carmakers. Haval, Changan, Hyundai, MG, JAC, BYD, Kia, and Audi, announcing exclusive after-sales service packages. Meanwhile, the key existing players in the auto sector Suzuki and Honda did not offer any such initiative.

Some companies even floated discounts of up to 50 per cent on labour

charges and 10 per cent on spare parts, including the windcreens, rear screens etc, exclusively for the victims of the hailstorm. However, in the open market, the prices of spare parts shot up. Not just the parts, but the labour cost also significantly increased.

"Our Honda Civic suffered from a shattered windshield and multiple dents in the B-11 area," said Zameer Hussain, resident of F-11 Islamabad, adding, "The mechanic was demanding Rs200,000 for the complete work - we have decided to rent the car for a month till the market cools down."

Incidentally, even the mechanics were victims of exploitation by the spare parts dealers, who raised the average rate by Rs5,000 to 8,000 per windscreen. Muhammad Asif, a mechanic in G-8, said that he tried to call one dealer in Faisalabad as well as one in Peshawar and they told him that all windcreens had been bought by car dealers in Islamabad. "Windcreens are the least sold items in Islamabad during normal days," he said, adding that for this reason, the market is being manipulated.

Besides the expensive parts, the vehicle owners also became victims of deceptive marketing, with locally

made products being billed as imported ones.

"But the issue is what can we do - I cannot drive around with a shattered windscreen and even if I do not agree with the quality, what can anybody do in these circumstances?" said Khayyam Siddiqui, a corporate employee in Islamabad.

The victims claimed the insurance companies were trying to delay the assessment and final damage reports. "It seems like they will conclude that the damages would be categorized under 'force majeure clause' like they do to the victims of riots and terrorism," said Zameer Hussain, another corporate employee in Islamabad.

More than 40 insured vehicles of the same company were damaged and negotiations with the insurer were underway.

Meanwhile, Dr Zahoor Rabbat, spokesperson for the Met office, said that the unusual situation developed due to prolonged dry and hot conditions in the area and the heat wave in the plains, which resulted in hailstorms. "Such conditions result in the development of Cumulonimbus clouds, which create hailstones," Dr Rabbat said.

CDA gets Naqvi's nod for underpass construction on Faisal Avenue

ISLAMABAD: The city managers have been directed to begin construction of an underpass on Faisal Avenue to link sectors E-7/F-7 and F-8, as Interior Minister Mohan Naqvi gave the go-ahead for several new development projects.

Linking one sector to another through underpasses on major roads is part of Islamabad's master plan.

Some years ago, the CDA constructed an underpass on Faisal Avenue to link sectors G-7 and G-8. However, despite its construction, the traffic issue remained largely unresolved, as the CDA built a narrow road on the roof of the underpass. During peak hours, motorists often face traffic congestion.

Now, the interior minister has directed the CDA to construct a second underpass on this road to connect sectors E-7/F-7 with F-8.

An official said that the previous mistakes made with the G-7 and G-8 underpass should not be repeated, and the new underpass must be wide enough to ensure smooth traffic flow.

Meanwhile, a press release issued by the Interior Ministry on Wednesday stated that during a meeting, Interior Minister Mohan Naqvi approved key urban projects to enhance public convenience and ease traffic flow in Islamabad.

"It was decided [by the chair] to remodel the Faisalabad Interchange to further improve traffic flow, which includes widening the interchanges and adding two more lanes. Moreover, to improve traffic movement at Faisal Chowk, the construction of an underpass was also approved. A two-plus-two-lane underpass project will be constructed there," the press release read.

It added that Mr Naqvi directed that the underpass be planned with future requirements in mind. It was also decided to operationalise the already completed parking place in the Blue Area.

Furthermore, the construction of parking places at other locations in the city was also approved during the meeting. It was decided to identify suitable sites for this purpose without delay.

The press release stated that the meeting included briefings on various projects aimed at permanently resolving traffic issues.

It was also reported that the selection of sites for pedestrian tracks, food stalls and parking spaces has already been made for the Blue Area Food Street.

Spaces will be allocated for public seating and recreational activities. Additionally, it was noted that the Blue Area Parking Plaza will feature commercial shops, a rooftop restaurant, a playground, a cinema and other facilities.

Minister of State for Interior Tahir Chaudhry, Interior Secretary Khuram Agwa, CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Islamabad IGP Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, CDA board members, district administration and service officials attended the meeting. — Staff Reporter

NA committee expresses concerns over slow pace of road construction in capital's rural areas

Discusses land issues of National Assembly, Senate housing societies

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary panel on Wednesday showed its concerns over incomplete road works in rural areas and directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to take immediate steps to complete the projects.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Housing, which met with MNA Raja Khuram Nawaz in the chair, besides other agenda items, discussed the incomplete projects in rural areas.

The committee expressed its annoyance over the delay in completing the project, which was started by the CDA almost two years ago.

The committee chairman said the CDA had been spending massive funds on mega

road projects in urban areas, but small projects started two years ago are still incomplete, which has been causing problems for citizens.

However, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa told the committee that funds had been allocated for completing projects in rural areas, adding that projects with 80 per cent physical progress would be completed on a top-priority basis.

The committee was told that work on the incomplete projects would be started soon.

In February 2023, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, during his first term, approved a CDA project worth Rs10 billion for the uplift of rural areas.

Subsequently, the CDA started development work in rural areas, including connecting streets and work on the widening of many rural roads, etc. Before launching the Rs10 billion project, the CDA had divided it into three phases, and work on the first phase is not completed yet as many projects were halted halfway.

Many rural roads, including

Hame-Machra Road, Sher-i-Damail Road, Channi Road, Darkala Road, Shahala Dina Old Road and Jagrot Road, etc, are still incomplete.

Whereas Sikanderi-Anam Road (which is also known as Alexander Road) was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in June 2023, but later on, the project was halted halfway.

This road is meant to link Islamabad with Haripur. The issue of this road and Jagrot Road was also taken up in the National Assembly.

In February this year on a calling attention motion.

However, work on these two major roads is all set to restart as the CDA, a few days ago, released pending funds for these two projects.

The meeting was also attended by State Minister for Interior Muhammad Tahir Chaudhry.

The committee warmly welcomed him on his first appearance before the committee.

The committee also discussed the land issue of the National Assembly Employees

Cooperative Housing Society (Nauchs) and issues of the Senate Employees Housing Society.

The committee directed the CDA chief and chief commissioner Islamabad to resolve the pending issues of members of these societies and submit a report in the next meeting.

Meanwhile, responding to queries regarding FIRs filed against participants in Jamat-ul-Islami's Gora March in Islamabad, the state minister told the committee that the government facilitated the event and was commended by the organisers.

However, he said that strict action was being taken against those involved in damaging police stations.

Regarding unregistered vehicles, the committee directed the Secretary, the Ministry of Interior and the CDA chairman to engage with vehicle dealers and resolve registration issues.

The minister stated that as part of the national counter-terrorism initiative, unregistered vehicles will not be

allowed on roads. A report on this matter is to be submitted in the next meeting.

The committee also deliberated on arms license policies. The minister clarified that one Prohibited Firearms (PF) license is issued to each Parliamentarian, while non-PF licenses are issued to their close associates.

The committee was informed that special permission for issuing NPB licenses in Rahochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be sought from the prime minister (PM). Additionally, arms licenses for businessmen and taxpayers are under consideration.

Discussing the issue of human trafficking, the state minister said that over 200 offenders have been arrested and several FIA officials have been terminated.

The committee also discussed the PM's announcement regarding the Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Centre (JMRC) in Sector H-16, Islamabad and recommended that the project be initiated as planned.

Pakistan gets 31 'refrigerated trucks' to boost immunisation

Kamal concerned over polio refusals, advocates community engagement over punitive measures

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to support routine vaccination, Unicef has handed over 31 refrigerated trucks to the Federal Directorate of Immunisation (FDI), with the support of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

This initiative builds upon ongoing support that includes the delivery of 23 refrigerated vehicles in 2023 and seven pickup trucks earlier this year. These investments are aimed at strengthening routine immunisation, improving outreach capacity, and bolstering the overall

health system.

"Every child has the right to be protected from preventable diseases. With the support of Gavi and in close coordination with the Government of Pakistan, these refrigerated trucks will help us ensure that every child has access to life-saving vaccines. By safeguarding vaccine potency through a strengthened cold chain, we are making strides toward a healthier Pakistan where every child is fully immunised," said Abdullah Farid, Unicef Representative in Pakistan.

Federal Directorate of Immunisation Director General Dr Khawar Saeed said: "This support is instrumental in expanding our reach and building the capacity of our immunisation teams. We are grateful to our partners for standing with us in our shared goal of protecting every child through equitable and resilient health systems."

According to an official of the health ministry, Pakistan contributes 7 per cent to the support fund of Gavi and trucks were purchased from same fund. "Unfortunately, Gavi and other donor agencies don't trust officials sitting in the immunisation programme due to which they have been purchasing equipment. However, they also don't share details of procurement due to which even we are not aware of the cost and other related details," he claimed. He also said that ordinary air conditioners were installed in trucks and suggested that purpose-built trucks (which have air conditioning on all walls) should have been purchased so that the quality of the vaccine would not be compromised.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Health Minister Mustafa Kamal said the truck would "significantly strengthen access to life-saving vaccines for children across Pakistan, including the remote regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and other hard-to-reach areas".

He announced that five refrigerated trucks have been allocated to each province to ensure the safe and efficient delivery of vaccines nationwide.

"The availability of these vehicles will guarantee the integrity of vaccine supply to all provinces and territories, helping us reach every child," he added.

During his address, the minister emphasised the need for primary healthcare, revealing that 70pc of patients visiting government hospitals could be treated at the basic health units (BHUs).

"The day is near when doctors and medicines will reach people

at their doorstep," he claimed. Mustafa Kamal also shed light on the ongoing national polio eradication campaign, which commenced on April 23. Over 450,000 frontline workers are participating in this crucial effort. For the first time, Pakistan and Afghanistan have launched synchronised polio campaigns, reflecting unprecedented cross-border collaboration.

However, the minister expressed concern over growing refusals to administer polio drops. "Those who deny their children the polio vaccine are risking their lives," he warned, while firmly opposing the use of force in such cases.

He stressed the need for community engagement over punitive measures, directing officials to counsel vaccine refusals instead of filing FIRs.

"There is a cure for every disease — but not for polio," Mr Kamal stated.

"Polio eradication is a national cause. Every individual must contribute to protect our children from permanent disability." He called for stronger support and cooperation with frontline workers.

The health minister also spoke about the responsibility of the health sector. "Our work is with God's most beloved creation — human beings. We are doing everything we can to alleviate suffering, and I am committed to fulfilling my duties with sincerity and dedication," he said.

"This sector is perhaps the most demanding. Our positions are a test, and we are answerable. I aim to pass this test with the prayers and support of the people," he added.

PRAYER	
Fajr	04:02
Zuhar	12:10
Asr	04:53
Maghreb	06:48
Isha	08:17
Starting time in Islamabad	

REFLECTIONS

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— HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)
76A-0427

Islamabad police observe 'Ghazi Week'

ISLAMABAD: Capital police are observing 'Ghazi Week' from April 23 to 26th to honour brave service members and pay tribute to their heroes.

Ceremonies are being held in all divisions of the capital police, where police ghazis are being invited and honoured for their bravery.

Police said so far, 131 officers of the capital police have attained the status of Ghazi and have been awarded Shujaat and Ghazi medals.

Officers receiving the Ghazi medal are awarded Rs200,000 along with a Ghazi certificate and are given the posting of their choice.

Officers awarded the Shujaat medal receive Rs200,000 along with a Ghazi certificate and their preferred posting within the department.

In addition, special welfare measures are taken for these heroes and their families in the fields of health and education. — Staff Reporter



STUDENTS read books at a stall during the 'Spring Festival' at Nuri in Islamabad on Wednesday. — Online

Security of Afghan refugee camp near Golra Mor enhanced

By Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: As crackdown on Afghan Citizen Card holders and illegal foreigners continues in Rawalpindi-Islamabad, the police have chalked out a revised security plan for Afghan refugees being kept in camps near Golra Mor.

On the other hand, as many as 1,134 Afghans had been rounded up by the law enforcement agencies during ongoing campaigns against Afghan Citizen Card holders and illegal foreigners in the twin cities of Rawalpindi-Islamabad so far.

However, 16 of them brought to the camps had been

missing. According to sources, of the 1,134 Afghans brought to the refugee camp near Golra Mor, 127 were citizen card holders, including 278 males, 94 female and five children.

Of the 377 ACC card holders, 352 individuals, including 261 male, 86 female and five children were deported back to their home country while 25 persons, including 17 male and eight female were still being held in the camp.

Likewise, as many as 817 illegal Afghans, including 599 male, 132 female and 286 children were shifted to the Afghan refugees holding camp near Golra Mor. Of the 817 individuals, 782 illegal Afghans, including 575 male, 128 female

and 279 children were deported, while 19 illegal immigrants were being kept in the camp.

In the light of security situation, the Rawalpindi district police on Wednesday chalked out a comprehensive security plan to strengthen security around the Afghan refugees holding centre near Golra Mor with deployment of more than 40 police personnel, led by SP Poshar Division to avert any untoward incident.

The police personnel will be deployed in three shifts as the special branch staff will conduct sweeping, searching and scanning with sniffer dogs and will get clearance certification from the Special Branch.

All the people entering inside the camp would be subjected to search.

As part of the security, the mobile phones of all Afghan nationals brought to the camp will be given to the mobile collection desk and would only be returned when they will be repatriated or released after verification.

Shift in-charge inspector will ensure that no one would be keeping a mobile phone with him during detention.

The Deputy Commissioner office will be responsible for making arrangements of erecting barbed wire and installation of CCTV cameras. They will also ensure the presence of ambulances and water tankers.

Extremist influence shapes India's posture: Gen Hayat

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee retired Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat on Wednesday cautioned that the extremist influence on India's strategic posture could destabilise the region.

Speaking at the conference on 'Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Emerging Technologies', hosted by the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Gen Hayat described India as "the only nuclear-armed state governed by an extremist ideology".

He noted the ideological alignment of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with Hindutva ideology, saying the government actively promotes Hindu nationalism.

"Yet, the world chooses silence. Why? Because India is a large country, and the West's focus is fixed on containing China," Gen Hayat said, adding that "these are the double standards, and they are dangerous for global peace and stability".

He also criticised India's official use of the name "Bharat" on international platforms, calling it a signal of a deeper ideological transition from a secular democracy to a "Hindu Hindutva".

"India is no longer 'India'. It is now 'Bharat', and this is not just a name change — it is a signal," he said.

Gen Hayat warned that India now possessed the world's fastest-growing nuclear arsenal and had remained the largest arms importer for over a decade. He highlighted India's expanding missile development programme, calling it a reflection of growing military ambitions.

India's strategic behaviour is unfolding across three dangerous dimensions: ideological extremism, technological militarisation, and political assertiveness, he said.

"With the fastest-growing nuclear programme, long-range missile development, and a decade as the top arms importer, this trajectory is destabilising South Asia," he added.

Gen Hayat also addressed the challenges posed by "multi-domain deterrence" — a strategic concept that integrates capabilities across land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. Previously absent from traditional deterrence frameworks, multi-domain deterrence introduces a more complex and layered challenge to the global security architecture.

The two-day conference drew experts from Australia, Canada, China, Russia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States to discuss the military implications of emerging technologies.

Man shot, injured as muggers loot two shops, three individuals

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Muggers looted two shops and three individuals, and also shot and injured a stallholder during the festival in the federal capital, police said.

In the first incident, four armed individuals raided a bakery in a bazaar in Sarai-e-Kharboosa at around 12:10am.

They held Abdullah and Waqar Ahmed at gunpoint and looted Rs20,000 in cash and two mobile phones before fleeing the scene, police reported.

The same gangsters then intercepted a citizen, Ashraf Shadman, on the road, held him at gunpoint, and looted Rs27,000 from him. Shortly afterwards, they intercepted another man, Raza Ali, and stole his mobile phone.

The police further said the gang stopped another individual, Shokat Ullah, while he was on his way home. When he resisted, one of the gangsters shot him.

He collapsed on the road, while the suspects escaped with stolen items.

Meanwhile, another bakery in Daska Ahsan was raided by the gang. They held the shopkeeper, Mohammad Iqbal, at gunpoint and looted Rs25,000 in cash and two mobile phones before fleeing.

Speaking to Dawn, Abdullah, the baker at the Sarai-e-Kharboosa bazaar, said six armed men on two motorcycles stormed his bakery located adjacent to the bazaar.

He added the suspects also looted two more people at different spots on their way toward the bazaar.

A police officer told Dawn that the five incidents were carried out by the same gang.

The officer added that an eyewitness had alerted the police at around 12:31 am, reporting that armed robbers were looting shops in Daska Ahsan and Sarai-e-Kharboosa and that there had also been gunfire.

CDA, Controller General of Accounts sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance transparency, accountability, digitisation and costless system of CDA's financial management.

According to a press release, the MoU was signed during a ceremony held at the CDA headquarters.

"The objective of the MoU is to implement a comprehensive asset management system in CDA through Standard Accounting Procedure (SAP) — an internationally recognised Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform.

Under the MoU, systems, applications and products in data processing (SAP) will be utilised to streamline various functions, including budgeting, accounting, payroll, running, procurement, inventory and fixed asset tracking.

This system will facilitate real-time data processing, centralised reporting and stronger internal financial controls," read the press release.

CDA Chairman Mohammad Ali Razaibari stated that signing the MoU with the CGA was part of CDA's broader vision to strengthen, modernise and stabilise the authority's financial system through advanced digital technology.

"This will not only improve CDA's performance but also enhance public service delivery," he was quoted as the press release as saying. — Staff Reporter

... ہم ذمہ دار والدین ہیں۔۔۔

اپنے بچوں کا مستقبل محفوظ بنانے کے لیے ہر مہم میں پولیو کے خطرے ضرور ہلاتے ہیں۔ اور آپ؟

قومی انسداد پولیو مہم 21 تا 27 اپریل 2025

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صرف ایک بار پولیو کے خطرے پلوانا کافی نہیں،
ہر مہم میں خطرے پلوانا ضروری ہے تاکہ بچوں کی
قوت مدافعت مضبوط ہو۔

اپنے بچے کو عمر بھر کی معذوری سے بچائیں۔
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PESHAWAR

HQs of the Court of Justice, Peshawar, Sindh No. 402/2024, Mahmood Iqbal versus, Turkish Airlines, through its Chief Executive Officer filed for 30-04-2025, before the Deputy Registrar, before the Hon. J. Chief Financial Officer, Turkish Airlines, General Manager, Building, Istanbul, Turkey, VESKADY 34145, Istanbul, Turkey. Whereas notice issued to the respondents mentioned above for appearance before the Deputy Registrar but respondents could not be served through normal process, and where as the service of said respondents are not practicable through normal process, they are, therefore, served within the notice for their appearance before the Deputy Registrar on 30-04-2025 at 09:00 a.m. personally or through an authorized counsel or an authorized agent, failing which as per the provisions shall be taken against them. Given under my hand and seal of the Court this 22-04-2025. Deputy Registrar (3004090431)

COURT NOTICE

GHAKHWAL

HQs of the Court of Justice, Ghakhwali, Sindh No. 402/2024, Mahmood Iqbal versus, Turkish Airlines, through its Chief Executive Officer filed for 30-04-2025, before the Deputy Registrar, before the Hon. J. Chief Financial Officer, Turkish Airlines, General Manager, Building, Istanbul, Turkey, VESKADY 34145, Istanbul, Turkey. Whereas notice issued to the respondents mentioned above for appearance before the Deputy Registrar but respondents could not be served through normal process, and where as the service of said respondents are not practicable through normal process, they are, therefore, served within the notice for their appearance before the Deputy Registrar on 30-04-2025 at 09:00 a.m. personally or through an authorized counsel or an authorized agent, failing which as per the provisions shall be taken against them. Given under my hand and seal of the Court this 22-04-2025. Deputy Registrar (3004090431)

GUJARAT KHAN

HQs of the Court of Justice, Gujarat Khan, Sindh No. 402/2024, Mahmood Iqbal versus, Turkish Airlines, through its Chief Executive Officer filed for 30-04-2025, before the Deputy Registrar, before the Hon. J. Chief Financial Officer, Turkish Airlines, General Manager, Building, Istanbul, Turkey, VESKADY 34145, Istanbul, Turkey. Whereas notice issued to the respondents mentioned above for appearance before the Deputy Registrar but respondents could not be served through normal process, and where as the service of said respondents are not practicable through normal process, they are, therefore, served within the notice for their appearance before the Deputy Registrar on 30-04-2025 at 09:00 a.m. personally or through an authorized counsel or an authorized agent, failing which as per the provisions shall be taken against them. Given under my hand and seal of the Court this 22-04-2025. Deputy Registrar (3004090431)

NEWSHERA

HQs of the Court of Justice, Newsheera, Sindh No. 402/2024, Mahmood Iqbal versus, Turkish Airlines, through its Chief Executive Officer filed for 30-04-2025, before the Deputy Registrar, before the Hon. J. Chief Financial Officer, Turkish Airlines, General Manager, Building, Istanbul, Turkey, VESKADY 34145, Istanbul, Turkey. Whereas notice issued to the respondents mentioned above for appearance before the Deputy Registrar but respondents could not be served through normal process, and where as the service of said respondents are not practicable through normal process, they are, therefore, served within the notice for their appearance before the Deputy Registrar on 30-04-2025 at 09:00 a.m. personally or through an authorized counsel or an authorized agent, failing which as per the provisions shall be taken against them. Given under my hand and seal of the Court this 22-04-2025. Deputy Registrar (3004090431)

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ISLAMABAD

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the complete newspaper

Court examines multi-billion land dispute between CDA, private firm

Firm defaulted on payment of Rs17bn for land meant for five-star hotel

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) is examining a multi-billion rupee land dispute between the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and a private firm, focusing on the firm's alleged default of Rs17 billion.

The private firm M/s BNP Private Limited has defaulted on a payment of Rs17 billion to the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for a 13.5-acre plot adjacent to the Jinnah Convention Center. This plot was originally allocated for the construction of a five-star hotel, Grand Hyatt.

The firm on the other hand constructed luxury flats "One Constitution Avenue" and sold out to different buyers including prominent politicians like former prime minister Imran Khan, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and former ambassador for protection against harassment of Women at the Workplace, Kashmala Tariq.

One Constitution Avenue has been raised in controversy since its inception. The 13.5-acre plot was auctioned in 2005 for Rs4.8 billion, and handed over to BNP (Pvt) Ltd. after an initial payment of only Rs800 million.

By 2016-17, a mere Rs1.02 billion of the remaining amount had been paid. Consequently, the CDA cancelled the lease in 2016—a decision upheld by the then IHC Justice Arshad Minallah, who also called on the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to investigate.

However, the project was deemed in 2021, following a ruling by the then Chief Justice of Pakistan, Sagheer Nisar.

As per the 2019 Supreme Court verdict, BNP was required to pay Rs17.5 billion in eight years. After paying only one instalment, the developer defaulted on the pay-

ment of remaining amount.

Amid this, the CDA passed the increased cost burden onto flat allottees, prompting them to approach the IHC. The civil body recently submitted in the court that these allottees had no legal right to independently challenge the authority's decision.

The CDA cancelled the lease again upon default, which led the private firm to move the IHC again.

IHC's Justice Khalid Mehmood Sarfaraz Dogar resumed hearing of the petition on Wednesday.

At the outset, CDA's counsel Kashif Ali Malik argued that the SC directed the builder to pay Rs17.5bn in 2019 but they did not comply with the apex court's direction.

He said that the devaluation of rupee against dollar estimated the value of defaulted amount to over Rs50bn.

Malik argued that the case of the petitioner firm was not maintainable and stressed that the developers had failed to meet the financial conditions tied to a 2019 Supreme Court ruling, which restored the lease on the condition of Rs17.5 billion to be paid in instalments.

He stated that only one instalment had been made in six years, leading to the lease's cancellation in 2023.

In contrast, the petitioner's lawyer claimed that the CDA had not issued a proper payment schedule, and therefore, the blame for the default could not rest solely on the developer or the flat buyers.

Justice Dogar remarked that the case involved factual controversies and hinted at referring the matter back to the CDA for resolution.

As the counsel of the petitioner insisted for settlement of the dispute through mediation, Advocate Malik argued that the matter did not require such settlement as the allottee was required to pay the defaulted amount without any delay.

The judge then asked referring the matter to CDA, Malik replied that he was required to seek instructions from the competent authority.

The court adjourned the hearing until April 29.

Six artists showcase rich Kalash cultural heritage

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and Nomad Gallery on Wednesday announced their collaborative exhibition and documentary screening, "Rekindling: The Kalash Narrative," celebrating the cultural heritage of one of Pakistan's most distinctive indigenous communities.

The cultural event emerged from a unique three-part residency conducted by curator Nageen Hyat, focusing on the rich traditions and contemporary challenges of the Kalash people of Chitral.

The exhibition showcased powerful works by six accomplished artists who have interpreted various aspects of Kalash life, heritage, and landscape through different media and perspectives.

The art exhibition was inaugurated by Senator Sherry Rehman.

Addressing on the occasion she said "I am honored to inaugurate 'Rekindling: The Kalash Narrative,' an exhibition that represents the vital work of cultural preservation and indigenous storytelling."

Organisers of the exhibition in a press release said the Kalash community was a living treasure of Pakistan's diverse heritage, and initiatives, which need to be documented and celebrated.

It said Nageen Hyat and Nomad Gallery had long championed Pakistan's cultural narratives, and this collaboration

with PNCA highlighted the importance of institutional support for such endeavours.

As we face increasing environmental and social challenges across our northern regions, artistic documentation becomes not just aesthetically valuable but historically essential.

The event featured two main components: Documentary Screening: "Rediscovering Greater Chitral", produced by Nageen Hyat for PTV Global, provided intimate insights into the Kalash community, their traditions, and the changing dynamics of their cultural landscape.

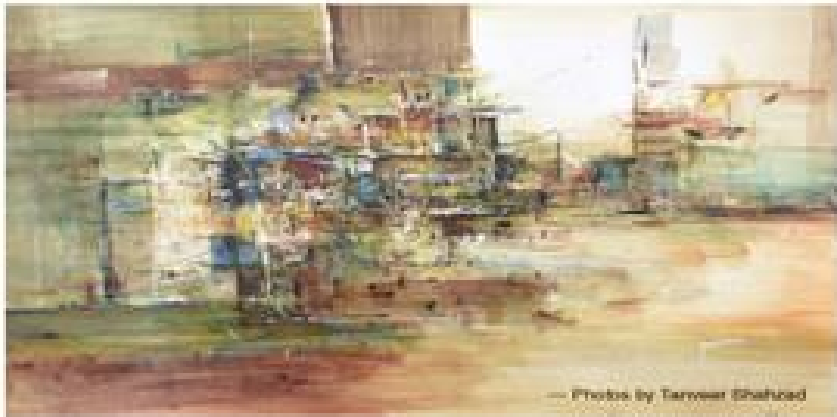
The exhibition featured works by renowned artists, including Akram Dor Balooh, a senior artist from Balochistan, presenting powerful images reflecting social struggles and resilience.

MA Rishi presented portrait and impressionistic art, and celebrated cultural themes.

Ahmed Habib who was artist and writer focused on the transformative potential of education for Kalash women. Riffat Khattak, a watercolorist captured the vibrant landscape and traditions of the Kalash Valley.

Samreen Asif, who was a contemporary miniature artist, explored Kalash women's narratives and cultural heritage. Ejaz Khan, who was an artist-engineer showcased stone carvings inspired by Kalash deities and architecture.

The exhibition was particularly meaningful as Nomad Gallery celebrated over 40 years of promoting contemporary art, film, and crafts development for the economic



— Photos by Tawseer Shahzad



empowerment of women and communities across Pakistan.



of the Kalash Valley, its beauty, and introduce its significance to a wider audience," explains Nageen Hyat, founder of



Nomad Gallery and curator of the exhibition. The exhibition will remain open for public until April 30.

Women, child protection centres to be set up in five districts

By Our Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Police have been directed to immediately establish women and child protection centres at every police station in Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum and Chakwal districts.

A police spokesman said on Wednesday that the move aims to ensure a safe and supportive environment for women and child victims.

Dedicated female police officers will handle matters related to vulnerable victims, he said.

As per the directives issued by Rawalpindi Regional Police Officer Babar Sarfaraz Alga, affected women and children will be provided with facilities for case registration, legal guidance and counselling in family disputes.

Babar Sarfaraz Alga said that the purpose of establishing women and child protection centres was to provide affected women and children with case registration facilities, legal guidance, and counselling in family disputes.

At these centres, women and children will be provided with a safe and dignified environment in police stations.

A female police officer will be deployed at the centres established at the police station level and will investigate only cases related to women and children.

The regional police officer further said that the women and child protection centres will also serve as platforms for alternative dispute resolution, where issues will be resolved peacefully through reconciliation between the parties.

These centres will work under the direct supervision of the subdivisional police officers (SDPOs) concerned, while responsibility for day-to-day performance will lie with the female officers posted at the centres.

IRM, Iqra varsity organise seminar on Earth Day

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Rural Management (IRM), in collaboration with Iqra University, hosted a seminar titled "Powering Earth: Unleashing Pakistan's Green Potential" to commemorate Earth Day 2025.

The event held on Tuesday brought together a diverse group of government officials, climate professionals, academicians, students, and concerned citizens to discuss the opportunities and challenges posed by climate change, as well as the urgent need for sustainable solutions in Pakistan.

The session was moderated by Dr Anjum Rashid, head of the regional climate resilience programme at the Institute of Regional Studies.

In his keynote address, CEO of the Institute of Rural Management Dr Roomei S. Hayat said while countries most affected by climate change contribute the least to its causes, "it is up to us to take the lead and act now".

Dr Shabaz Khan concluded by emphasising regional disparities.

He said climate change is not affecting everyone equally and that money matters, despite being among the least contributors to emissions, are among the hardest hit. — AFP

Transgender person dies of electrocution in Taxila

By Our Correspondent

TAXILA: Two persons were killed in different incidents in the jurisdiction of Taxila and Haveli police stations on Wednesday, police sources said.

In the first incident, a transgender person died of electrocution in the limits of Taxila police station.

According to police sources, Ahsan alias Kiran was standing at a bus terminal when he accidentally stepped on the live wire and suffered a fatal electric shock, and died on the spot. His body was shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for autopsy.

Separately, a man garroted down his neighbour over a family dispute in Mullah Kalan village in the limits of Haveli police station.

Police sources said the man married the daughter of his uncle and moved to Swabi, however, the relationship between the couple became strained, after which the girl returned to her parents' home.

On Wednesday, when the man came to his in-laws' home to take his wife back, his uncle, a hotel owner, after a heated exchange, took out his pistol and shot him dead and fled away.

Respective police stations registered cases and launched further investigations.

Mouradullo, Parighat police on Wednesday arrested a suspect who allegedly murdered an eight-year-old boy.

The suspect took the boy who was returning from school and molested him. When he returned home, he revealed his ordeal to his family, who took him to the police station.

Medical examination of the boy was conducted which confirmed the assault. Police have registered a case against the suspect and sent him behind bars.

PM's aide interacts with influencers, outlines youth-focused initiatives

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan has said the incumbent government is committed to empowering the younger generation through meaningful initiatives.

The prime minister's aide described some of the key initiatives, including the National Volunteer Corps, aimed at unlocking the immense untapped potential of Pakistan's youth.

He said digital youth hubs was launched last month, and so far, as many as 1,022,424 young individuals had downloaded the Prime Minister's

Youth Programme application.

After youth engagement, education will be the next major priority area, Rana Mashhood told a meeting of youth influencers at the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesday. Key initiatives discussed during the meeting included youth houses, establishing ideas and incubation centres, development of exports and Pakistan's strategic planning for participation in the 2028 Olympics.

Influencers were encouraged to use their platforms responsibly and deliver the message of hope and positivity among the youth, he advised.

The meeting created an atmosphere of openness and transparency, emphasising collective

responsibility and welcoming constructive criticism.

The meeting brought together around 20 youth influencers from various cities across Pakistan, alongside members of the PMYP team. Adding an international dimension to the gathering, a Nigerian influencer also participated, offering a valuable global perspective.

The session was highly productive, focusing on youth empowerment and engagement initiatives.

The influencers shared valuable feedback and urged the government to promote a softer and more positive image of Pakistan both locally and globally through

GOVERNMENT OF GILGIT BALTISTAN
INDUSTRIES, LABOUR & COMMERCE DEPARTMENT
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
Development of Minawar Industrial Zone (MIZ) Gilgit

The Government of Gilgit Baltistan has approved the Public Private Partnership Act 2019 with the purpose to provide investment opportunities to private sector in the financing, construction, development of infrastructure / development projects or other related services.

In order to boost the economic activities in the region the GB Government (Industries, Labour & Commerce Department) intends to hire the services of reputed, experienced (individual / JV) National and International Firms for development of Minawar Industrial Zone (MIZ) Gilgit for which Expression of Interest (EOI) are invited under GB Public Procurement Rules 2024.

Interested firms/companies are required to submit the following requisite information as part of their EOI.

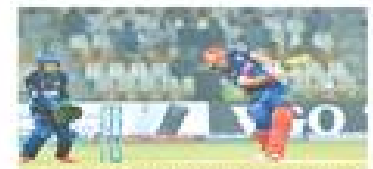
- Registration requirements.**
 - Valid Registration with SECP (Please attach proof)
 - Valid Registration with FBR (Please attach NTN certificate)
- List of Required Documents to be submitted with the application, Eligibility Requirement/ Checklist and basic TOR (Scope of work) can be downloaded from <https://gilgit.gov.pk/> / <https://www.gpps.org.pk/> and www.gilgit.gov.pk or obtained from the office of Director Industries, Labor and Commerce GB from date of publication of this notice till 18th May, 2025. At a cost of 5000/- (copy of feasibility study of the project can be obtained from the same office).
- All the applicable Federal, Provincial & Local taxes must be considered while preparing the financial proposals.
- The financial statements should be provided to demonstrate that the firm has financial capacity to execute minimum 5-00 Million investments in the project.
- 100% of the project financing would be arranged by interested private party.
- The Government of Gilgit Baltistan will not provide any sovereign guarantee for the Project.
- No pending litigation certificate must be provided by the firm.
- Dead line of Submissions:** The EOI applications along with following documents must reach in the office of Director Industries, Labor and Commerce near Globe Chowk KRU Gilgit before 04:00 PM 22nd May, 2025. The same shall be opened publicly on 28th May at 12:30 PM.
- The Procuring Agency has reserved the right to cancel this EOI in its entirety or partially without defraying any cost incurred by the firm.
- The procuring agency doesn't bind itself to accept any EOI and Late EOI will not also be considered under any circumstances.
- Interested firms should address their inquiries and submit their complete proposals on the above mentioned address.
- It must be noted that firms / companies meeting all criteria/conditions will only be shortlisted for consideration.

Deputy Secretary
Tel No.09811-927628 Fax 09811-927628

EOI/GB/2025/25

LAHORE

Sunset 06:39 pm
 Sunrise (Tomorrow) 05:32 am
NEXT 24 HRS
 Minimum 23.5°C
 Maximum 41.8°C
 Outlook Mainly Sunny
AQI
 Maximum (Yesterday) 159

METRO
Central

United juggernaut rolls on with thumping win over Sultans

Pg.18 SPORT



NEW Amarkali shopkeepers have installed uniform shutters and storefront signs under a government direction meant to check encroachments permanently. — White Star

LHC again places heritage sites under control of archaeology dept

Law officer told to forward court order to CS for action against WCLA DG for holding private events at monuments

By Waqar Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Wednesday ordered the Punjab archaeology department to take over administrative control of Lahore Fort and other heritage sites which were earlier transferred to the Walled City Authority of Lahore (WCLA).

Justice Shahid Karim was hearing a petition challenging the handover of the heritage sites, including Lahore Fort, Shalamar Gardens and Jahangir's tomb, to the WCLA by the provincial government.

At the outset of the hearing, a written reply was filed on behalf of WCLA,

Director General Kamran Lashari, in which he admitted holding of private functions at the heritage sites despite restraining orders passed by the court.

An apology on behalf of the WCLA DG was also tendered, which the judge rejected for the time being and immediately nominated the director general of the archaeology department.

Justice Karim resumed the hearing at 1pm when archaeology DG Zahir Abbas Malik appeared before the court. He stated that the conditional transfer of the management of Lahore Fort, Shalamar Bagh and Shahi Hamam was made to the WCLA following a notification issued on Oct 20, 2014.

He said, as per the condition, the ownership of the Fort and Shalamar Bagh was to remain with the directorate general of archaeology, however, the WCLA was vested with the management and control of the monuments for all practical purposes.

The DG also presented a 2023 notification, which required the archaeology

department to withdraw all officials' staff posted at fort, Shalamar Gardens and Qutubshahi Alishah's tomb in Amarkali.

He said complete administrative control of the sites was also transferred from the archaeology department to the WCLA.

However, Justice Karim observed that it did not mean at all that the overall authority over the Lahore Fort was conceded by the directorate general of archaeology, Punjab, which inherently vests in the department of archaeology according to the primary law.

"The transfer of administrative control does not mean that everything has come to rest in WCLA," the judge maintained.

The judge observed that the admission made by the WCLA DG about holding private functions in the monuments in violation of the court's orders cannot be tolerated.

The judge suspended the impugned notification of 2014 and 2023, which transferred the control of the heritage

sites to the WCLA.

Justice Karim directed the archaeology DG to take over administrative control of Lahore Fort and other sites till the next hearing.

The judge instructed a Punjab government's law officer to forward the order to the chief secretary, who shall initiate action against WCLA DG Lashari and other officers, and inform the court regarding appropriate action at the next hearing.

"This action might include revocation of appointment of those officers as they have fallen in breach of the public trust reposed in them," Justice Karim observed in his order.

The judge further directed the law officer to assist the court regarding action under the law that may be applicable to the violations committed by the WCLA.

The judge would resume further hearing on Thursday (today) at 1pm.

Rana Brian Ali, an employee of the archaeology department, filed the petition.

'Sindh Katcha area specialist' to combat gangs

By Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: The Punjab government has appointed a grade-19 police officer of Sindh in one of the 'troubled' districts of south Punjab — Rahim Yar Khan — to combat the hardened criminals.

There were reports that Irfan Somro had served the Kathore-Kandhok as SSP, a district plagued by violent crimes.

He was given a chance to lead the district police recognising his deep understanding of intelligence-led policy against the notorious gangs operating in the Katcha belt of upper Sindh, particularly in Kandhore.

The Sindh officer was recommended by a senior police officer serving against a key position in Punjab as 'the best choice' to hit the criminals of the Katcha areas of Rahim Yar Khan keeping in view his past experience.

On Tuesday, Mr Somro replaced Rahim Yar Khan District Police Officer (DPO) Riazwan Omer Gondal who was given the chance twice to lead the district police keeping in view the ability to fight hardened criminals.

As per the reports, the Punjab go-

vernment has changed many times the command of the district police to fight against the Katcha area criminals.

It has provided long-range weapons, bullet-proof vehicles and other logistic support to the Rahim Yar Khan police to eliminate the criminals.

During the police operation in 2024, reportedly, over 70 criminals were allegedly killed while 19 police officers were martyred in Rahim Yar Khan.

An official privy to the development said the government abandoned the past practice of making appointments of the police officers serving in Punjab.

In a recent meeting, he said, it took a final decision to launch the first Sindh police officer as head of the Rahim Yar Khan police force.

Mr Somro was among 10 officers who were transferred and posted as DPOs and against other positions across Punjab.

The official said the appointment of the police officer from Sindh came under discussion in many references when it transpired that additional IG of recently raised Crime Control

Continued on Page 14

Case against Wasa contractor over death of three labourers

By Imran Gabol & Shafiq Butt

LAHORE/RAHWAL:

Three labourers lost their lives, and one remains critically injured after a devastat-

ing chemical fire erupted while they were working on a 30-foot-deep

sewerage pipeline on Khayaban-e-Firdausi Road

near Shaheed Khawam Hospital on April 16.

The victims, employed by Reckon Paines Company, a contractor for the Water and Sanitation Authority (Wasa), suffered severe third-degree

burns in the incident.

The labourers were laying a sewerage pipe line from Shaheed Khawam Hospital to Shog Chowk.

The government estimated Rs1.9 billion project for the sewerage and 24 inches' sewerage pipe is being laid under 4.15km long road. The project is scheduled to be completed in 10 months' period.

The deceased were identified as Wasim Akhraf (22), Muhammad Akid (20) and Muhammad Farhan, residents of Yousafwala, district Rahwal.

According to hospital records, two labourers passed away on April 18 night, while the third died on April 20. Arif remains in a critical condition at Jinnah Hospital's Burn Unit.

The elder brother of deceased Farhan, Imran Ghaffar, filed a complaint

and a case under Section 322 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) (Qatal-e-Kay Sahab) was registered against the contractor at Narah Town Police Station.

The complainant alleged that the company flouted the labourers underground without protective gear or proper precautions.

"They were welding a pipeline joint using hazardous chemicals without any safety protocols," Ghaffar stated.

"This negligence cost my brother his life."

Contractor Maseeh dis-

puted the allegations, claiming that the explosion occurred due to a labourer's negligence.

"Farhan lit a cigarette

Continued on Page 14

Fire destroys wheat crop over 85 acres

Dawn Report

NAROWAL: Wheat fields on 85 acres across Narowal, Kasur and Gujranwala were ravaged by a series of fire incidents causing losses worth millions to farmers.

Farmers blamed faulty machinery, high-voltage electric wires and negligence by authorities for the fires.

In Narowal, fire incidents destroyed wheat crop on 56 acres at nine different locations in two days leaving an estimated financial loss of Rs7.56 million.

According to Revenue 1122, the control room received nine emergency calls,

including three from Shakargarh tehsil.

In Shakargarh, two acres each were burned in villages Dargah Riba turning point and Sahara. In Narowal, fires destroyed wheat on four acres in Chas Goriya, three acres in Quasqam, eight acres in Nowadry, nine acres in Dhoon, 12 acres in Manik and four acres in Sangarpar.

Officials said that four fires were caused by short circuits and six due to carelessness involving smoking. Farmers Muhammad Akid and Shafiq Jatt said such incidents had occurred last year as well due to electric wires hanging over fields. Farmers demanded that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz compensate

them for their losses.

KASUR: A fire caused by sparks from high-voltage 11kV electric wires gutted six acres of ripe wheat crop in village Badha Jevan in Chaudhri police jurisdiction.

Farmer Muhammad Ishraq's entire harvest was destroyed despite villagers' efforts to douse the flames. Villagers accused Lashari of negligence, saying they had lodged repeated complaints about the hanging wires but no action was taken.

The affected farmer demanded compensation for the loss.

GUJRANWALA: In Gujranwala's suburban areas of Zafarabad and Garmala Warskan, wheat and fodder crops on

around 23 acres were burnt. In Zafarabad, seven acres of Deen Muhammad, six acres of Shafiq Ali, seven acres of Iqbal Chaudhry and 1.25 acres of Yousaf Turkhan were destroyed.

In Garmala Warskan, two acres of wheat and six acres of fodder cultivated by Muhammad Nabeel were reduced to ashes.

Reports suggest that sparks from a chopper machine's wiring started the fire. Authorities have urged farmers to ensure safety measures during harvesting and regularly maintain their equipment.

The agriculture department is assessing the losses and has indicated that compensation may be considered.

Continued on Page 14

Two militants killed, several injured by LEAs

By Our Correspondent

DEBRA GHRAZI KHAN: Police, Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and Rangers personnel killed two militants and left several others injured in a joint operation in the Punjab-KP border area, in which two policemen also suffered minor injuries.

According to police, the personnel of DG Khan police, CTD and Rangers had an encounter with militants in Kotani Tal area in the vicinity of Wahawa police station.

They say the militants, armed with rockets, hand grenades, and heavy weaponry, opened fire on the security forces. During the intense exchange of fire, two militants were killed, while several others sustained injuries, they added.

They say that despite the heavy firing by the militants, the police teams responded with full force, forcing the militants to flee towards nearby hills for cover.

During the encounter, an elite force official, Ahsan Habib and a CTD personnel, Ghazanfer, sustained minor injuries and are said to be in stable condition now.

A Punjab police spokesperson confirmed the encounter, stating that a search operation is going on in the area to apprehend the fleeing militants.

E-warehouse set-up for wheat farmers approved

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Punjab cabinet on Wednesday approved implementation of the Electronic Warehouse Asset System (EWAS) to facilitate the farmers to store their wheat. The government will bear the storage costs.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz presided over the 26th provincial cabinet meeting.

The meeting approved an amendment to the Food Grains (Licensing Control) Ordinance, 1967, to ensure 25 per cent wheat procurement for flour mills, under which the licences of flour mills which do not purchase 25pc mandatory wheat can be cancelled.

Deregulation of the wheat sector was approved to protect the rights of farmers. It also approved Pakistan's largest ration card for 1.5m workers and labourers. A sum of Rs30,000 per month through ration cards will be provided to them. Additional funds were approved for payment of dues for the purchase of medicines and drugs. Approval of funds was granted for the purchase of furniture and equipment for tertiary care hospitals in Punjab.

The cabinet approved the proposed amendments to the Punjab Consumer Protection Act 2005, under which additional sessions judges will be delegated the powers of consumer courts.

Mashhood's plea against his defeat dismissed

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: An election tribunal comprising a judge of the Lahore High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition of former provincial minister Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan against the victory of PTI-backed independent MNA, Mubashir Waheed from PP-172, Lahore.

Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmed, the tribunal member, announced the verdict on the petition, which also challenged a decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of not conducting a vote recount in the constituency.

The tribunal had earlier reserved its decision on the maintainability of the petition.

Mr Waheed's lawyer objected to the maintainability of the petition, arguing that such matters should be taken up with the Supreme Court rather than the Lahore High Court if the dispute involves a vote recount.

A counsel for Rana Mashhood, an adviser to the prime minister, had argued that the returning officer and the ECP as well refused to hold a vote recount and announced the final result of the 2024 general election held in the constituency. He asked the tribunal to set aside the impugned orders of the respondents and order the recounting of the votes.

The tribunal, however, declared the petition of Rana Mashhood non-maintainable and dismissed it.

Mr Waheed won the seat by securing 31,379 votes while Khan obtained 28,647 votes.

Four lawyers booked for ‘torture’ of ASI

By Our Correspondent

RAHAWAL: Nusr Shah police registered a case against four lawyers and an unidentified man for allegedly kidnapping an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) near Quah Shashin Bridge at Rana Toll Plaza on Tuesday night.

Reports said ASI Muhammad Iqbal along with Constable Muhammad Amin and a driver from Nusr Shah police station, stopped former Muhammad Adam advocate for papers verification.

Instead of providing the registration documents, Adam allegedly used harsh and abusive language.

While the initial tension was diffused by passers-by and other cops, reports suggest that Adam later called his fellow lawyers Musamil, Zafar Iqbal, Muhammad Ali, and Zulfikar from nearby villages. The group arrived in a car armed with pistols and guns.

They allegedly assaulted the ASI, tore his uniform, forcibly put him into their vehicle and took him to a nearby location. There, they continued to threaten him with firearms.

Meanwhile, the constable used a 15 emergency call to inform the

police. Upon the arrival of police vehicles, the lawyers fled the scene in their car.

Nusr Shah police registered a case under sections 353, 386, 365, 395, 348, 149 of Pakistan Penal Code and Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, based on a complaint filed by Constable Muhammad Amin.

The Wednesday, it was learnt that the police did not allow the suspects to get pre-arrest bail from local magistrate. No arrest has been made.

IMPRISONMENT: Anti-Terrorism Court Special Judge Ziauddin Khan on Wednesday handed down 31-year rigorous imprisonment to two members of a banned mafia.

The convicts identified as Asif Bhattar and Shamsuddin were apprehended by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Oct 21, 2024, during a sting operation.

At the time of their arrest, the CTD recovered explosives, dry batteries, electronic devices, circuits and detonators from their possession.

The two were subsequently booked under Sections 4 and 5 of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908, and Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, following a complaint by Inspector CTD, Sahiwal.

Sharp rise in suicide bids thru’ wheat pills calls for regulation

By Our Correspondent

DERA GHAZI KHAN: The intensive care unit at the Allama Iqbal Teaching Hospital has witnessed a sharp rise in cases of suicide attempts through consumption of wheat pills, with doctors calling for an immediate ban on strict regulation on the sale of these toxic preparations.

As per hospital records, 215 patients were admitted last year (2024) after ingesting these toxic substances, resulting in 55 fatalities.

In the current year alone, 81 cases have already been reported, with a mortality rate of 45 per cent.

Medical experts attrib-

ute this alarming trend to the easy accessibility of the pills, which are commonly used as pesticides and preservatives.

Doctors are urging immediate government intervention.

“When preserving pills are proving deadly, and their unrestricted sale must be stopped,” said Dr. Faraz Hussain Khosa of the ICU.

“The government should intervene before more lives are lost.”

In response to the crisis, the deputy commissioner acknowledged the gravity of the situation and assured that the matter would be referred to the food department and other relevant authorities for immediate action.

Anti-encroachment operation to continue

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Punjab government has instructed the divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners to continue the province-wide anti-encroachment operation, ensuring encroachments are removed permanently.

Presiding over a meeting of the divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners via video-link from the civil secretariat on Wednesday, Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman conducted a detailed review of ongoing anti-encroachment efforts and price control initiatives.

He stressed that the encroachments be removed permanently

and the affected areas be restored.

He also instructed the departments concerned to expedite rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts to deliver immediate relief to the public.

The chief secretary also directed the deputy commissioners to initiate price control measures and enforce strict monitoring of essential commodity prices.

He said overpricing of food and essential items would not be tolerated and strict legal action be taken against profiteers and hoarders.

The administrative secretaries of the agriculture and price control departments and other senior officials attended the meeting at the Civil Secretariat.

By-election schedule announced for PP-52

By Our Correspondent

SARDWAL: Additional Deputy Commissioner of Revenue Muhammad Iqbal, acting as returning officer, has issued the by-election schedule for Punjab Assembly constituency PP-52 (Sahiwal), which fell vacant after the death of MPA Chaudhary Arshad Waraich.

Nomination papers

will be received from April 23 to 25; the candidate list will be displayed on April 26; scrutiny and appeal hearings will conclude by May 10; and the final list will be issued on May 11, with May 12 as the last date for withdrawal.

Election symbols will be allotted on May 13 and polling will be held on June 1.

Restoration of Uch Sharif tombs goes on

By Majeed Gill

RAHAWALPUR: The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) has embarked on an ambitious conservation and restoration plan for 10 tomb/shrines of Uch Sharif at a cost of over Rs653 million.

Dawn learnt that initially the restoration work has been initiated with the released funds of Rs120m out of total allocation and it may take about a year to complete the whole plan.

The 10 historical shrines and mosques to be restored and preserved include tombs of Hazrat Jafaruddin Saadkpoth Bukhari, Ustad Nooria, Hazrat Bahauddin, Bibi Javindi, Hazrat Badruddeen Nagori, Makhdum Jahangiyar Jahangir, Hazrat Farahuddin Laila, Rajan Qattal and Khwando Subhani besides Masjid-e-Hajjat.

The tombs of Bibi Javindi and some others are presently in a dilapidated condition as during previous years as they were affected by floods and needed immediate restoration and preservation.

Rahawalpur Commissioner Musarrat Jabson, who inspected the work during her Uch Sharif visit the other day, was told in a briefing that the conservation and upgrade project of 10 shrines and their attached mosques was aimed at enhancing the historical and cultural significance of Uch Sharif. The project is aimed at promoting religious tourism with a view to create pleasant environment for tourists, visitors and locals



RAHAWALPUR: Hazrat Mahboob Subhani shrine. — Dawn

and it would include improving infrastructure with a view to upgrade the pilgrim trail to the important shrines.

The commissioner told Dawn that in order to patronise the local craftsmanship, the government had decided to set up a craft bazaar at Uch Sharif.

“This would also help to keep the local dying crafts to flourish in the coming years for the coming generations,”

According to Ms Jabson,

beautiful gates for entrance to Uch Sharif city and exit from it would be constructed while the mosques attached with the shrines would also be improved with the addition of the construction of washrooms, ablution areas, drinking water facilities, resting areas and parking for the devotees.

Besides, flooring work of the streets along with the improvement of underground sewerage system would also be carried

out, she said and added that the executing department had been directed to strictly maintain the standard and quality of the work.

The commissioner said that with the completion of preservation work of the historic shrines, the tourism potential and scope would increase and foreign tourists would have frequent visits to the Uch Sharif.

It may be mentioned that Uch

Sharif, one of the oldest towns in Punjab, Pakistan, located in Bahawalpur Division, is well-known for its stunning tombs and historical structures that are decorated with blue mosaic and other adornments.

The town flourished under Alexander's rule and since then, numerous dynasties, including the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals and the Chattris, have left their marks on its landscape.

Bodies of two brothers recovered from river Jhelum

By Our Correspondent

SARGODHA: The bodies of two young brothers who drowned in the Jhelum River have been recovered and handed over to their heirs.

According to sources, 20-year-old Muhammad Ghani and 17-year-old Muhammad Faizan drowned while bathing in the river during a break from wheat harvesting near the Kallar Sharif shrine in the Rajpur area of Jhelum town.

Rescue 1122 teams, after a strenuous search operation, spotted the bodies.

BUMPER DEATH: A woman was killed and her three children were seriously injured after she fell off a motorcycle and was crushed by a speeding dumper.

According to sources, Fatima Bibi, 40, of Mangri village, was riding a motorcycle as pillion with her son and children from Dal Lakhan to Jalla Makhdum Road near Canal Jhal on the Sargodha-Lahore Road.

Their motorcycle collided with

another motorbike, causing her to fall.

She was run over by a dumper and died on the spot.

Her 20-year-old son Danyan, 10-year-old daughter Aasma Bibi and 14-year-old son Iqbal were seriously injured and shifted to THQ hospital.

Police handed over the body to her family and are investigating the incident.

THEFT CASE: Police have registered a unique theft case involving items worth only Rs200.

According to the FIR registered at Peshawar police, soap and shampoo worth Rs500 were stolen from the house of Nazim Bibi in the Dhori area of Peshawar town on Sargodha-Gujrat Road.

The complaint was filed by Sub-Inspector Syed Fata Hussain Sherafi and the case registered under Section 379 of the PPC.

Locals criticised the police's selective move, saying that police often ignore major thefts involving lakhs of rupees but appeared unusually quick in pursuing a case involving everyday household

goods.

DIALYSIS MACHINES: A US citizen has donated five dialysis machines to the DHQ Teaching Hospital in Sargodha to help improve medical services for kidney patients.

At a ceremony held at the hospital, the machines were formally handed over to Medical Superintendent Dr. Musarrat Roshni Aini, Principal Medical College Prof Dr Waris Farooq and District Centre In Charge Muhammad Tahir Abdul Khaliq.

Sources said that Mr Khaliq had earlier highlighted the urgent need for five dialysis machines due to the pressure on the existing setup. Responding to the appeal, the donor arranged the equipment, saying it would significantly improve care for patients in need of dialysis.

It is worth mentioning that the DHQ Teaching Hospital still lacks a burn unit and a neurosurgeon. Meanwhile, the trauma centre established in Sahiwal has also not been made functional for a long time.



SARGODHA: A football match during a sports gala at the University of Sargodha. — APP

Japan-funded water treatment plant inaugurated

By Our Correspondent

TORA TER SINGH: Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) of Faisalabad and Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) have completed a five-million gallons per day capacity water treatment plant project.

A ceremony was held on Wednesday at Jhal Khomana for the handing over of the project.

Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi along with Wasa officers attended the ceremony.

The Japanese ambassador said Faisalabad is the third largest city of Pakistan, but its current water supply is insufficient for the growing population.

To address this issue, Jica provided technical assistance from 2016 to 2019 and prepared a master plan for water, sewage and drainage up to 2038. This project was included as a priority project

in the master plan.

He added that a grant of more than Rs7 billion was used to upgrade the old Jhal Khomana water treatment plant and improve the water pipeline and transmission system, which tripled the water supply. This has not only improved water facilities but also improved the health and living standards of the citizens. The project will also help achieve SDG Goal 6: “Clean water and sanitation for all.”

He said, “We hope that all the facilities installed with Japan's assistance will be used in a sustainable and effective manner and the people will benefit from the expertise gained from this project.”

Jica representative in Pakistan Naonki Miyota said, “We want this project to provide safe water to many citizens as possible and improve the environment of the residents of Faisalabad.”

He added that through this grant aid project and ongoing technical cooperation, the

Government of Japan and JICA will continue efforts to provide safe water in Pakistan.

He said Pakistan-Japan relations have always been excellent, and Japan has always worked to improve Pakistan's infrastructure and the quality of life of its citizens.

Wasa DMD Engineering Saqla Raza said they are grateful to Japan and Jica for completing this mega and state-of-the-art project, which has started a new era between Pakistan and Japan. He said the old water tanks of the 19th century had been restored using modern technology, enabling clean water to reach citizens at their doorsteps.

He said much was learned from Japanese engineers during the project, and its completion would further improve the water supply system.

Project Director Engineer Ali Ahmed said Jica and Wasa have a relationship of over 20 years, and this project's completion marks a new chapter in their friendship. He said the

project would increase the city's water supply capacity, delivering drinking water to more than 200,000 people.

COP ARRESTED: Gullberg police in Faisalabad on Wednesday arrested Constable Nusrat Masih for threatening his wife, Lady Constable Stephanie Masih, with dire consequences and using abusive language.

Complainant Sub-Inspector Muhammad Iqbal Farooq stated in the FIR registered under Section 506 of the PPC and 155-C of the Police Order, that the suspect had been threatening his wife Stephanie and the threats were made during an investigation into a complaint filed by Stephanie against him.

GANG-RAPE: Two youths allegedly gang-raped a woman in Gojra Chak 361JB on Wednesday.

The alleged rape survivor of Chak 413JB informed Gojra Sadhar police that she was stalked by one of the suspects in his village seeking her help to

find a match for him. He took her to his house where he and his one identified accomplice gang-raped her.

Police were conducting raids to arrest them.

FIRE: Four acres of wheat crop of Khadin Gojra were gutted in Gojra Chak 94JB on Wednesday.

Reports said the cause of the fire could not be ascertained. Rescue 1122 firefighters extinguished the fire after the crop had been gutted.

CLASH: A man was killed and another critically injured when their opponents opened indiscriminate fire on them near Khamsara Adha, Faisalabad, on Wednesday.

The two were returning to their village Chak 85 JB, Dijkot, after appearing in a court case in Faisalabad.

Police said deceased Asif Chaudhary Jai and wounded Rana Chaudhary Abbas were attacked by Umair Bhai Rabi and Muhammad Talha with whom they were involved in a legal dispute.



File photo

Rare Indian grey wolf killed by locals near Derawar Fort

One of the suspects arrested

By Majeed Gill

RAHAWALPUR: Locals allegedly killed a rare Indian grey wolf in the desert of Chadian near Derawar Fort, about 70km from here, the other day.

Rahawalpur division Wildlife Deputy Director Muhammad Usman Bokhari confirmed to Dawn that an Indian grey wolf, a rare species, was spotted by some locals, who allegedly chased and killed the animal near Derawar Fort.

He claimed that one of the alleged killers has been arrested. He was identified as Makhan, son of Khadim, a resident of Aamwala toba (pond) in the limits of Derawar police station in Yamunan tehsil of Bahawalpur district.

He said Makhan was in police custody for further legal action, while search for his fleeing accomplices was on.

He said a case under the Punjab Protected Areas' Act was instituted against the suspects who allegedly

killed the rare animal.

According to some local wildlife experts, Indian grey wolf is an endangered species facing extinction threat. It is rarely found in the dry and semi-desert areas of Pakistan, India and Iran. The animal is short in height and likes to live away from human population, they say.

They say that the sighting of India grey wolf had never been reported in Bahawalpur's desert region, adding that it may have crossed into Pakistani territory from the Indian Rajasthan.

They say that these animals only visit populated areas in search of food and shepherds kill them to protect their goats and sheep from their attack.

The experts regretted the killing of such a precious and rare animal at the hands of villagers, saying the wildlife field staff, who have vehicles equipped with wireless sets and other gadgets, besides medical equipment, should have acted promptly to save the rare wolf.

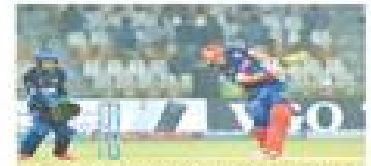
They added that the wildlife security and field staff concerned should be vigilant round the clock and check illegal hunting and poaching in the desert area.

PESHAWAR

Sunset 06:54pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow) 05:29am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum 29°C
Maximum 37°C
Outlook Sunny

METRO
North

United juggernaut rolls on with thumping win over Sultans

Pg.18 SPORT



A CRAFTSMAN shapes a pot at his workplace in Phandu village on the outskirts of Peshawar. — INP

MPC rejects minerals bill as 'direct attack' on provincial autonomy

Threatens protests if proposed law pushed through assembly

By Ali Hamza Bacha

PESHAWAR: A multi-party conference organised by the opposition Awami National Party on Wednesday rejected the draft Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Act, 2025, describing it as a "direct attack on provincial autonomy" and demanded limiting the role of all institutions to the constitutional sphere.

It warned that if the government tried to push the bill through the assembly, street protests would be staged across the province.

The move was held at the ANP's secretariat Bacha Khan Markazi here, with party provincial president Mian Hishar Hussain in the chair.

Leaders of political parties, business community and civil society organisations shared views about the proposed legislation on the occasion and agreed a joint declaration.

A delegation of the Jamiat Uloom-ul-Islami-Farl was led by Masood Ahmad Rehman, while the Pakistan Peoples Party leaders led by provincial president Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha also attended. A delegation of the National Democratic Movement led by Bushra Gohar also showed up, while the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was represented by Abdul Siker Ali, Ali Anghar and other leaders.

The Jamiat-ul-Islami's delegation was led by Prof Muhammad



ANP provincial president Mian Hishar Hussain addresses the multi-party conference at Bacha Khan Markazi, Peshawar, on Wednesday. — White Star

Imam, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's by Murtaza Javed Abbasi, that of the Qaumi Watan Party by Tariq Ahmad Khan, the Madori Khas Party's by Adil Mahmood, that of the Pakhtunkhwa National Awami Party by Khurshid Kakagi and the Awami Workers Party's by Ravizur Rasoolullah.

Representatives of the chamber of commerce, lawyers, mineral experts and civil society, business organisations, Mines and Minerals Owners Association and other ANP central and provincial leaders also participated.

The ANP provincial chief expressed satisfaction with the views of participants against the proposed law.

The declaration said that the

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill, 2025, was rejected in its entirety as it was a "direct attack on the provincial autonomy, authority over local resources and sovereignty of the provincial assembly as granted under the 18th Constitutional Amendment."

It added that the bill was an attempt to grant the Centre the control over the province's mineral resources in an unconstitutional move, which would cause mistrust between the federation and provinces.

The declaration said only residents and their elected representatives had the authority over the province's resources and no federal institution or bureaucracy could be allowed to grab that.

It added that the multi-party conference categorically rejected any "authority of the Special Investment Facilitation Council and the Federal Minerals Wing over the affairs and mineral resources of the province" as it considered the SIFC a "conspiracy to completely control the province's agriculture, minerals, tourism, environment and information technology sectors by the federal government and the military establishment and co-opted it."

"We completely reject the establishment of an unconstitutional and illegal council like the SIFC," it added.

The declaration demanded that the role of all institutions be limited to their constitutional roles.

"The MPC categorically rejects the role of the army in the country's politics. It demands that details of all commercial businesses by the Pakistan Army along with their assets be made public, while all commercial activities of the army be stopped so that they can focus on their constitutional responsibilities."

The declaration said that the proposed law was not only a violation of constitutional principles but also a "robbery" on the rights of local communities, working class and those associated with mining.

The move demanded that the provincial assembly unanimously reject the minerals bill and a constitutional and legal struggle be launched against it.

It announced that a vigorous and organised public campaign would be launched against the proposed act.

"If this bill is forcibly enacted, a protest movement will be launched across the province," it warned.

The declaration urged writers, legal community, civil society and youth to be part of this constitutional, political and public struggle against the proposed legislation.

The participants emphasised that the struggle was not limited to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but it was rather a national struggle for the rights of federating units, the supremacy of the Constitution and the establishment of a balance between the Centre and the province.

They endorsed the opposition of political parties in Balochistan to the minerals bill passed by the provincial assembly and demanded its immediate withdrawal to remove mistrust among people.

Kurram elders pledge to surrender weapons

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Elders of both warring parties in Kurram district during a jirga on Wednesday assured authorities about immediately starting the process of voluntary surrender of weapons in connection with implementation of an agreement.

The jirga, which took place at district headquarters Parachinar, was attended by General Officer Commanding 5th Division Kohat Maj Gen Zulfikar Ali Shah, Commissioner Syed Muzam Bilal Shah and DGO Abbas Majeed Marwat as well as the elders from both sides.

A statement issued here said that officials held detailed discussions with selected tribal elders of the parties there along with the jirga in which the parties assured them to fulfil their national responsibilities in implementation of Kohat Peace Agreement and thanked all government institutions for demolishing about 1,000 bunkers.

In addition to a meeting of Kohat Commissioner and district departments to review social and development activities in the district, visits to different areas will be made.

Commissioner Muzam Bilal Shah expressed the hope that overall situation in Kurram district would further improve and normal life would be fully restored. "God willing, Kurram district will once again become a cradle of peace," he added.

Military officials said that both sides in Kurram were serious about establishing peace and were trying to make the peace sustainable by utilising all resources.

Kurram district has been in throes of a brutal conflict since the November last year attack on a convoy that left more than 40 people dead. Roads leading to Parachinar remained blocked for more than six months, resulting in shortage of medicines, clothes and other basic necessities in the area.

Earlier towards the end of last month, both the sides of conflict in the district had signed an eight-month peace agreement while a fragile ceasefire was broken in January this year.

Bannu schoolteacher kidnapped

LAKKI MARIWAT: A schoolteacher was kidnapped in the Miryan area of Bannu district on Wednesday, the police said.

An official said they received information about the incident and were investigating the matter. "We are trying to locate the whereabouts of the teacher," he added.

According to local elders, Farmanullah was bundled into a vehicle by unidentified armed men while he was going to school in Harankhet area on a motorcycle.

They said the kidnapped teacher had no enmity with anyone in the area.

It was also learnt that the teacher would also work as a quick to provide medical treatment to local people.

Elders of Harankhet area asked the local administration and police to ensure safe recovery of the abducted teacher within 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the police tightened security arrangements for the ongoing five-day anti-polio drive in Bannu district as regional police chief Imran Shahid carried out field visits to check deployment of cops and presence of policemen with vaccinators.

Mr Shahid spent the busy day on Wednesday as he interacted with polio workers, subordinate police officials and health experts to get their viewpoint about the problems arising during the immunisation campaign. — Correspondent

PA demands extension in deadline for Afghan refugees' repatriation

Urges Centre to empower KP to hold peace talks with Afghanistan

By Umar Farooq

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Wednesday demanded of the federal government to reconsider its current Afghan policy for necessary changes and extend the deadline for the repatriation of Afghan refugees.

It also asked the federal government to empower KP to hold direct and meaningful talks with the interim Afghan government for long-term peace in the region.

The demands were made through two resolutions during a sitting chaired by Speaker Babar Ahsan

Swati here.

A resolution tabled by PTI member Shaukat Ali noted that the issue was seriously concerned about the law and order situation in the province.

It added that the federal government's Afghan policy had failed as the security situation in the country as well as Pak-Afghan relations had worsened. "It is imperative to take solid steps for restoring peace in the region," he said.

The resolution read that the house demanded of the federal government to "reconsider and change Afghan policy immediately."

It recommended that the KP government be empowered by the federal government to hold "direct and meaningful talks with Afghanistan to play its positive role for long-term peace in the region."

Another resolution, tabled by Mr Ali and passed unanimously by the

house, demanded extension of the deadline set for the repatriation of Afghan refugees.

It noted that Afghans had been living in Pakistan for decades, as sudden repatriation would not only create problems for them but could also render a negative impact on the current frosty relations between the neighbouring countries.

Earlier, treasury MPA Rajah Ali Khan Abbasi said local and international countries visited Galyat highlighting the country's positive image worldwide, but the residents faced immense shortage of drinking water.

He said that water bowlers were filled with spring water and thousands of gallons of water was supplied to the Mari water board on a daily basis, with the practice continuing for decades.

The lawmaker said that people in the area faced issues and were com-

pelled to buy water and it was the legal right of the residents to receive water on priority.

Law minister Adil Alam Afridi declared the issue serious and said a pipeline was laid down during the British rule for water supply to the Mari and surrounding areas.

He added that the provincial government had claimed Rs6 billion of the water supplied from Galyat but the payment had yet to be made.

He said that a special committee should be formed and the calling attention notice should be sent to it for resolving the issue once and for all.

MPA Naeem Ahmad Abbasi complained that residents were not provided water. He warned that the people would never allow anyone to use water as they're forced to purchase it.

"We don't want locals to dis-

pute," he said, adding that water from KP had been provided to Mari for the last 120 years and that, too, for free of charge.

However, ANP member Arbab Usman noted that it was an inter-provincial issue and involved concerned areas as well.

He said the house should issue directions as the issue couldn't be sent to the committee as it lacked power to take up the issue with other provinces.

The chair observed that once the committee made any decision, it would be binding on the provincial government contrary to the house to pursue the issue.

Mr Usman also said that around 40,000 cases were pending with the Peshawar High Court.

"If this is the case at the high court, what will be the situation at the lower courts? A prevents should be started to monitor the situation,"

he said, requesting the chair to form a committee on the matter.

The lawmaker said e-courts were required at merged tribal districts, while consumer and civil courts should be streamlined.

He said judges should be directed to decide cases within a specific timeframe.

The law minister informed the house that the sanctioned posts at the high court totaled 20, while 13 judges were working there. He added that 10 additional judges were appointed to the high court, taking the strength to 23.

The assembly also passed the KP Right to Information Amendment Bill, 2025. Special assistant to the chief minister for technical education Tufail Anjum tabled the KP Trade Testing Board Bill, 2025, in the house.

The chair later adjourned the sitting until 2pm on April 28.

Reshun villagers begin building flood protection wall

A group of about seven people are working on a steep, rocky hillside. They are dressed in simple, everyday clothing. Some are standing, while others are crouching or kneeling, seemingly engaged in manual labor or mining. The terrain is rugged and covered with loose rocks and soil. The background shows more of the mountainous landscape under a clear sky.

Amirullah said that the deputy speaker promised a number of times to start work on the construction of a byway and salvage the remaining portion of the village, whose major part has been swept away by the river during the past eight years, but to no avail.

of the village, said that the flood had rendered hundreds of people homeless and nearly half-a-kilometre of the Shander Road and hundreds of acres of fertile land was washed away during the last years, but the authorities were least bothered to take notice of it.

He said that the ideal time for working on highway was from October to March, and the villagers were waiting against time as the level of water had already increased in the river making it almost impossible to carry on work on the site.

MIPA Noraya Film could not be contacted on telephone to ascertain her version despite repeated calls on her cell phone, which she did not respond to.

In formulas of expressions, parentheses and the process.

The petitioners have raised concerns over violations of fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Pakistan. He has also sought interim relief from court, requesting that registration of FIRs under the impugned Act might be halted.

The petitioners included an independent federal government through secretary of law and justice, secretaries of ministries of interior and information and broadcasting. Khabarov

Pakistan's new government through its chief secretary, PTA director general, PTA chairmen and Pakistan Electronic Media Board has been conducting dialogues.

Representative Authority chairman, Advocate Munim Mada Kakkal appeared for the petitioners and stated that the impugned Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act was hastily introduced and approved by Second and National Assembly in January this year with minimal parliamentary debate, bypassing meaningful consultation with stakeholders including journalists and civil society organisations.

He contended that through the impugned Act severe restrictions were imposed on

fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, privacy rights and due process, in violation of the Constitution of Pakistan and international human rights standards.

The contract said that the amended Act undermined democratic values by criminalizing dissent, enabling state over-

reach and imposing disproportionate penalties for undefined and vague offenses related to digital expression and social media use.

He contended that the law granted excessive powers to regulatory authorities and suppressed independent journalism at the pretext of combating racism and ethnic incitement.

He argued that the amendments infringed upon articles 4, 9, 10, 10-A, 19, 19-A, and 25 of the Constitution by restricting free speech, curbing press freedom and allowing for arbitrary promotion of digital content creators.

Mr Kakabadse said that establishment of Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA), social media protocols, tribunals and

National Cybercrime Investigation Agency (NCIA) consolidated unclassified infor-

These authors used several different sample sizes, with the smallest sample size being

He stated that the investigatory powers under the amended Act had been enhanced to an alarming degree, making previously billable offences now non-billable, cognisable and non-compoundable, which was in violation of established principles of legal fairness and due process.

He said that Pakistan's commitments under Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other global conventions were being disregarded.

He claimed that the ingrassated Act introduced broad definitions of 'unlawful' and 'offensive' content, creating legal uncertainty and fostering an environment of fear and self-censorship among journalists and activists.

He contended that the unchecked power to block or remove online content and entire social media platforms without judicial oversight constituted a violation of Article 10-A (right to fair trial) and Article 25 (equality before law) of the Constitution.

general and tribal elders in particular in assisting security forces in their efforts to take on the menace of militancy.

Though there was no official word about the details of the *jejeu*, participants of the gathering told *Koreajo* on Wednesday that it was held in a very cordial atmosphere and the Presbyterian church commander provided every opportunity to some tribal elders and local political figures to share their thoughts and apprehensions about the current security situation in Tishu valley.

They said that tribal elders suggested to him to form a fully authorized jirga comprising seasoned and experienced tribal elders to hold meaningful dialogues with Afghan Taliban leadership in Kabul and later open a dialogue channel with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) after finding a place to any success in their contacts with Taliban leadership in Kabul.

They said that the Peshawar corps commander also appreciated the role of tribal elders in peacefully negotiating reopening of Torkham when border security forces traded fire over construction of a controversial checkpoint on the Afghan side of the border in late February.

"We reminded the corps commander that peaceful rejoining of Turkmen border by tribal jirga was a manifestation of local elders command over resolution of such thorny issues in accordance with time-tested tribal customs and traditions," said one of the tribal elders, who attended the Boundary Jirga.

There was also some criticism of the countryside Voto merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by some others during the jirga. They blamed the passage of 25th Amendment for the existing law and order situation in some tribal districts, western cold Deras.

They said that the criticism of merger and subsequent deterioration of law and order in tribal districts was neutralised by some activities of political parties present in the jangs who related with the counter arguments that militancy and terrorism had raised its ugly heads years before the region was merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

They said that some participants suggested to the corps commander to give a time-frame about the ongoing military operations and restoration of peace in Iraq to win the fading confidence of people.

CHEARSADA: About 70 supervisory staff have been removed or reprimanded for allowing or covering up cheating during the ongoing main module examinations being conducted by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Peshawar.

Briefing reporters, secretary education board Mohd. Iqbal Khan, stated:

The said affiliation of three schools with the board had been terminated on complaints of cheating and copying after

the regulated time due to collisions between the maintenance staff and their activities at home. These schools included Rhymer Model School and College for Girls, Kids Garden, Nochia Posthumus, and Michelson Grammar School, which are located

He said that the staff should maintain discipline in the examination halls and completely eliminate any kind of disorder and cheating.

ANTI-ISRAELI RALLY
A rally to express solidarity with the Palestinians and condemn Israeli atrocities in Gaza was held in Charnock Bazar here on Wednesday.

There could be research to understand how

a large number of people were organized by the Charitable Chagga Market Association.

The rally passed through various roads, including Peshawar Road, Mardian Road, Targi Road, Nowshera Road and ended at Faran's Aamr Chuk.

The participants, while chastising shoppers against brand and its allied countries, announced a complete boycott of buying and selling Israeli products. The rally was led by the association's executive Wehbechallah.

The speakers condemned the aggression and barbarity of Israel, America and their allies against Palestinians. — *Correspondent*

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CHAKWAL

In the Court of Justice Ahmed Noor-ul-Amin AGJ Chakwal, Appeal, Bahar Khan vs. yd vs Bahar Khan S/o. To, Zaher Khan S/o. P/o M/s. Tanager S/o. P/o Patel Hussain, Tanager Hussain, Muhammad Waheed S/o. Mohammed Razaq, Khuda Mahmood, Mohammed Asad ym/s. Khuda to, To, Zaher Khan, Mohammed Afzal, Mohammed Adnan, Mohammed Anwar S/o. Fakhri Mohammed, Mohammed Razaq, Mohammed Hameed, Mohammed Usman S/o. Sajida Bto R/o Ghazal Malik, Tah & Omer Chaudhary Presently Absent you are inform to attend the Court personal through counsel or at attorney on 26-04-2025 at 9 am to avoid ex parte proceedings. (23192707640)

PESHAWAR

PESHAWAR High Court Peshawar JHA No. 432/P/2024, Mahmood Iqbal versus Turkish Airlines, through its Court Executive Officer filed for 26-04-2025 before His Deputy Registrar Notice to R/o No. 3 Civil Finance Office, Turkish Airlines, General Management Building, Istanbul Airport, YESILKUYU 34140, Istanbul, Turkey Whereas nobody issued to the respondents mentioned above, to appear before the Deputy Registrar but respondents did not fail to proceed through counsel process, And whereas as the service of said respondents are not practicable through normal process, they ask therefore, served within this notice for their appearance before the Deputy Registrar on 26-04-2025 at 09:30 a.m. personally or through an authorized council or an authorized agent, failing which as per law proceeding shall be taken against them. Given under my hand and seal of the Court JHC 22-04-2025. Deputy Registrar (23042916323)

GUJARATI KHAN

In the Court of Myr Nazki Qazi Judge Sajid Khan, Zahid Zahir versus Wasim Malik, Shah for Dissolution of Marriage on the Plea of Khula, To, Wasim Malik son of Muhammad Yousaf Malik resident of Mans Sharada P/O Darayla Garganjer, Tehsil Gujrat Khan District Rawalpindi, Presently residing in Islamabad, you are inform to attend the Court personal through counsel or attorney on 26-04-2025 at 10 am to avoid ex parte Proceedings. (23192707640)

NOWSHERA

In the Court of Muhammad Harit Cio 4 Judge L, Nowshera, Suit No. 37/1 Original Institution dated 10-12-2023 Next Date of hearing 26-04-2025, Filed legal Statute by Mr Akhtar Saib Publication Against Aungmyethar Myanmar Ah Bhui Shon of Multatara Dhak Residents of Mori Banda Jahangir Currently Absent, In the above filed suit the service of above mentioned person is not possible through ordinary means, Therefore, you defendants / am informed through this publication that on 26-04-2025 at 09:30 am, You have / has to appear before this Court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the suit noted above, otherwise ex parte proceedings will be initiated against you. Seal of Court (Muhammad Harit) Cio Judge L, Nowshera. (23042916323)

In the Court of Fiazan Wahabud Azam Cio Judge N, Nowshera, Suit No. 318/1 Institution, Date 14-12-2024 Next date of hearing 10-05-2025, Case title, Gul Ram vs. Nur Mahal etc., Publication against (3) Nadia Arzen S/o Muhammad Arzen Resident of Nowshera presently in UK 047854027292, In the above filed Court suit the service of above mentioned (3) is not possible through ordinary means, Therefore, you defendants / am informed through this publication that on 10-05-2025 at 09:30 am, You have / has to appear before this Court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the Court suit noted above, otherwise ex parte proceedings will be

initiated against you. Seal of the Court (Fiazan Wahabud Azam) Cio Judge N, Nowshera. (23042916323)

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Man sentenced to life for desecration of Holy Quran

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: A local court has convicted a man for desecration of the Holy Quran and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

The additional sessions judge, Mirza Mohammad Khalid, pronounced that in the light of overwhelming evidence produced at trial, consistent testimony given by prosecution witnesses and failure of the accused to prove any definite plea led the court to the conclusion that the prosecution case was proven beyond shadow of any reasonable doubt.

The judge ruled that the accused was held guilty of offence of defiling etc of the Holy Quran, which was breach of Section 295 (E) of Pakistan Penal Code.

While sentencing him to life imprisonment, the court extended him benefit of Section 382-B of Code of Criminal Procedure under which his pre-arrest period of detention would be counted to his prison term.

The FIR of the occurrence was registered at Peshawar police station on March 9, 2022, wherein an inhabitant of the area named Asim Khalid was the complainant.

The complainant reported to police in presence of a mob that he was present at a mosque in the evening when the accused picked a copy of the Holy Quran and took it to the ablution area. He claimed that the accused started desecration of the Holy Quran and when he tried to stop him he started altercation with him.

Shahbaz Ahmad, the assistant public prosecutor, argued that the accused was directly charged in the FIR and was caught red-handed at the time of commission of the offence.

He said that besides production of independent witnesses to establish crime of the accused, prosecution also recorded testimony of credible investigation team.

The defence counsel contended that the accused was innocent and had falsely been charged for the commission of the offence. He said that the accused was charged for the offence with mala fide intentions as the complainant had some previous grudges against him.

The court observed that although the accused facing trial did not conform to his guilt either before the judicial magistrate or even before the trial court, yet sufficient independent evidence in shape of deposition by complainant and eyewitnesses of the incident was available on record to connect him with the commission of the offence.

The judge observed that there was nothing on record which could negate or even create doubt in prosecution version rather entire evidence so tendered remained unobjected.

Two friends shot dead in Swabi

SWABI: Two friends were killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on them near their home in Zaida city on Wednesday, the police said.

SHO Zaida police station Asif Khan said they collected evidence from the crime scene and it seemed the friends were targeted under a well-planned attack.

Gul Mast Khan, a resident of Zaida, while registering an FIR with the Zaida police station, said his 25-year-old son, Yousaf Khan left his home on Tuesday with his 30-year-old neighbour Yasir Khan.

"On the morning of Wednesday, they received information that the bodies of both the friends were lying in a street in Zaida city," he told the police.

Local people shifted the bodies to Rakhia Khan Teaching Hospital, Shikhanmuroor. The complainant said he along with Shier Aman, the father of the deceased Yasir, went to the hospital and identified the bodies.

"We have no enmity or ill-will towards anyone in the area," he said. The police registered an FIR against unknown persons and started an investigation.

Meanwhile, the Kaka Khan police traced the blind murder of Syed Ali Khan, who belonged to Shikoh Jara village, by arresting four hited killers, including his brother and a nephew. They said the motorcycle and Kalashnikov used in the crime were a recovered.

On May 6, 2023, the plaintiff in the case, a widow of the deceased, had reported the murder of her husband by an unknown accused. Mohammad Ishaq, a brother of the deceased, hired contract killers for murdering his brother over a land dispute. — Correspondent

Information dept gets new secretary

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Wednesday posted Mohammad Khalid as secretary information and public relations department.

A notification issued from the establishment department here said Mr Khalid, (288-28), awaiting posting at the establishment department, had been posted secretary information and public relations department. It said Mr Khalid replaced Shafiqul Rehman, (288-28), secretary administration department, of the additional charge.

The post had been lying vacant since March 22, when the provincial government transferred the then secretary information Arshad Khan over "violation of government advertisement policy."

The move came after several public sector advertisements carrying Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur's pictures appeared in newspapers, attracting criticism from the government. — Bureau Report

Shortage of facilities, teachers hampers enrolment drive in Landi Kotal

Parents complain about lack of textbooks in Mohmand schools

Dawn Report

KHYBER / MOHMAND: Shortage of basic facilities coupled with nearly 250 vacant posts of teachers has seriously hampered the ongoing enrolment campaign in the government primary schools in Landi Kotal sub-district of Khyber district.

Officials of the Khyber education department and primary school teachers confided to Dawn that parents by and large were reluctant to bring their children to schools for admission as these were already overcrowded and lacked basic facilities like electric supply, drinking water and lavatories for both teachers and students.

They said a number of primary schools for girls were closed for several months due to absence of female teachers.

The officials conceded that the schools were faced with a shortage of 246 teachers, including women, in Landi Kotal, out of the total 642

in the entire Khyber district. They said all the primary schools in Landi Kotal were crowded due to shortage of classrooms.

They said as per the criteria set by the provincial education department, six classrooms and six teachers were a requirement and it was then made mandatory for every primary school in the province, but in Landi Kotal this criterion was not yet implemented.

The officials said now they had only two teachers each for a strength of over 600 students in almost every primary school with just two rooms and that too mostly dilapidated.

They regretted that they had so far succeeded in enrolling less than 50 per cent of the total targeted 4,000 new students.

The officials said they had submitted a number of applications to the provincial education department for filling the vacant posts and provision of funds for construction of additional classrooms and other related facilities, but were still awaiting a favourable official response.

"The ongoing enrolment campaign in Landi Kotal is a complete failure due to acute shortage of required facilities," Shams-ud-Din Afridi, president Tanzeem-i-Ansara, Khyber, told Dawn.

Meanwhile, scores of girl students in Ali Masjid, Shabqan, Tarda Maina, Kari Kohra, Chera and adjoining localities in Jamrud tehsil are in danger of discontinuing their education after the eighth grade due to absence of a high school in these localities.

Meanwhile, though a school enrolment campaign is currently underway across Mohmand district, lack of textbooks in most government schools has raised concerns among parents and teachers, who fear it may have negative impact on students' academic progress.

Special events have been organised by the district administration and the education department, encouraging parents to enrol their children in schools.

According to sources in education department, a total of 116 government schools across the district have been given specific enrolment targets. These include eight high schools, 30 middle schools and 38 primary schools. The overall districtwide target is to enrol at least 5,000 new students during the campaign. However, many schools have yet to meet their assigned targets.

Despite these efforts, the unavailability of textbooks in most schools has emerged as a major issue, students said.

Miscreants attack Lakki wildlife park

By Ghulam Mursalin Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT: Miscreants attacked a wildlife park with explosives here on Tuesday night.

However, no damage to public or animal life was reported.

Police declared the explosion an act of terrorism and said that they were investigating it.

Police and wildlife officials said that six armed "terrorists" entered the park at night, planted explosives inside the office's building, and later detonated them destroying the structure.

They said that the explosion caused the birds' enclosure to catch fire, which destroyed it afterward.

The officials said that just a day ago, a minor explosion partially damaged the building.

A police official quoted the park's watchman as saying that he saw six armed men enter the premises by the small gate but got scared and hid himself inside the park.

An official of the wildlife department said that the birds had already been shifted from the park to other facilities in the neighbouring districts, including Baran and Dera Ismail Khan.

He, however, said that at least five animals were present in the park at the time of explosion and they all were safe.

"We're planning to move these animals to a wildlife facility in Rahat," he said.

The official declared the incident a "great loss" to the wildlife and his team's efforts for its conservation.

Located along the Indus Highway on the bank of the Korram River and having different forest animals, the park is popular with locals and visitors from adjoining districts.

Residents said that as the district lacked recreational facilities, families used to visit the park on Eid and other festivals.

They said that a playing area was available on the premises for children to enjoy sliding, swinging, games and other rides.

The residents said that visitors used to feed birds and animals in the park.



OFFICIALS examine the damaged bridges at the wildlife park in Lakki Marwat. — Dawn

Govt resumes free renal transplants on Sehat Card Plus

Officials say only poor people can benefit from the facility

By Ashtaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has restarted free renal transplants on Sehat Card Plus as two patients underwent procedures at public sector Institute of Kidney Diseases Wednesday.

One patient received kidney from his sister and the other from his brother. Both the donors and recipients are doing well, according to doctors at Institute of Kidney Diseases (IKD), Hayat abad Medical Complex, Peshawar.

Officials in health department said that the last free

transplant in the province was conducted on Sehat Card Plus (SCP) in August 2022 after which the procedures were stopped by caretaker government, citing lack of funds.

They said that the decision of caretaker government to stop free transplants on SCP adversely affected scores of patients, who had been on waiting list to undergo the costly procedure.

However, last month Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur approved a summary to resume free organ transplants and cochlear implants under the free health insurance initiative, they said.

SCP chief executive officer Dr Mohammad Riaz Taseel told Dawn that two more patients would get free transplants next week as there were a total 38 patients to be given free services. He said that government had released Rs100 million to

facilitate renal, bone marrow and liver transplant patients, treatment of thalassemia and cochlear implants.

According to him, the programme, launched in 2016, has so far benefited more than 4.3 million people at a cost of Rs305 billion. They also include 164 kidney and 64 liver transplants, with each costing Rs1.4 million and Rs5 million, respectively. He said that stopping transplants under free treatment programme left many patients high and dry.

Dr Riaz said that about 40 patients had been on the waiting list for transplants, mostly for kidney, and many of them had fulfilled requirements.

He said that most of the patients had approached health adviser Hisham Ali and he prevailed upon the chief minister to allocate special funds to extend cashless medical services to these patients, who

could not afford expensive treatment.

"We are also going to sign agreements with hospitals for liver transplants in Islamabad as these are not available in Peshawar-based hospitals. Six patients will undergo cochlear implants at Hayat abad Medical Complex" said Dr Riaz.

Officials at health department said that resumption of free transplants was approved by chief minister for poor people and would not cover all patients like other diseases covered under SCP. However, government was likely to allocate more funds and extend the facility to all patients requiring organ transplants, they said.

They said that provincial cabinet had approved a summary regarding restarting organ transplantation two months ago, but the department had again sent a sum-

mary to chief minister to know if all the people could be included in the transplant programme or only those living below poverty line. The department had earlier proposed establishment of Rs1 billion endowment fund to run its profit for transplanting organs to patients, they said.

Officials said that the chief minister approved a summary wherein number of patients had been mentioned which meant that the grant was for poor people. They said that each of the renal transplants would cost about Rs2 million.

They said that the government had paid Rs14 billion since last year to State Life Insurance Corporation, the executor of SCP, to cut down its liabilities and had planned to pay it Rs1 billion every month to be able to do away with the outstanding amount, which was more than Rs10 billion.

Security arrangements for Kaghan visitors reviewed

Official says personnel re-deployed in Naran

By Our Correspondent

MANSHERA: The district administration on Wednesday reviewed security arrangements related to tourism and healthcare of tourists and provision of essential services to them during their visit to the Kaghan Valley.

"As the summer season has set in, we have relocated the police station to Naran and will shortly deploy the tourism police in the entire valley," district police officer Shafiqullah Khan Gandapur told a meeting at the New Circuit House.

The meeting, chaired by deputy commissioner Khalid Iqbal, discussed ways to improve hospitality and security services as well as the reopening of the remaining section of the Manshera-Naran-Jalabad Road and the road leading to the Saiful Muluk Lake.

"We have re-deployed our personnel in Naran to ensure foolproof security for tourists. As more sections of the (MNJ) Road have been cleared to traffic, additional police posts are being made operational," the DPO

said.

He said that police would also be deployed at Babasar Top, while traffic wardens had been assigned duties along the (MNJ) Road to manage traffic flow in the valley.

Assistant director of the Kaghan Development Authority Asad Shafiqullah informed the meeting that efforts were under way to reopen the Lake Road, allowing tourists to visit the snow-covered Saiful Muluk Lake.

"We expect that visitors will be able to travel to the Saiful Muluk Lake in four wheelers within a week or so," he said.

Mr Shafiqullah said that water supply schemes, greenbelts, ambulances and rescue services had been revitalised in the valley.

President of the Horticulture Association Seth Mansurullah said the tourism industry was fully prepared to welcome tourists.

"We have decided to offer quality food and hospitality services to all visitors coming to enjoy the valley's natural beauty," he said.

The road link between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, which has been closed since mid-November, is also expected to reopen soon.

HELD: The police on Wednesday arrested two men for attempting to sexually assault a girl in Lohar Banda Baghlan area of Balakot tehsil.

Balakot Circle SP Jehanzeb Khan told reporters that both accused fled after the girl resisted their assault bid at a deserted place.

He said that the girl's mother later approached him for strict action against the accused.

The SP said a police team, led by DSP Badkash Nisar and including Balakot SHO Fahad Shah, conducted a raid and arrested the accused.

He said that an FIR had been registered against the accused, while an investigation against them was under way.

Road blocked against police 'torture' of Bajaur student

BAJOUR: Students of Government Postgraduate College, Khan, on Wednesday staged a demonstration against the alleged torture of a pupil by a traffic police officer.

Scores of students blocked the main Bajaur-Mardan Road outside the college. They alleged that Sajjad Khan was beaten up by DSP Qasim Shah on Tuesday while he was going to college in a public transport vehicle.

The demonstrators alleged that after the assault, the DSP took Sajjad to the Khan police station, where he and other personnel subjected him to more torture. They claimed the student was tortured for raising voice against the traffic police's "unfriendly" behaviour towards transporters.

The protesting students, also joined by political and social activists, condemned the incident.

The speakers observed that the "inhuman act" of the senior police official had damaged the force's image among the local community, and called for suspension of the official.

The protesters, who earlier pledged to continue the agitation until the

police officer was suspended, agreed to end the road blockade after a joint team of the college management and police department met with them.

The team, including the college's principal Prof. Ameer Shah and DSP Abdul Aziz, assured the protesting students of initiating a departmental inquiry into the matter. The demonstration, which lasted around two hours, disrupted traffic on the road.

Meanwhile, district police officer Waqas Rafique ordered an investigation into the incident, which drew widespread condemnation from students, political and social circles.

According to a statement issued on Wednesday evening, an inquiry committee comprising senior police officials with impeccable reputation has been tasked with submitting its report by Thursday (today).

Strict action would be taken against the accused official if he was found guilty, in line with the police department's zero-tolerance policy against the misuse of authority, the statement quoted Mr Rafique as saying. — Correspondent

GOVERNMENT OF GILGIT-BALTISTAN
INDUSTRIES, LABOUR & COMMERCE DEPARTMENT
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)
Development of Minawar Industrial Zone (MIZ) Gilgit

The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan has approved the Public-Private Partnership Act 2019 with the purpose to provide investment opportunities to private sector in the financing, construction, development of infrastructure / development projects or other related services.

In order to boost the economic activities in the region the GB Government (Industries, Labour & Commerce Department) intends to hire the services of reputed, experienced (individual / JV) National and International Firms for development of Minawar Industrial Zone (MIZ) Gilgit for which Expression of Interest (EOI) are invited under GB Public Procurement Rules 2024.

Interested firms/companies are required to submit the following requested information as part of their EOI.

- Registration requirements:**
 - Valid Registration with SECP (Please attach proof)
 - Valid Registration with FBR (Please attach NTN certificate)
- List of Required Documents to be submitted with the application, Eligibility Requirement/ Checklist and basic TOR (Scope of work) can be downloaded from <https://gpps.gov.pk/> / <https://www.gpps.org.pk/> and www.khgh.gov.pk/ or obtained from the office of Director Industries, Labor and Commerce GB from date of publication of this notice till 18th May, 2025. At a cost of 5000/- (copy of feasibility study of the project can be obtained from the same office).
- All the applicable Federal, Provincial & Local taxes must be considered while preparing the financial proposals.
- The financial statements should be provided to demonstrate that the firm has financial capacity to execute minimum 5-00 Million investments in the project.
- 100% of the project financing would be arranged by interested private party.
- The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan will not provide any sovereign guarantee for the Project.
- No pending litigation certificate must be provided by the firm.
- Dead line of Submissions:** The EOI applications along with following documents must reach in the office of Director Industries, Labor and Commerce near Globe Chowk KRU Gilgit before 04:00 PM 22nd May, 2025. The same shall be opened publicly on 28th May at 12:30 PM.
- The Procuring Agency has reserved the right to cancel this EOI in its entirety or partially without defraying any cost incurred by the firm.
- The procuring agency doesn't bind itself to accept any EOI and Late EOI will not also be considered under any circumstances.
- Interested firms should address their inquiries and submit their complete proposals on the above mentioned address.
- It must be noted that firms / companies meeting all criteria/conditions will only be shortlisted for consideration.

Deputy Secretary
Tel No. 09811-927628 Fax 09811-927628

EOIGB/2025/25