

**Imran may get bail: Gohar**  
**F.P. Report**

BUNER: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar, expressed confidence that Imran Khan will secure bail, emphasizing that June 11 is a crucial date in this regard. Speaking to media, Gohar extended Eid greetings to all Pakistanis, Palestinian brothers, and soldiers fighting at the borders. He noted that this will be the fourth Eid celebrated without Imran Khan's presence, yet his ideology continues to guide the party.



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## Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 unveiled

# Pak hits \$411b economy amid broad recovery

**Saqib Mushtaq**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, announced on Monday that Pakistan's economy rebounded in FY2025, driven by IMF-backed reforms, a \$411 billion GDP milestone, and record investor confidence. With inflation at a historic low, foreign reserves up, and industrial growth surging, macro-economic stability signals a decisive turnaround in the country's economic trajectory.

Speaking at the launch of the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2024-25, the minister highlighted that real GDP grew by 2.68%, driven by a robust 4.8% rebound in industrial activity. The size of the economy surpassed the \$400 billion mark for the first time, while per capita income increased to \$1,824. The minister was flanked by financial team including Finance Secretary, Imdad Ullah Bosal; Economic Advisor, Dr. Raja Hasan M. Mohsin; and Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad.

Inflation dropped to a multi-decade low of 0.3% in April 2025, supported by exchange rate stability, tight monetary policy, and improved food supply. The current account

posted a surplus of \$1.9 billion, foreign exchange reserves rose to US\$ 16.64 billion, and exports and remittances showed healthy growth.

Total foreign investment grew by 16.5%, and overseas Pakistanis demonstrated renewed confidence through record inflows via the Roshan Digital Account. Fiscal consolidation efforts reduced the fiscal deficit to 2.6% of GDP in July-March and raised the primary surplus to 3.0%, with a 25.9% increase in FBR tax collections. The policy rate was cut from 22% to 11% as inflationary pressures eased. The KSE-100 index surged by over 52%, and both Fitch and Moody's upgraded Pakistan's credit ratings. Banking sector assets and deposits also posted strong growth, with improved capital adequacy.

In a landmark development, the government posted a fiscal surplus of Rs 1,896 billion (1.7% of GDP) in Quarter 1st FY2025—the first in 24 years. Key reform measures included provincial tax mobilization (especially in agriculture), an updated National Fiscal Pact, and GST rationalization. The minister noted continued progress in energy diversification, with installed power capacity reaching 46,605 MW.

Reforms across sectors, along with structural adjustments and improved governance, signaled a positive trajectory for the economy.

In education, Rs 61.12 billion was allocated to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), and literacy initiatives pushed the national literacy rate to 60.65% (urban: 74.09%, rural: 51.56%). Youth empowerment efforts under the PM Youth Skill Development Program trained over 56,000 individuals in IT and hospitality. Overseas employment facilitation registered 727,381 workers abroad in 2024. The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) continued to expand, as since its inception, BISP has disbursed Rs 2,607.81 billion in grants, benefiting approximately 9.87 million individuals. In FY 2025, Rs 598.72 billion was allocated, of which Rs 385.64 billion was disbursed as of March 31, 2025. An amount Rs 328.47 billion under UCTs and Rs 57.17 billion under CCTs) and supported 7.87 million (UCTs) and 2 million (CCTs) beneficiaries.

Pakistan also launched its first carbon market policy, issued a Rs 30 billion Green Sukuk, and secured \$1.4 billion under the IMF's

Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). Climate resilience projects like Recharge Pakistan were rolled out to combat environmental challenges. Digital transformation accelerated, with ICT exports rising 23.7% to \$2.8 billion, driven by a \$2.43 billion trade surplus and \$400 million from freelancers. Over 50 Software Technology Parks and e-Rozgar centers were operational, while National Incubation Centers supported 1,900+ startups—generating 185,000 jobs and Rs 30.8 billion in investments.

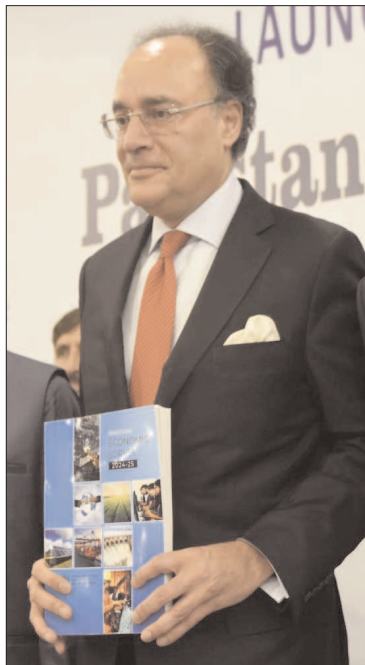
These developments, underpinned by a home-grown reform agenda, reflect Pakistan's commitment to inclusive growth, digital innovation, and long-term economic stability. The minister also recounted the difficult path that led to the current recovery. He said the economy faced severe challenges in FY2023, with GDP contracting by 0.2%, industrial output shrinking by 3.9%, inflation peaking at 29.2%, and the rupee depreciating by 28.5%. The policy rate had risen to 22% amid surging inflation.

The fiscal deficit reached 7.8% of GDP, public debt stood at 75% of GDP, and foreign reserves fell to \$6.3 billion. The external financing

requirement was estimated at \$25 billion in FY2024, placing significant pressure on the external account. When the current government took office in March 2024, it immediately pursued structural and policy reforms aimed at stabilizing the economy and promoting inclusive growth. It successfully completed the IMF Standby Arrangement (SBA), focusing on fiscal consolidation, import liberalization, exchange rate flexibility, and reforms in energy, SOEs, and governance.

On global trends, he added that the world economy had stabilized after recent shocks, though new tariff disputes were renewing uncertainty. Global GDP is projected to slow to 2.8% in 2025 before rising to 3.0% in 2026, while global inflation is expected to decline from 5.7% in 2024 to 4.3% in 2025 and 3.6% in 2026—offering relief for domestic price pressures.

Pakistan's key trading and remittance partners—including Saudi Arabia, UAE, China, and the United States—are expected to maintain a positive growth outlook. Rising global trade volumes will further support Pakistan's exports and remittance inflows. Summing up, the finance minister



noted that structural reforms, fiscal prudence, and targeted policy interventions had laid the foundation for continued recovery and inclusive growth, positioning Pakistan on a stronger economic footing as it moves forward.

## Bilawal warns world of India's weaponisation of water

LONDON (APP): Former foreign minister and Chairman Pakistan's People Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday leading a high-level Pakistani parliamentary delegation warned the international community that the India's weaponisation of water undermines international norms and sets a perilous precedent.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari engaged with eminent members of the British think tank, academia, and policymaking community at the prestigious Chatham House, one of the UK's leading think tanks focused on foreign and security policy issues, said a statement issued by Pakistan Embassy here.

During the interaction, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari urged the international community to take notice of this alarming development and hold India to account for its actions. He strongly denounced India's unilateral and illegal suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.

The closed-door discussion was held under the "Chatham House Rules," which is used around the

world to encourage inclusive and open dialogue in meetings. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and other delegation members conveyed Pakistan's perspective on the recent escalation in South Asia while expressing serious concern about India's unprovoked military aggression that resulted in civilian casualties and posed a significant threat to regional stability.

They underscored that India's actions constituted a clear violation of Pakistan's sovereignty, international law, and the United Nations Charter. The delegation said that Pakistan's armed forces, with the full support of the people of Pakistan, had given a befitting response to India, demonstrating Pakistan's resolve to defend its sovereignty, and thwarting India's ambitions to set any new so-called "normal" in the region.

The delegation noted that the pending resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains the principal stumbling block to lasting peace and stability in the region. They urged the international community to support meaningful dialogue and ensure

respect for international commitments and human rights.

The other members of the delegation include Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Masood Malik; Chairperson, Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and former Minister for Information and Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman; Chairperson, National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and former Foreign Minister, Hina Rabbani Khar; former Minister for Commerce, Defence and Foreign Affairs, Engineer Khurram Dastgir Khan; MQM's Parliamentary Leader in the Senate and former Minister for Maritime Affairs, Senator Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt, former Foreign Secretaries, Ambassador Jalil Abbas Jilani and Ambassador Tehmina Janjua. Pakistan's High Commissioner to the UK Dr Mohammad Faisal was also present during the round table conference.

## PM greets Bosnian leadership on Eid

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: On the occasion of Eidul Azha, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with the Member of the Bosnia & Herzegovina Presidency, Dr. Denis Becirovic, on Monday.

The Prime Minister conveyed his heartfelt Eid greetings to him, as well as to the people of Bosnia & Herzegovina and prayed for their peace, progress and prosperity. The warm sentiments were reciprocated by the Bosnian leader.

During their warm and cordial conversation, the Prime Minister emphasized that Pakistan attached great importance to its deep-rooted fraternal ties with Bosnia & Herzegovina and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen bilateral cooperation, particularly through trade, culture, and people-to-people exchanges.

The Prime Minister thanked the Bosnian leadership for its support to Pakistan during the recent Pakistan-India crisis and shared with him Pakistan's efforts to maintain peace and security in South Asia. The Prime Minister reiterated his invitation to Dr. Becirovic to undertake an official visit to Pakistan. The invitation was accepted and reciprocated by the Bosnian leader who also extended an invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Bosnia & Herzegovina.

## President urges efforts to strengthen economy

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday, citing the country's vast potential for development, called for concerted efforts to build a robust and self-reliant national economy.

The president, in a meeting with Pakistan Peoples Party leaders and workers at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on the occasion of Eidul Azha, extended Eid greetings to them. He praised the workers as the strength of the party, acknowledging their steadfast support during challenging times. He urged them to remain dedicated to the nation and contribute to its progress.

He also called for working together for the country's development and prosperity. He highlighted agriculture as the cornerstone of the national economy, stressing the need to prioritize its growth and support farmers to strengthen economic foundations. The president expressing concerns over rising extremism in India, said that the Indian minorities, especially Muslims and Christians, faced discrimination and oppression.

## Field Marshal visits LoC to celebrate Eid with troops

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Asim Munir visited forward positions along the Line of Control (LoC) to celebrate Eidul Azha with frontline troops.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the visit commenced with Eid prayers, during which special supplications were made for Pakistan's enduring peace, stability, and prosperity as well as for martyrs who made supreme sacrifice for the defence of their motherland.

Extending warm Eid greetings to the officers and soldiers, the Field Marshal commended their unwavering commitment, professional excellence, and steadfast service in the face of persistent challenges.

The COAS expressed that celebrating Eid on the frontline away from their families serves the superior national purpose of defending the motherland at all costs throughout the year. Field Marshal Asim Munir lauded the formation's exemplary performance during Marqa-e-Haq, Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos and paid solemn tribute to the martyrs and Ghazis whose sacrifices continue to fortify the nation's security and resolve.

COAS said, "You have befittingly avenged the loss of lives of innocent Pakistani civilians including children, women and elderly through your bold and effective response." While interacting with troops, COAS expressed deep appreciation for their high morale, exceptional

operational readiness, and resolute vigilance in responding effectively to Indian ceasefire violations. He reiterated complete confidence in the battle preparedness of the armed forces to decisively deter and defeat any act of aggression.

Underscoring Pakistan's principled stance, the Field Marshal affirmed that the just and valiant struggle of the Kashmiri people against Indian occupation will never be forgotten. He emphasized the need for the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in line with the aspirations of its people and the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Upon arrival at the LoC, the COAS was received by the Commander, Rawalpindi Corps.

## Three terrorists killed, cop martyred in Lakki

**F.P. Report**

LAKKI MARWAT: Three terrorists were killed and a policeman was martyred in an armed clash in the Kot Kashmir area here on Monday. Police said that the clash occurred when a large police contingent backed by APCs and supported by armed villagers confronted terrorists in the area.

"During the fierce and intense exchange of fire, three terrorists were neutralised and killed while a police constable Shahidullah was also critically injured", they maintained. They said that the injured cop later succumbed to injuries while being shifted to a hospital.

Police said that a terrorist commander Chota Waseem was among the killed ones who along with his accomplices were wanted by law enforcement agencies in cases pertaining to terrorist attacks. They said that security was beefed up after the clash while the funeral prayer of the martyred police official was offered at the police lines attended by district administration officials and police and military authorities.

Meanwhile, over a dozen suspects were arrest-

ed during a search and strike operation jointly launched by the police and security forces in the Top Takhtikhel, Qazi Dheri, Tanchiabad, Tabi Murad and Sherikhel areas of Lakki Marwat district, claimed DPO Muhammad Jawad Ishaq on Monday.

The district police head said that the operation was launched on reports about the presence of terrorists and anti-peace and anti-state elements in the remote rural localities of the district. "During the action, the law enforcers eliminated the hideouts of miscreants and criminals gangs and arrested 13 suspects including two drug traffickers and seized arms and ammunition from them", he maintained.

He said that the cops checked data of suspected individuals with the help of the criminal record verification system and met with local elders to seek their support to make actions against miscreants result-oriented. The DPO said that the police would continue such actions in future to make the district crime-free and establish lasting peace in the area. He said that the police would use all available resources for the safety and protection of citizens.

Meanwhile, Regional Police Officer Bannu Sajjad Khan directed district police authorities to trace the bandits involved in looting passenger buses and ensure their arrest without delay. He issued these directions while chairing a meeting here at the police lines in the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai. Lakki Marwat DPO Muhammad Jawad Ishaq briefed him about the security and law and order situation.

SP Investigation Murad Ali Khan, SDPOs and SHO's were in attendance. The RPO said that the road and highway safety must be kept the top priority as it was the prime duty of police to provide the transporters and commuters safe travelling on roads. He said that the arrests of bandits' gang would help to enhance public trust in the police force of the district.

Sajjad asked the police officials to increase patrolling on Lakki-Darra Tang and other roads and tighten noose around anti-social elements in the district. He stressed for promoting community policing to win people's support against criminals and miscreants and asked the cops to behave with citizens politely.

## Focus on to develop southern districts: KP CM

**F.P. Report**

D I KHAN: Chief Minister Khayrullah Khan Sardar Ali Amin Khan Dandapur has said that solid measures are being taken for development of southern districts including Dera Ismail Khan.

He was talking to local dignitaries, party workers, and citizens who called on

him on the second of Eidul Azha at his residence. During these meetings, residents raised various issues and sought development initiatives and the chief minister assured that concrete measures would be taken for resolving those issues.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that the development of

Dera Ismail Khan and other southern districts was a top priority for the current government and in this regard effective measures were being taken. He stated that the construction of flyovers in the city had already begun, which would not only ease traffic congestion but also provide significant relief to residents in their daily commute.

## 6 family members killed in gas leakage blast

**Anees Takar**

MARDAN: Six persons were killed and two others sustained serious injuries when roof of a double story building collapsed due to a gas cylinder explosion in Iram Colony area in the Eidul Azha night, Rescue 1122 and district administration officials told. All the dead and injured persons belonged to the same family.

The personnel of rescue-1122 said that soon after getting information about the ill-fated incident Disaster, Fire-fighters and Medical teams rushed to the spot and launched their rescue services and activities.

While carrying out their rescue activities, the relevant officials pulled out a total eight persons out of collapsed debris including two men, a woman and five children. The officials said that the dead persons were identified as Fawad 36, his wife and two children named Riyan 7 and Aiza 4, Shah Fahid 25, and 8-years old Tuba-daughter of Jawad. Besides, the injured minors were identified as five-year old Aysha-daughter of Fawad and five-year-old Dua-daughter of Jawad. The officials said that they completed their rescue operation in seven hours and took all the dead and injured persons to Mardan Medical Complex hospital for further procedure.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan Dr. Azmat Ullah Wazir, District Emergency Officer Syed Shuib Mansoor and Assistant Commissioner Junaid Khalid were present on the occasion who supervised all the rescue operation. It was observed that the ill-fated and tragic incident paved the way for panic and sorrow in the area concerned and other adjacent localities on the happy day of Eidul Azha.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing leaders and workers of Pakistan People's Party at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Pakistan rejects Modi's baseless, misleading remarks

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has firmly rejected the "baseless and misleading remarks" made by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his first visit to the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) after the Pahalgalam false flag operation.

In a strong rebuttal, the Foreign Office said: "Pakistan firmly rejects the baseless and misleading remarks made by the prime minister of India regarding the situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir." It added that such statements represented a "deliberate attempt to deflect international attention from the grave and persistent human rights violations being committed in a territory under foreign occupation."

"We are deeply dismayed that the Indian prime minis-

ter has once again chosen to accuse Pakistan of involvement in the Pahalgalam attack, without presenting a single piece of credible evidence," FO said in its statement. "Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally recognised disputed territory, the final status of which is to be determined in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the will of the Kashmiri people," it said, adding that no amount of rhetoric could change the legal and historical reality.

"Claims of development in IOJK ring hollow against the backdrop of an unprecedented military presence, suppression of fundamental freedoms, arbitrary arrests, and a concerted effort to alter the region's demography in violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention," FO said. Pakistan

called upon the international community, including the UN and human rights organisations, to hold India accountable for its oppression and to ensure that the "Kashmiri people are allowed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions." "Pakistan remains steadfast in its principled support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their just struggle for their rights and dignity," FO said.

Meanwhile, Modi arrived in Reasi in IIOJK, the other day, to inaugurate the Reasi rail bridge and flagged off train to Srinagar. Addressing at a rally in Katra, he accused Pakistan of attacking "insaniyat and Kashmiriyat" (humanity and the Kashmiri identity) in Pahalgalam and went so far as to label Islamabad "an enemy of poor's bread and butter".





## Punjab achieves historic cleanliness milestone during Eid: CM Maryam

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has declared that with the grace of Allah Almighty, another milestone in public service has been achieved as the province successfully carried out the largest cleanliness operation in its history during Eid-ul-Azha.

According to Punjab government sources, the Chief Minister personally monitored cleanliness efforts across both small and large cities over the three days of Eid. Expressing satisfaction at the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the public, she praised the performance of all relevant departments and institutions. She lauded the dedication of waste management companies, district administrations, officers, and field staff, noting their commitment to meeting high standards of service.

The Chief Minister noted that for the first time, a province-wide cleanup operation of this scale had been conducted across 10 regions, 41 districts,

and 146 tehsils. Commissioners, deputy commissioners, and assistant commissioners actively took part in the drive by visiting neighborhoods, inspecting arrangements firsthand, and collecting direct feedback from the public. Waste collection points were set up in every locality, and disposable bags were distributed to households to ensure timely removal of animal waste.

The operation was monitored digitally from a central control room established at the Punjab Safe City Authority. In Lahore, the Lahore Waste Management Company exceeded its targets by collecting and disposing of waste efficiently and promptly. Across Punjab, major roads, streets, and public pathways were washed with phenyl and rose water to maintain hygiene and freshness.

During a detailed briefing to the Chief Minister, it was revealed that 111,121 tons of garbage were collected on the first day of Eid, 112,161 tons on the second day, and

10,000 tons on the third day.

Lahore alone accounted for over 71,343 tons of waste, while substantial collections were also made in Bahawalpur, D.G. Khan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Multan, Rawalpindi, Sahiwal, and Sargodha. In total, 143,429 liters of phenyl, 30,563 liters of rose water, and nearly 3 million kilograms of lime were used across the province for sanitation purposes.

Authorities informed the Chief Minister that out of 10,681 complaints received during the three days of Eid, 9,901 were resolved. Over 11.9 million free disposal bags were distributed, while 1,684 altars, 816 dump sites, and 3,970 union council camps were set up for public convenience.

The public, in both urban and rural areas, expressed their satisfaction and gratitude, praising Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and her team for executing such a timely and effective cleanliness campaign.

## US delegation meets Commissioner to reinforce commitment to Polio eradication

KARACHI (APP): A delegation from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Polio Branch, led by Dr. Richard Franka, met with Commissioner Karachi, Syed Hasan Naqvi, to discuss sustained efforts in the fight against polio.

Dr. Franka appreciated the Commissioner's leadership and the concrete measures undertaken to strengthen the city's polio eradication initiatives.

During the meeting, the epidemiological significance of Karachi as a core polio reservoir was underscored—owing to its large,

heterogeneous population and continuous population movement, which present complex challenges to eradication efforts.

Both parties emphasized the importance of maintaining high-quality surveillance and vaccination coverage to interrupt transmission.

The discussion also focused on sustaining momentum toward eradication goals, including continued CDC technical assistance and capacity building of Health Department staff.

The critical role of NSTOP officers in supporting District Emergency

Operations Centers (DEOCs) was highlighted as a key element of the response structure.

The active role of the Deputy Commissioners across Karachi was also acknowledged, particularly their continued leadership and on-ground coordination in supporting the polio eradication cause.

Their commitment to ensuring effective implementation of polio campaigns and rapid response efforts has been instrumental in driving progress.

Commissioner Karachi, Syed Hasan Naqvi, reiterated the need to maintain

NSTOP's support in core reservoir districts and stressed the importance of enhancing the capacity of frontline workers (FLWs) at the national level.

He advocated for providing FLWs with a conducive working environment and proposed organizing appreciation events to recognize their dedication and hard work—an essential step to boost morale and sustain motivation across the frontline workforce.

As a token of appreciation, souvenirs were presented to the CDC delegation in recognition of their ongoing support.

## Young man commits suicide in Karachi, 4 Injured in separate incidents

KARACHI (PPI): In a series of unfortunate incidents across the city, 4 people were injured and 2 lost their lives. On June 7, Maria, aged 30, and her 10-year-old son, Faheem, members of Saleem's family, were injured by stray bullets near Murghi Khana Bridge, Quaidabad.

They were immediately taken to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for medical assistance. Authorities have launched a thorough investigation to determine the circumstances of the shooting.

On the same day, in a separate incident, 35-year-old Kamran sustained gunshot wounds during a per-

sonal dispute near Shero Bara, close to Jumma Goth. He was also taken to a medical facility for urgent treatment, while law enforcement agencies are investigating the details of the altercation.

A tragic incident occurred in Usman Town Sector 50/C, where 25-year-old Munir committed suicide. His body was sent to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for necessary legal procedures. Police are examining the motives behind this heartbreaking incident.

Adding to the day's unfortunate events, the body of an unidentified woman, approximately 50 years old

and appearing mentally ill, was found near the riverbank close to Korangi Bagh. Initial investigations suggest a natural death, and the body was sent to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for further legal procedures.

Another concerning incident took place in Soldier Bazaar No. 3, where 54-year-old Asif was injured by gunfire while resisting a robbery. He was taken to Civil Hospital Karachi for treatment, and investigations are ongoing to apprehend those responsible.

Authorities in the city continue to investigate these incidents, striving to restore peace and deliver justice to the victims and their families.

## Strict security measures implemented in Islamabad on Eid al-Adha

Islamabad (PPI): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, acknowledged the sacrifices of the city's martyrs and ensured security measures on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. IGP Rizvi participated in Eid prayers with officers at the Police Lines Headquarters and offered special prayers for national security and the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs.

After the prayers, IGP Rizvi warmly congratulated the police officers on Eid and visited the memorial of the martyrs. He laid floral wreaths and paid tribute to the brave indi-

viduals who sacrificed their lives for the peace of the country, considering their invaluable services an asset to Islamabad Police.

A grand feast was organized for the families of the martyrs and police officers, where IGP Rizvi mingled with the participants, reflecting his statement, "Every officer is a part of my family." His outreach extended to personal visits to the homes of police martyrs, where he distributed gifts and assured families of ongoing support, committed to addressing any concerns.

During his district tour, IGP Rizvi met with offi-

cers on duty, distributed Eid gifts, and expressed his deep appreciation for their sacrifice of holidays to ensure a peaceful Eid for citizens.

Under IGP Rizvi's directives, strict security measures were implemented across Islamabad, activities were monitored by the Safe City Control Room, and senior officers were deployed in the field. This cautious strategy resulted in a peaceful Eid without any untoward incidents.

Over 1,500 police officers were tasked with the security of parks, while more than 300 traffic officers ensured the smooth

flow of traffic. Female officers safeguarded families in public places, with access to Daman-e-Koh and Lake View Park restricted to families only. Quick response teams continued patrolling to maintain law and order in the city.

Islamabad Police launched a strict crackdown against one-wheeling and public disorder, utilizing Safe City cameras and drone surveillance to maintain public safety. This effective strategy highlighted Islamabad Police's dedication and performance in ensuring community safety during Eid.



KARACHI: A view of fire caught on warehouse at Maripur locality. —INP Photo

### Four youth drowned in canal

JAMSHORO (INP): Four youth drowned in KB Feeder while bathing in the canal near Al-Manzar area of Jamshoro, rescue sources said. "Four young men from Hyderabad who had arrived for a picnic at Jamshoro's Al-Manzar, drowned in the canal while bathing in water. "Two drowning youth were rescued from the canal," rescue sources said. "While two dead bodies retrieved from the water," rescuers said. Deceased youth identified as, Ali Haider 14 and Mudassar s/o Saeed 20 years old.

### Police issue post-Eid travel advisory

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highway and Motorway Police (NH&MP) on Monday issued a travel advisory for commuters using motorways at the end of Eidul Azha holidays.

A spokesman for the NH&MP said that motorways and highways are expected to see heavy traffic as people head back to their cities and workplaces. To avoid accidents and delays, NH&MP urges all travelers to take some basic safety steps.

He said that before starting the journey, check the engine oil, water, tyre pressure and brakes of the vehicle. Ensuring everything is in order can reduce the risk of breakdowns on the road.

While driving, use seat belts, observe the speed limit, keep a safe distance from the next vehicle and take care of the lane and line, the spokesman said adding that before a long journey, the driver must be completely refreshed and take some time to rest after two to two and a half hours of driving. "Never drive while sleepy or drowsy," the advisory said.

Those traveling in passenger vehicles can complain about overloading and overcharging on Motorway Police Helpline 130, it said. The Motorway Police is always ready to help you and ensure a safe journey. By following these guidelines, all road users can contribute to a smooth and safe return journey, it added.

## Mayor supervises cleaning operation on Eid days

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab, along with MD Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) Tariq Ali Nizamani, personally supervised the collection of the offal and sacrificial animal waste on all four Eid days, including on Eid of the Bohri community and other arrangements.

He visited all seven districts in connection with the Eid-ul-Azha operation as

under SSWMB over 76 thousand tons of animal waste were buried in the landfill site and GTS Sharafi trenches, said a spokesperson of SSWMB on Monday.

Talking to the media, the Mayor Karachi said that the work of washing the major roads of the city with rose water has begun to ensure the elimination of odor and pollution. In addition, spraying of disinfectants, sprinkling of lime and fumigation are also underway.

He said that since the first day of Eid, when the sacrifice has begun in the

city in the morning, he and the solid waste team have been present on the ground. We are trying to ensure that the citizens do not face any problems. There is always room for improvement in the system.

He paid tribute to the solid waste staff and all those who are present on the ground and are busy providing relief to the people and said that everyone performed their duties diligently in the harsh weather.

Last year, the performance was good and this year it has improved even more, he added. He further said that so far, wherever he visited, the garbage operation is satisfactory. Wherever he saw shortcomings or negligence, immediate action was taken and improvements were implemented. Show-cause notices were given to the companies and contractors whose negligence were found.

He said that in New Karachi, he did not find the arrangements very suitable, so additional machinery has been installed and cleaned.

The collection points are cleared every day till night. Today too, work will be done till late night and they will be cleared tonight too. The work of lifting and burying the waste will continue till night. Garbage and animal remains are also being cleaned and the collection points that become empty will be sprayed with lime and fumigated.

He thanked the media for pointing out the shortcomings. He added that municipal bodies and elected local government representatives are also active in their areas.

According to other details, more than 38 thousand tons offals were shifted to Jam Chakro, more than 30 thousand tons to Gundas and more than eight thousand tons of waste have been delivered to GTS Sharafi.

About three thousand complaints were received through 1128 complaint centers of solid waste and mobile app, out of which 94.4 percent have been resolved and work is underway on the rest.

## Rescue 1122 responded to 22,593 emergencies

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Emergency Services Department, Rescue 1122, responded to 22,593 emergencies across Punjab during the Eid holidays. According to Rescue 1122 spokesperson, Punjab Emergency Services Department Secretary Dr. Rizwan Naseer praised Rescue 1122 personnel for their dedication and selfless service to the citizens of Punjab.

According to a briefing given to the Secretary, Rescue 1122 responded to 5,374 road traffic accidents, resulting in 39 fatalities, 13,841 medical emergencies, causing 587 deaths, 14 drowning incidents, with 10 fatalities, 353 fire incidents, 464 cases of falls or slips, 427 maternity-related emergencies, 387 work-related

injuries, 262 animal rescue operations, 98 electrocution incidents, 64 burn injuries, two building collapse incidents and 865 miscellaneous emergencies.

The deputy director operations reported that during Eid-ul-Adha, from June 6 to 9, 2025, a total of 216 emergencies related to animal handling and sacrificial activities were reported. These included, 119 injuries during sacrifice, caused by improper use of knives or tools, 97 incidents where aggressive or uncontrolled animals required rescue intervention. Several people were injured during the sacrifice process or trampled by animals. Among them, 65 patients were shifted to hospitals, while 151 received on-site first aid. These cases

were reported from major districts including Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, and Bahawalpur.

Dr. Rizwan Naseer expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives during the holidays. Reported fatalities included, 587 due to medical emergencies, 39 in road accidents, 19 due to criminal incidents, 10 from drowning, eight due to electrocution and 110 from miscellaneous causes.

He expressed serious concern over the 5,374 road accidents, especially the 39 resulting in death. He appealed to motorcyclists to limit their speed to 50 km/h, noting that every 1 km/h increase in speed raises the risk of a fatal accident by 4 to 5%.

## Police commended for maintaining peace, security on Eid

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar lauded the police force for exemplary security arrangements during Eid-ul-Azha, ensuring a peaceful and safe environment across the province.

According to IGP Punjab, senior police officials including the capital city police officer (CCPO) Lahore, regional police officers (RPOs), district police officers (DPOs) and traffic officers remained actively present in the field throughout the Eid holidays.

He added that the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) played a key role in keeping Lahore and other cities clean and free of animal waste through efficient monitoring and surveillance systems.

"The combination of effective patrolling, continuous monitoring and integrated security meas-

ures contributed to a peaceful Eid-ul-Adha," said Dr. Usman Anwar.

Law enforcement operations continued against individuals involved in illegal activities such as one-wheeling and aerial firing. A Punjab Police spokesperson reported that 32 offenders were arrested and 25 cases registered across the province for one-wheeling. Additionally, seven individuals involved in aerial firing were apprehended, with illegal weapons recovered and cases filed.

In separate actions, four suspects were arrested for instilling fear among citizens through public display of weapons, while seven others were taken into custody for violating the Loudspeaker Act, with legal proceedings initiated in each case.

Furthermore, 14 cases were registered against individuals collecting ani-

mal hides illegally during Eid-ul-Adha. Dr. Usman Anwar, lauded the police force for exemplary security arrangements during Eid-ul-Adha, ensuring a peaceful and safe environment across the province.

**Punjab police disburses Rs308m for welfare of police personnel children:** Punjab Police has disbursed over Rs 308.4 million over the past two years for the treatment and rehabilitation of special needs children of serving police employees across various districts.

According to the Punjab Police spokesperson, as part of this initiative, Rs 71.7 million was allocated for cochlear implant surgeries of 41 children suffering from hearing impairments, 654 children diagnosed with cerebral palsy received Rs 10,000 monthly stipends, totaling over Rs 126.8 million, 161 children affected

by thalassemia were provided with Rs 15,000 per month, amounting to Rs 52.78 million in medical support, Rs 10.2 million was spent on treatment of 162 children with various hearing disorders, 181 children battling serious illnesses were granted over Rs 36.8 million for their medical care: Rs 10 million was awarded as scholarships to 58 special needs students pursuing education. Additionally, 131 physically challenged children of police personnel were provided with wheelchairs.

IG Punjab Dr Usman Anwar said that comprehensive steps are being taken for the treatment, rehabilitation and welfare of special needs children of police employees. "We are fully committed to making the lives of these children more dignified and easier through sustained welfare efforts," said IG Punjab.



KARACHI: People enjoying at sea view during eid holidays. —INP Photo



# Chief Secretary inspects cleanliness operations

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, paid visits to various areas of Peshawar to inspect the cleanliness situation in the city during Eid-ul-Adha. He was accompanied by CEO Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP), Yasir Ali Khan. During the visit, Chief Secretary reviewed the ongoing Eid-ul-Adha cleanliness operation at several key locations including University Road, Canal Road, Old Bara Road, Kohati, Yakatoot, Wazir Bagh, and Lahori. He expressed satisfaction over the overall performance of the sanitation teams.

Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah directed WSSP officials to ensure round-the-clock cleanliness

throughout Eid. He emphasized the importance of continuous monitoring of the operation and instructed that sanitation staff remain on high alert to maintain cleanliness across the city.

## KP Local Government Minister Arshad Ayub Khan Reviews Eid Special Cleanliness Drive

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government, Arshad Ayub Khan, visited various areas of Peshawar on the third day of Eid-ul-Adha to review the ongoing special cleanliness operation. During his visit, the Minister thoroughly assessed the sanitation arrangements made to ensure cleanliness across the city during Eid.

The Minister was accompanied by CEO Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar

(WSSP) Yasir Ali Khan, Secretary Local Council Board Waheed-ur-Rehman, and other concerned officials. The Minister inspected the cleanliness of major roads including GT Road, Ring Road, Dalazak Road, Charsadda Road, Yakatoot, Gorchatri and University Road. He also visited Hayatabad to examine the sanitation situation. On this occasion, the Minister issued directives to the concerned officers to wash all collection points and carry out disinfection sprays after the conclusion of the special operation to eliminate any foul odors and germs completely.

The Minister also commended the sanitation staff for their dedication and performance in effectively disposing of animal waste over the three days of Eid-ul-Adha and acknowl-

edged their hard work and teamwork.

CEO WSSP briefed the Minister in detail regarding the special Eid operation and informed that over 9,500 tons of animal waste had been disposed of during the first two days of Eid. He maintained that upon completion of the operation, all main roads would be washed with a mixture of rose water and chlorine, and disinfection spray activities would continue to ensure a clean and safe environment.

Minister Arshad Ayub Khan lauded the overall performance of the sanitation staff and emphasized that all personnel had fulfilled their responsibilities with true commitment. He reiterated that all must continue to carry out their duties diligently for the continued improvement of the department's performance.



PESHAWAR: President of Peshawar Press Club, M. Riaz, addressing on the occasion of Eid evening with children organized by Thalassaemia Center of Alkhidmat Foundation.

# KP collects, disposes over 24,000 tons of waste on Eid

## F.P. Report

P E S H A W A R : Government of Khyber khtunkhwa conducted Cleanliness/ Sacrificial Animals Waste Collection Drive during Eid-ul-Azha. The drive was successful in achieving its main objectives as reflected from statistical data shared in a report prepared by Performance Management and Reforms Unit (PMRU).

As per the report, a total of 24939 tons of waste was collected and safely disposed off throughout the province with an operational cost of PKR 78.5 million. 11309 number of staff was deployed in the operation out of which

95% attendance was observed. Similarly, all complaints received during the operation were resolved. 2294 vehicles were used during the operation. Most districts (97%) used burial as the primary waste disposal method, with some districts using greener methods.

Peshawar district recorded the highest amount of waste collected, totaling 10944 tons. D1 Khan followed with 2900 tons of waste collected, Mardan 2635 tons and Swat 2059 tons. Kurram, Kohistan Lower and Torgar districts recorded the lowest quantity of waste collected, each with only 4 tons.

In terms of number of

staff deployed, Peshawar recorded the highest number with 4073 staff members, followed by Swat (888) and Mardan (855) whereas North Waziristan had the lowest number of staff deployed (04). The report also highlighted that Mardan district saw the highest number of absent staff (62), followed by Peshawar (22). Overall, 28 districts had 100% attendance of staff.

Complaint resolution presented impressive figures, with 99.9% of success rate.

A total of 1289 complaints were received, 1288 out of which were resolved. Peshawar received the highest number of complaints (594),

followed by Mardan (228). Shangla, Torgar, Orakzai and North Waziristan districts incurred lowest cost during the drive (30000, 55000, 50000, 15000 PKR respectively).

Key takeaways from the report include excellent complaint handling, high staff attendance, effective disposal and low cost in some districts. The report also highlighted some coverage gaps in Swat and South Waziristan Lower due to inaccessibility along with absenteeism in districts such as Mardan and Peshawar. The drive was an overall success in terms of coverage and waste collection and disposal.

# Economic Survey also follows ‘Form 47’ pattern: Muzzammil Says country’s debt soars by Rs31,300billion under PDM

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: At the end of the fiscal year, Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on finance & interprovincial coordination, Muzzammil Aslam, released an important video statement, saying that the trend of "Form 47" has now become widespread across Pakistan, and even the Economic Survey of Pakistan has used the same Form 47 methodology.

Muzzammil Aslam stated that according to the government, the GDP growth at the end of the year stands at 2.7%, whereas last year, the government had set a GDP growth target of 3.6%. He said that he informed the Prime Minister last week that the actual GDP growth should be shared with the public, and even this 2.7% GDP growth is embarrassing.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Advisor noted that in 2021

the growth rate was 5.7%, and in 2022, at the end of Imran Khan's government, it was 6.4%. Yet, despite this, in 2022, PTI founder Imran Khan was still blamed for poor economic performance. Muzzammil Aslam questioned how long the government would continue to sell the false narrative of an improving economy.

After the fall of Imran Khan's government, the growth rate dropped to -0.2% in 2022-23. The following year it was 2.5%, and now, according to the government, it is 2.7%.

The Finance Advisor pointed out that the population is increasing by 2.5%, while the average growth rate over the past three years has been just 1.5%. He mentioned that, for the first time during Eid-ul-Adha, 30% of livestock were sent back from Karachi unsold, and if such a situation existed in a major city like Karachi, one can imagine the condition in other cities.

Muzzammil Aslam also said that the government lied about reducing the inflation rate — due to excessive taxation, people's purchasing power has declined significantly.

He highlighted that the government itself is admitting a 13.5% decline in major crops — including wheat, sugarcane, rice, and maize, all of which have suffered drops in production.

The KP Finance Advisor said that now the PDM government claims an annual increase in livestock production, stating a 4.7% growth, but when there is a shortage of essential food items for people, how can livestock production be increasing?

He added that small industries run behind large industries, and while the government claims a 1.5% decline in large-scale manufacturing, it is a miracle that small industries supposedly saw 8.8% growth.

Muzzammil Aslam said that, according to a World

Bank report, 45% of Pakistan's population has fallen below the poverty line. Out of a population of 240 million, if 110 million are below the poverty line, then what kind of economic performance is this?

He stated that core inflation in the country is still at 11.6%. The PDM government has entered IMF programs four times in the past three years, and, in the Prime Minister's own words, not even a "penny" of investment has come into the country.

Muzzammil Aslam concluded by stating that at the end of Imran Khan's government, the total national debt was Rs. 43,500 billion, and after three years under the PDM government, the debt has reached Rs. 75,000 billion. A total of Rs. 31,300 billion in debt was taken in just three years, and even in the current budget, the PDM government has very limited capacity to provide any real relief to the public.

# Tribal elders play vital role in fight against terrorism

PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant development in Pakistan's ongoing fight against terrorism, tribal elders across the northwestern regions have taken a proactive role in supporting the government endeavors in fight against terrorism and implementation of National Action Plan (NAP).

Marking a renewed community led push for durable peace and stability in formerly Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), these tribal elders are diligently pursuing the communities as arbitrators and custodians of traditional codes.

Their participation in counterterrorism efforts has enhanced the legitimacy of state policies through local intelligence gathering, deradicalization initiatives, resolution of local disputes and community policing for efficient implementation of the NAP. National Action Plan (NAP) was launched by Nawaz Sharif-led government following the 2014 Army Public School Peshawar massacre, as part of a unified national strategy to combat terrorism and extremism.

A cornerstone of this counter terrorism strategy was the engagement of tribal elders, whose respected status in local Pashtun communities in erstwhile Fata was crucial in bridging the gap between state institutions and the grassroots population.

"Pro-government tribal elders have paid a heavy price in the war against terrorism. Their sacrifices paved the way for peace and stability in erstwhile FATA," said Shahge Gul Afridi, former Member of the National Assembly from Bara Tehsil of Khyber

district.

After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, he said militant spillover into Pakistan's tribal belt surged. "Tribal elders were among the first to rise in support of the Pakistani state agencies, aiding in the identification of extremists and helping in formation of tribal lashkars (militia) to safeguard their communities against militants' threats."

It is noteworthy that from 2001 till June 2018, at least 149 pro-government tribal elders were assassinated and 69 others injured in targeted attacks. Among the victims were prominent figures including former Federal Minister Malik Faridullah Khan Wazir, Malik Mehboob Wazir, Malik Shah Farosh, Malik Salam Khan of the Mohmand Peace Committee, and many others. These elders were targeted for raising lashkars and issuing public statements during peace jirgas, urging communities not to shelter militants and calling on youth to reject extremist ideologies.

"The tribal elders have always stood for Pakistan against both internal and external threats and sacrificed lives," said Haji Shaukat Ullah Khan, former Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Bajaur tribal district. "Pakistan is our motherland, and we are ready to render every sacrifice for its defense and protection against all threats."

He said the tribal elders' efforts in conflict mediation, reintegration, and peace-building have played a vital role in erstwhile Fata and in many areas, helped establish local peace committees to coordinate close-

ly with district administration and the government agencies to monitor suspicious activity and resolve disputes between warring groups.

"What these elders need is recognition, respect, security and a seat at the decision-making table," he added. "Many among them stress the need for increased socio-economic investment in tribal areas particularly in education, healthcare and infrastructure to root out terrorism and prevent radicalization." "High poverty and illiteracy rate in erstwhile FATA make tribal youth susceptible to hostile propaganda," said Brig. (R) Mahmood Shah, former Secretary Law and Order for FATA. "Now more than ever, tribal elders, academics, religious scholars, and the media have joined hands in countering this growing threat."

Referring to a recent video by banned TTP fugitive Noor Wali Mehsud, in which he had called for Indian support for so called "jihad," Brig. Shah condemned the group for distorting Islam and threatening Pakistan's national security.

"The Khawarij are mocking Islamic teachings and aligning with India under the false pretext of religious warfare," he said.

"These terrorists have used advanced Indian-made quadcopters in recent attacks against Pakistan, including those targeting women and children that is clear evidence of external sponsorship."

He said the video evidence has exposed the nefarious propaganda of Indian sponsored Khawaraj aimed at blaming security

forces for their own atrocities.

Professor Dr. Ghanfoor Ahmed, former Dean of Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, Peshawar also deplored the Khawarij's terror actions and underscored the need of mobilization of tribal elders, religious scholars and media to counter malicious propaganda of inimical forces in the wake of Khawaraj negative campaign against Islam.

"Seeking help from non-believers and carrying out terrorism in the name of religion is not jihad. It's a betrayal of faith and a conspiracy against Islam," he said. Citing Surah Al-Ma'idah, he pointed out that alliances with non-Muslims against one's own people contradict Quranic teachings.

"The Pakistani nation must recognize its enemies and support its security forces," said Dr. Ghanfoor. "These extremists are using Islam for personal gains by distorting its true message. Their defeat is imperative for peace and preservation of Islamic values."

Since, the experts believe in national unity against Khawarij-India nexus, they call upon federal and provincial governments for a continued engagement with tribal elders under the NAP framework particularly in policy consultations and protection of leaders, religious scholars and community activists. Their continued support to the government and law enforcing agencies could prove pivotal in defeating terrorism, alienating youth from disgruntled elements and fostering long-term stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



# BBQ, Matton Karahi parties add colours to Eid celebrations

PESHAWAR (APP): The Matton Karahi, BBQ and Chappli Kabab parties have added colours to Eidul Azha celebrations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Whether at homes or recreational spots, people enjoyed these delectable cuisines on joyous occasion of Eidul Azha.

By visiting parks and dams sites, they enjoyed BBQ and meat parties besides free swings by children on the third day of Eid-ul-Azha celebrations.

Keeping alive the rich traditions of hospitality, the people of KP exchanged meat dishes and invited loved ones on parties besides distributed sacrificial animals meat in poor that doubled their Eid joy. As per traditions, the people of Peshawar passed the first Eid day at home and spent the second day by visiting houses of their loved ones, relatives and friends for exchange of Eid greetings, meat and sweet gifts besides Eidis in children. On third day, they visited parks and recreational tourism destinations.

"I came from Wapda town to hand over sacrificial animals meat to my sister in line of Islamic rituals," Zedhan Khan, a resident of Nowshera told APP.

"I visited the home of grandfather on third day of Eidul Azha and exchanged Eid greetings with him viz a viz his family members. Such joyful event, which comes after a long time, are creating spirit of love, warmth, sacrifice and brotherhood in the society," he said.

"The exchange of Eid greetings and distribution of meat among poor and friends bring people and relatives more closer besides doubled their joys."

"I distributed 10 kgs meat among my relatives, poor and has utilized half amount of Edi by visiting parks and Peshawar zoo for



recreational activities and donated the remaining amount among orphans children to include them in Eid-ul-Azha celebrations," he said. "I met with all my friends, cousins and relatives during Eid days and today I came to Peshawar alongwith brother to visit parks and recreational spots for entertainment," said Rehbar Khan, a resident of Nowshera at historic Shahi Bagh Peshawar while enjoying free swing said.

He said the Eidi received from relatives and loved ones has greatly helped him pay ticket charges of free swings and transport. Like these young visitors, thousands of people of Peshawar, Mardan, Kohat, Nowshera and Charsadda districts thronged to parks, picnic and recreational points besides Peshawar Zoo to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha with great enthusiasm.

Parks and recreational spots in Peshawar, Kohat, Charsadda and Nowshera were flooded with tourists due to effective security measures made by the government. Great hustle and bustle was seen at Chacha Younis Park, Shahi Bagh, Tanda dam in Kohat, Kund Park in Nowshera and Sardaryab

picnic point in Charsadda where people mostly children and youth enjoyed free swings and meat parties under an open sky amid laughter and funfair.

Sardaryab picnic point on Peshawar-Charsadda Road and Kund Park in Nowshera was jam-packed with visitors while spicy items including meat, rice and Bar B Que parties were enjoyed by them on the banks of Shah Alam, Khayali and Indus rivers amid great funfair.

The riverside views, colourful boats and fried fish attracted visitors at Sardaryab in Charadda in abundance.

Local musicians and singers have enthralled visitors in Sardaryab and presented local Pashto songs especially during evenings and received warm applause from tourists.

The brightly painted boats on river bank that offer trips to tourists for Rs200, also attracted tourists in large number at Sardaryab. Great rush of tourists were seen especially children tried to get place in the boats before enjoying entrance in the rivers.

"Sardaryab is my favorite tourist place because the riverside views

always gave me some respite from hot weather," Ehtisham Khan, 28, a resident of Peshawar told APP.

"The natural beauty of Sardaryab, especially its long river shore and travelling inside the river through colour boats gives me immense happiness during Eid holidays," he said.

Eid festivities in Kohat also continued on third day of Eid where people enjoyed travelling, swimming, rice and meat dishes at open at Tanda dam.

Built on River Tochi near Kohat city in 1960, the Tanda dam attracted influx of tourists from Hangu, Karak and Bannu districts.

"Tanda dam double my enjoy due to its cool breeze here," Rehan Khan, a tourist from Kohat told APP.

He said the atmosphere of Tanda dam was very excellent and full of natural beauty and people can come here to enjoy its natural beauty.

Film lovers also visited cinema houses and enjoyed movies on big screen. Entertainment Gala were also held at all major cities, towns and villages where elaborate entertainment arrangements were made for entertainment of children.





## In brief

### Minister lays foundation stone of Road F.P. Report

KARAK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture Major@ Muhammad Sajjad Barkwal has laid the foundation stone of the Kazim Kala-Amarkai Graveyard Road along with the MNA Shahid Khattak in Karak district. Besides Kamran Khattak, Asim Khattak, Asim Barkwal and Arif Nawaz Khattak, workers and elders of the area were also present on this occasion. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the Minister Agriculture thanked the Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, and said that he had included Karak district among his priorities. InshaAllah, this era will prove to be an era of real development for the Karak district. He added that a new era will be usher in the area with the road projects. He expressed his determination to work together for the progress and prosperity of the Karak district. Earlier, the Minister while addressing a public gathering in Dubli Lawahar, said that addressing the grievances of those areas is his utmost priority which were ignored in the past. He added that collective struggle will be waged to bring these areas at par with the developed one.

### Four people killed, two hurt F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Four people, including a minor, lost their lives and two others were injured when a car plunged into a ravine on Sunday in Dera Ismail Khan. The incident occurred in a remote Sheerani area of Darazinda. According to locals, a family was returning from the popular tourist destination, Almar Kalan, when their car went out of control and fell into a deep ravine. Among the deceased were two brothers and a seven-year-old child. The injured were transported to a nearby hospital, where medical officials confirmed that they are in stable condition.

### Session judge visits jail F.P. Report

KARAK: In the light of Directions of August Peshawar High court, Peshawar, Syed Yasir Shabbir, Honorable District and Session judge, Karak, along with Senior Civil Judge Admn and Deputy commissioner Karak visited the judicial Lock up/central jail karak. The prisoners involved in Petty nature cases were released. The whole premises of jail including female and juvenile barics, kitchen, hospital and drug rehabilitation centre were inspected in detail. Later the Honourable District and Session Judge inaugurated a Solar plant recently installed by Deputy commissioner Karak in the premises of jail.

### End to Gaza war demanded F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Speakers at a conference have strongly reacted to the indifference of the international community to the Gaza situation, saying that thousands of innocent Palestinian Muslims including women, children and elderly have been martyred in the merciless Israeli aggression and bombardment. The conference was held at the residence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader and former district nazim Ishaq Ahmad Khan Meenakhel in Lakki city on Monday to express solidarity with the oppressed Muslims of Gaza.

# Kundi for setup of Jirga to resolve merged dists' issues

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday underlined the need for formation of a joint tribal jirga representing all the merged tribal districts to amicably and permanently resolve issues being faced by the people of these areas.

He was addressing a ceremony organized in his honor by the Mehsud Jirga to express gratitude for the safe recovery of Atta Muhammad Mehsud, a youth from the Mehsud tribe who had gone missing in Sindh and was later recovered due to the efforts of the governor. The governor urged tribal leaders to ensure unity for resolving their problems as only the people of the merged districts themselves could effectively present their case to the federal government and other relevant forums.

"You should put your heads together and form a joint jirga to provide a prosperous future to your youngsters, as no one else would come from outside to resolve your problems," the governor said. The governor warned that continued neglect of the merged areas could have spillover effects on neighboring regions.

Governor Kundi highlighted that while the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) laws were abolished with the merger of FATA into KP, the fundamental issues remain unresolved. He said the state had promised to provide Rs 100 billion annually to the merged districts, and the Sartaj Aziz Commission recommended allocating 3 percent of the NFC share, but to date, we have received nothing," he stated.

He further claimed that Rs 700 billion meant for the tribal regions were transferred to the provincial government, but those funds never reached the intended recipients. "We must set aside political differences and form a united tribal jirga to negotiate with the state for our rights," he urged. He added that issues such as unemployment, lack of infrastructure, electricity shortages, and the absence of internet connectivity were severely hindering progress in the region.

He informed that discussions regarding FATA development funds and compensation packages had already been initiated with the authorities concerned and would be resolved soon. He also highlighted ongoing efforts to improve infrastructure and address electricity problems in the

tribal belt. The governor voiced concern over rising unemployment in the merged districts and underscored the importance of creating job opportunities for the youth.

He emphasized that internet access, which has become vital in the modern world, remained a major gap in the tribal areas. About Atta Muhammad's recovery, Governor Kundi said it was his duty to advocate for his release, adding "I will continue to act as your representative and voice in times of need." During the event, tribal elders honored Governor Kundi with a traditional turban and praised his commitment to tribal rights.

PPP Upper Waziristan District President Shamsur Rahman Mehsud and other elders presented a charter of demands to the governor regarding regional development, to which the governor assured full cooperation. Later, talking to media persons, the governor raised concern over the law and order situation in KP saying that the province was under the control of corrupt elements." He added that the KP government was deliberately obstructing federal development projects.

He cited alleged corruption in wheat procurement, health services, and municipal administrations, claiming that Rs 50 billion had been embezzled in a single district and transferred abroad. He added that the provincial government was blocking key federal initiatives, including the Chashma Lift Canal and the Dera Ismail Khan International Airport.

However, he assured that these projects would be launched soon despite resistance. Expressing concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in KP, the governor criticized the provincial authorities for leaving the region vulnerable to terrorism. He voiced confidence in the Pakistan Armed Forces, stating, they had the capability to eliminate terrorism just as they taught lessons to India in just 78 hours.

"We want peace in the province, and our youth deserve the same opportunities and facilities as those in Islamabad and Karachi," he asserted. He added that, unlike the violent protests on May 9, the governor noted that the PPP's March 26 demonstration had remained peaceful and did not target military installations. He pledged full support for peace and development, promising to convey the concerns of tribal communities to federal authorities and ensure their inclusion in national progress.

# 2 killed, dozens injured in Eid traffic accidents

F.P. Report

OKARA: In Okara, two people were killed and over 2 dozen were injured in traffic accidents during Eid. Among the injured were women, elderly, and children, totaling 22 people.

The first incident occurred near Zamal Marriage Hall on Depalpur Road, where a car collided with a motorcycle, injuring Rashid Ahmed and Altaf Hussain, residents of Iqbalpura. The second accident happened near Khanganwala Bridge when a car accident caused two motorcycles to collide, injuring Ghulam Muhammad, Nooran Bibi, Nadeem Iqbal, Ahad Ali, and Muhammad Usman.

The third accident occurred near Pir Di Hatti, where a car hit a motorcycle, injuring Misbah-ul-Haq and Muhammad Shahbaz. The fourth accident happened near 43/2L, where a collision between two motorcycles injured Sajida Parveen, Bashiran Bibi, and Muhammad Shahbaz. On Chuchak Road near DPS, a collision between two motorcycles injured Muhammad Ashraf, Muhammad Akram, and Kausar Bibi. In a tragic accident on Chuchak Road, an eight-year-old boy, Atiqur-Rehman, was killed when a speeding Mazda

truck hit him. In another accident near 39/4L on Mailgada Road, Saeed Ahmed, Aisha Bibi, and Faizan Ali were injured.

**Illegal amusement rides seized:** In a decisive move for community safety, Deputy Commissioner Ahmed Usman Javed has ordered a comprehensive operation against illegal rides in Okara's public recreational areas.

Assistant Commissioner Rab Nawaz, along with Chief Officer of the Municipal Committee Umar Naseem, led the enforcement action against operators of unapproved rides. As a result of this operation, mechanical rides at key locations such as Fareeduddin Water Park, Colonel Safdar Shaheed Park, and Jinnah Park were seized.

Authorities confiscated equipment from these illegal setups, reflecting a strong stance against potential hazards. The police have been approached to register cases against two individuals.

In light of the upcoming Eid al-Adha celebrations, the presence of unregulated and dangerous mechanical rides posed a significant threat to public welfare. The directives from the Government of Punjab against these installations are being strictly enforced,

ensuring that public safety is given the highest priority. This proactive measure is to prevent any untoward incidents during the holiday celebrations. The local administration has committed to continuing these vigilant measures, maintaining a zero-tolerance policy against illegal recreational operations in the city's parks, and ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens.

## Rescue 1122 ensured emergency coverage F.P. Report

MUZAFFARGARH: Rescue 1122 ensured a comprehensive emergency coverage during Eid-ul-Azha congregations across Muzaffargarh and Kot Addu districts, in accordance with established emergency protocols.

According to District Emergency Officer (DEO) engineer, Ubaidullah Khan, Rescue 1122 provided effective emergency response arrangements at all major and minor Eid prayer gatherings held across both districts.

## Lawyers delegation call on Muqam F.P. Report

MINGORA: A delegation of the Muslim Lawyers Forum Shangla met Federal Minister and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, at his residence in Malam Jabba here Sunday.

Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam appreciated the role of lawyers in upholding the rule of law and assured full cooperation in resolving their issues. He stated that the government is committed to strengthening institutions and improving the legal infrastructure in areas like Shangla.

The delegation was led by the President of the Muslim Lawyers Forum, Syed Namdar Ali Shah Advocate. Other important office-bearers and members of the delegation included Vice President Mehrullah Shah Advocate, General Secretary Shahidullah Advocate and others. On this occasion, it was affirmed that mutual cooperation will continue for the welfare of the lawyer community and the public.

## AJK CJ called upon to halt appointment process F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A wave of concern and protest is mounting among applicants for the protocol officer post at the Supreme Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, following what many are calling a pre-planned and non-transparent recruitment process. Over 500 qualified candidates, including several PhD degree holders, had applied for the post. However, only 6 candidates were shortlisted, raising serious questions about the legitimacy and fairness of the shortlisting process.

Insiders claim that a so-called test and selection process was held to favor a specific individual already working in the Supreme Court on an ad hoc basis, who has now been placed at the top of the merit list. According to the affected candidates, no third-party testing service was engaged, and no transparent mechanism was adopted to ensure equal opportunity for all.

In response, candidates have formed a social media platform titled "Protocol Officer Aspirants—Supreme Court AJK" to coordinate collective action, raise awareness, and pursue justice. Speaking to the media, the applicants have called upon the Honorable Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan, to personally intervene and halt the recruitment process until a transparent, merit-based, and impartial procedure is ensured.

"This is not just about one post," said one of the affected applicants. "It's about safeguarding public trust in the judiciary and ensuring that institutions follow the principles of fairness and transparency." The group has also announced that if no action is taken in the coming days, they will initiate a peaceful protest demonstration outside the Supreme Court building in Muzaffarabad.

# Former senator demands setup of probe comittee



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Former Senator Kohat saying that it was a bomb blast in which Abbas Afridi was killed. Police security was withdrawn from us two hours before the explosion, he disclosed.

There were several assassination attempts on me and my sons before that, but not yet any FIR was registered for any incident including the Abbas Afridi's martyrdom, nor any arrest was made, which shows a 100% conspiracy.

Addressing a press conference at Kohat Press Club on Monday, he said that on the one hand, Amjad Afridi

is arrested in a false case while on the other hand, an explosion is made in the room and Abbas Afridi is martyred.

He maintained that gas leakage does not cause the such huge destruction that has occurred, but it is also a continuation of the same conspiracy. He termed the Abbas Afridi's death a part of a planned plan and the result of a well-thought-out conspiracy. He narrated that Abbas was assassinated, a grenade attack was launched on our CNG station, a rocket was fired on flour mills, Amjad Afridi's car was fired at, Ibrahim Afridi's house was attacked, Babar Azeem was fired at and now Abbas Afridi has been killed but

no FIR has been registered in any of these incidents.

Afridi said that we have no enmity or dispute with anyone, Malik Muhammad Asad was a good person and he was respectable. We had no involvement in his murder.

Conspiracy hatched against Amjad Afridi, he declared.

He questioned that what was the purpose of the policeman firing on the occasion of Amjad Afridi's appearance in court?. All these are links of a conspiracy against us. Therefore, we demand from the government to form an impartial committee and conduct an independent and impartial investigation into this incident and provide us justice, he concluded.

# Upper Swat enchants tourists during Eid holidays

KALAM (APP): The interplay of sunshine and drifting clouds over the snow-capped peaks of Upper Swat has turned the region into a magnet for tourists and adventure seekers this Eid-ul-Azha, with Mahodand lake emerging as a centerpiece of natural allure.

Blanketed in a mix of mist, rain, and sunlight, the lake—nestled deep within the heart of Osho Valley—has become a breathtaking spectacle during Eid holidays. The recent spell of rain has rejuvenated the landscape, casting a magical hue over the bluish-white waters, lush green pastures, and blooming wildflowers.

Families from across Pakistan, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, are arriving in large numbers to soak in the lake's seasonal beauty and cool, refreshing air. "I came to Mahodand Lake with my family after five years to enjoy its mesmerizing beauty and pleasant weather," said Nasir Khan, a tourist from Peshawar.

"Every raindrop adds to the magic, enhancing the lush surroundings and the lake's emerald glow," he added while enjoying freshly grilled trout, as his children played by the water's edge. Perched at an altitude of 9,400 feet and stretching over two kilometers, Mahodand lake has witnessed a vibrant revival following the recent rains that turned weather very pleasant in upper parts of Swat. While enjoying boating in the famous lake Nasir's family was over the moon after taking some respite of the sizzling weather in Peshawar.

Its growing popularity owes much to improved accessibility, thanks to the Swat Motorway and upgraded local infrastructure that have significantly cut travel time from major cities in Punjab and KP. To manage the influx and promote eco-friendly tourism, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, through its Tourism and Culture Authority, has launched several sustainable tourism initiatives under the Ecotourism Development Project (ETP).

Among them is the installation of over a dozen eco-friendly camping pods at key tourist spots like Mahodand, Gabeen Jabba, Sharan, and Chitral. Priced affordably between Rs 3,500 and Rs 4,000 per night, the pods offer two to four beds, private bathrooms, compact kitchens, and 24/7 security managed by the dedicated Tourism Police. "Our camping pods are designed for comfort and affordability, especially for families and young travelers," said a spokesperson from the Tourism and Culture Authority.

"The Tourism Police, trained in multiple languages including English, ensures visitor safety and assistance, further supported by our 'Tourist Safety App.'" To ease pressure on popular destinations like Malam Jabba, Galiyat, Kaghan, and Naran, the government is also developing lesser-known tourist sites. These include new jeep tracks and scenic spots in Haripur, Abbottabad, Dir, and Swat.

Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager of the KP Tourism Authority,

highlighted new developments such as the Lamchar and Sajkot waterfalls and off-road routes aimed at diversifying the tourist experience.

Looking ahead, the province's Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs)—developed in partnership with the World Bank—promise transformative growth. Zones in Mankiyal, Ghanoor, Madaklasht, and Thandiyan are expected to attract up to \$2.8 billion in investment and create an estimated 200,000 jobs.

Great rush of tourists were witnessed in Behrain and Malam Jabba Swat where all hotels and restaurants are jam-packed. Kumrat valley—a tourists paradise in Upper Dir have also drawn adventure sports enthusiasts in droves.

Poor roads infrastructure and high hotels cost irked tourists in Kumrat valley. Projects such as the Dir-Madaklasht cable car and restoration of colonial-era trails are further set to boost the region's appeal for both domestic and international tourists. "The revival of Mahodand Lake is not just about nature—it's about opportunity," said Omair Khattak, General Manager of Investment at the KP Tourism Authority. "We're building local economies, encouraging eco-conscious travel, and opening up Pakistan's stunning northern landscapes to the world." As summer unfolds, Mahodand Lake stands as both a tranquil retreat and a powerful symbol of Pakistan's rising tourism potential—where nature, culture, and sustainable planning converge.

# Kohat police conduct large-scale traffic campaign

F.P. Report

KOHAT: To ensure the convenience and safe travel of citizens on the occasion of Eidul Azha, Kohat Region Police conducted a coordinated and large-scale traffic campaign from June 1 to June 8, 2025. The campaign was launched on the instructions of Deputy Inspector General Kohat Region, Abbas Majeed Khan Marwat and was carried out under the direct supervision of District Police Officers (DPOs) in all districts - Kohat, Karak, Hangu, Kurram and Orakzai.

During the campaign, special attention was paid to two major violations: one, charging more than the fare from passengers and the other, driving at high speed. Strict action was taken in this regard, as a result of which more than 800 vehicles were challaned for charging more than the fare, while more than 1000 drivers were stopped for speeding and dangerous driving.

The campaign witnessed significant improvement and effective enforcement compared to previous years, which is a testament to the growing vigilance of the police. A total of 9,989 traffic violations were reported, including tinted windows, unregistered vehicles, lane violations, and other general irregularities. Traffic staff were deployed on all major highways, city entrances and exits, and bus stands, while special teams were also formed to redress complaints promptly. Passenger complaints were redressed in a timely manner under the supervision of DPOs, and legal action was taken on the spot.

During the campaign, an awareness campaign was also conducted through FM radio, police social media, and public announcements to create awareness among the citizens about respecting traffic rules and responsible driving. DIG Kohat Region Abbas Majeed Khan

Marwat appreciated the timely and coordinated action of the district police teams and reiterated the resolve that such campaigns will be continued continuously to ensure public convenience, protection of life and property, and traffic discipline.

**RD Operations visits Rescue 1122:** Regional Director Operations South Imran Khan Yousafzai visited the district office of Rescue 1122 Karak on the second day of Eid. On this occasion, he was welcomed by District Emergency Officer Atif Sardar and rescue personnel. During the visit, he met the staff present at the station and reviewed the facilities provided to the public during the joyous days of Eid. Later, he inspected the vehicles and equipment used in emergencies, on which Regional Director Operations South Imran Yousafzai expressed satisfaction.

Regional Director Operations South encouraged the personnel

on duty and appreciated the spirit of prioritizing public service instead of Eid and said that they should continue the mission of public service and ensure the provision of all resources and facilities. Regional Director South Imran Yousafzai distributed certificates and cash prizes among the rescue personnel for their excellent performance in various emergencies and encouraged the rescue personnel.

Meanwhile, on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, DSP Headquarters Karak Fazal Akbar Khattak, setting a high example of selflessness and sacrifice, truly highlighting the sacred spirit of sacrifice, sacrificed a fine bull, which he had reserved for those police personnel who are also performing duty in the police line for the protection and service of the public on the day of Eid.

This is the first time that a senior officer in Karak Police has slaughtered a bull and pre-

sented it to the jawans on duty, which is a unique and commendable initiative in the history of Karak district. This act of DSP Fazal Akbar Khattak not only carries a spiritual message but also further promotes brotherhood, solidarity and the spirit of service within the police force. On the instructions of District Police Officer Karak Shahbaz Elahi, DSP Fazal Akbar Khattak spent Eid with the jawans in the police line and mingled with the jawans and had dinner at one place. Speaking on the occasion, DSP Headquarters Fazal Akbar Khattak said: "Sacrifice is not just a ritual but a great message.

The Sunnah of Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) teaches us to prioritize the happiness of others over our own happiness. I have made this sacrifice for those youths who are on duty to protect the public instead of celebrating Eid with their families." This act of the Karak Police is an example of how the guards engaged in

serving the public keep the spirit of sacrifice and selflessness alive at every opportunity.

Morover, police under the leadership of SHO Latemar Farid Khan of police station arrested a dozen unruly youths for one-wheeling, having fun and disturbing public peace in different areas of Latemar on the third day of Eidul Azha.

During the operation, illegal weapons were recovered from two persons and they were taken into custody along with two pistols. According to the police station SHO, the arrested unruly youths were shifted to the police station along with their motorcycles and legal action has been initiated against them. The public has expressed satisfaction over the timely action taken by the Latemar police against the unruly youths and appreciated the police performance for ensuring the supremacy of law.





## US believes Russia response to Kyiv drone attack not over yet

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The United States believes that Russian President Vladimir Putin's threatened retaliation against Ukraine over its drone attack last weekend has not happened yet in earnest and is likely to be a significant, multi-pronged strike, US officials told Reuters.

The timing of the full Russian response was unclear, with one source saying it was expected within days. A second US official said the retaliation was likely to include different kinds of air capabilities, including missiles and drones. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity. They did not detail Russia's expected targets nor elaborate on intelligence matters. The first official said Moscow's attack would be "asymmetrical," meaning that its approach and targeting would not mirror Ukraine's strike last weekend against Russian warplanes.

Russia launched an intense missile and drone barrage at the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and Russia's Defense Ministry said the strike on military and military-related targets was in response to what it called Ukrainian "terrorist acts" against Russia. But the US officials believe the complete Russian response is yet to come. A Western diplomatic source said that while Russia's response may have started, it would likely intensify with strikes

against symbolic Ukrainian targets like government buildings, in an effort to send a clear message to Kyiv.

Another, senior, Western diplomat anticipated a further devastating assault by Moscow. "It will be huge, vicious and unrelenting," the diplomat said. "But the Ukrainians are brave people." The Russian and Ukrainian embassies in Washington and the White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Michael Kofman, a Russia expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said he expected Moscow might seek to punish Ukraine's domestic security agency, the SBU, for its role in last weekend's assault. To send a message, Russia could employ intermediate-range ballistic missiles for the attack, he said.

"Most likely, they will attempt to retaliate against (SBU) headquarters, or other regional intelligence administration buildings," Kofman said, adding Russia could also target Ukrainian defense manufacturing centers. Still, Kofman suggested Russia's options for retaliation may be limited as it is already throwing a lot of its military might at Ukraine.

"In general, Russia's ability to substantially escalate strikes from what they are already doing - and

attempting to do over the past month - is quite constrained," he said. Kyiv says audacious attack employed 117 unmanned aerial vehicles launched deep from within Russian territory in an operation code-named "Spider's Web." The United States assesses that up to 20 warplanes were hit - around half the number estimated by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy - and around 10 were destroyed.

The Russian government denied that any planes were destroyed and said the damage would be repaired, but Russian military bloggers have spoken of loss or serious damage to about a dozen planes, including those capable of carrying nuclear weapons. The strikes, prepared over 18 months and conducted by drones smuggled close to the bases in trucks, dealt a powerful symbolic blow to Russia, which throughout the Ukraine war has frequently reminded the world of its nuclear might.

Putin told President Donald Trump in a telephone conversation that Moscow would have to respond to attack, Trump said in a social media post. Trump later told reporters that "it's probably not going to be pretty." "I don't like it. I said: 'Don't do it. You shouldn't do it. You should stop it.'" Trump said of his conversation with Putin. "But, again, there's a lot of hatred."

## Iran expands dog walking ban

TEHRAN (BBC,AFP): Iranian officials have expanded a ban on dog walking to a swathe of cities across the country, citing public order and health and safety concerns.

The ban - which mirrors a 2019 police order that barred dog walking in the capital, Tehran - has been extended to at least 18 other cities in the past week. Transporting dogs in vehicles has also been outlawed. Dog ownership has been frowned upon in Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with dogs viewed as "unclean" by authorities and a legacy of Western cultural influence.

But despite efforts to discourage it, dog ownership is rising, particularly among young people, and it is viewed as a form of rebellion against the restrictive Iranian regime. Cities including Isfahan and Kerman have introduced bans in recent days, according to news agency AFP.

An official from the western city of Ilam, where a ban was implemented, said "legal action" would be taken against people who violated the new rules, according to local media. However, enforcing restrictions in the past has been patchy, while many dog owners continue to walk their dogs in public in Tehran and other parts of Iran. There is no national law that outright bans dog ownership, but prosecutors often issue local restrictions that are enforced by police.

"Dog walking is a threat to public health, peace and comfort," Abbas Najafi, prosecutor of the western city of Hamedan, told state newspaper Iran. Owners have sometimes been arrested and dogs confiscated for being walked in public. Many have taken to walking their dogs in secluded areas at night or driving them around to evade detection.

Politicians in the Islamic regime regard pet ownership as un-Islamic. Many religious scholars view petting dogs or coming into contact with their saliva as "najis" or ritually impure. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has previously described dog ownership - other than for the purposes of herding, hunting and security - as "reprehensible".

In 2021, 75 lawmakers condemned dog ownership as a "destructive social problem" that could "gradually change the Iranian and Islamic way of life". Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance banned advertisements for pets or pet-related products in 2010 - and in 2014 there was a drive in parliament to fine and even flog dog-walkers, though the bill did not pass.

Following the recent crackdown, critics argue the police should focus on public safety at a time of growing concern over violent crime, rather than targeting dog owners and restricting personal freedoms.

## Thousands march in Rome for end to war in Gaza

ROME (AP): Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Rome against the war in Gaza in a protest called by Italy's main opposition parties, who accuse the right-wing government of being too silent. Protesters held a banner reading "Stop the massacre, stop complicity!" at the start of the march, which moved peacefully through the center of Rome amid a massive display of rainbow, Palestinian and political party flags.

The protest attracted a diverse crowd from across the country, including many families with children. According to organizers, up to 300,000 people participated in the rally organized by the leftist opposition to ask the government for a clear position on the conflict in Gaza. "This is an enormous popular response to say enough to the massacre of Palestinians and the crimes of (Israeli leader Benjamin) Netanyahu's government," the leader of Italy's center-left Democratic Party, Elly Schlein, told reporters at the march.

"There is another Italy that doesn't remain silent as the Meloni government does," she said, referring to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. Meloni was recently pushed by the opposition to publicly condemn Netanyahu's offensive in Gaza, but many observers considered her criticism too timid. "(The Italian government) is not reacting despite an



abnormal massacre, despite an absolutely cruel and inappropriate reaction. The (Italian) government remains silent," said Nadin Unali, a Tunisian demonstrator at the march.

Earlier this week, the Italian premier urged Israel to immediately halt its military campaign in Gaza, saying its attacks had grown disproportionately and should be brought to an end to protect civilians. Israel faces mounting international criticism for its offensive and pressure to let aid into Gaza during a humanitarian crisis.

Gaza has been under an Israeli blockade for nearly three months,

with experts warning that many of its 2 million residents are at high risk of famine. The war broke out on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants launched a surprise attack on Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted 251 hostages. They are still holding 56 hostages, around a third of them believed to be alive. Since then, Israel has killed more than 54,000 Palestinians in its military campaign, primarily women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures.

## Chinese ship runs aground off Philippines-occupied island in Sea

PUERTO PRINCESA, Philippines (AP): A Chinese ship ran aground in stormy weather in shallow waters off a Philippines-occupied island in the disputed South China Sea, prompting Filipino forces to go on alert, Philippine military officials said.

When Filipino forces assessed that the Chinese fishing vessel appeared to have run aground in the shallows east of Thitu Island because of bad weather, Philippine military and coast guard personnel deployed to provide help but later saw that the ship had been extricated, regional navy spokesperson Elaine Rose Collado said. No other details were immediately available, including if there were injuries among the crewmembers or if the ship was damaged, Collado said. Confrontations have spiked between Chinese and Philippine coast guard and navy ships in the disputed waters in recent years.

"The alertness of our troops is always there," Col. Xerxes Trinidad of the Armed Forces of the

Philippines told reporters. But when they saw that a probable accident had happened, "we tried to provide assistance as professionals" in accordance with international law on helping distressed vessels at sea. "We're always following international law," Trinidad said.

Filipino villagers living in a fishing village on Thitu, which they call Pagasa island, immediately informed the Philippine military and coast guard after seeing the Chinese ship lying in the shallows about 1.5 nautical miles (2.7 kilometers) from their village, said MP Albayda, a local Filipino official, told The Associated Press. "They got worried because the Chinese were so close but it was really the strong wind and waves that caused the ship to run aground," said Albayda, adding that other Chinese ships pulled the stricken vessel away.

The stricken ship resembled what the Philippine military had repeatedly said were suspected Chinese militia ships, which had backed the Chinese

coast guard and navy in blocking and harassing Philippine coast guard and military vessels in the disputed waters, a busy conduit for global trade and commerce. Thitu Island is home to a Philippine fishing village and Filipino forces and is the largest of nine islands and islets occupied by the Philippines. It lies about 26 kilometers (16 miles) from Subi Reef, which China transformed into an island base along with six other barren reefs to reinforce its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea.

Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan are also involved in the long-simmering territorial standoffs, an Asian flashpoint that many fear could pit China and the United States in a major conflict. The US does not lay any claim to the South China Sea but has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, it's longtime treaty ally, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

## Slovakia will block EU curbs on Russia

BRUSSELS (Reuters): Slovakia will block any European Union sanctions against Russia that damage its national interests, Prime Minister Robert Fico said after parliament approved a resolution calling on the government not to back any new measures.

Fico said that Slovakia wanted to stay constructive within the bloc, but he called the resolution a political tool with a strong message. "If there is a sanction that would harm us, I will never vote for it," Fico told a news conference shown on his party's YouTube page. Slovakia, a NATO and European Union member, has diverged from Western allies in its position on Ukraine under Fico and his leftist-nationalist government coalition, and stopped official state military aid to Kyiv as it battles Russia's invasion.

Fico has also been an opponent of sanctioning Russia for its war against Ukraine, saying trade measures damage Slovakia and the EU more than

Moscow. The new resolution, approved in a thinly attended parliamentary session, committed government members not to vote for new sanctions and trade limitations towards Russia. It had not been immediately clear to what extent the resolution was constitutionally binding. Fico said he could not support any measure stopping the import of Russian fuel for Slovakia's nuclear power plants. "I am interested in being a constructive player in the European Union, but not at the expense of Slovakia." Slovakia has not blocked any previous EU sanctions, including a 17th package targeting Moscow's shadow fleet, adopted in May. Attempts to hit Russia's gas and nuclear sectors have consistently hit obstacles, with opposition from Slovakia and other countries, like Hungary, that still rely on Russian energy supplies.

**Russia says plan to boost role in Africa includes 'sensitive' security**

**ties:** Russia plans to step up cooperation with African countries, including in "sensitive areas" such as defence and security, the Kremlin said. Russian mercenary group Wagner said last week it was leaving Mali after helping the military junta there in its fight with Islamist militants. But the Africa Corps, a Kremlin-controlled paramilitary force, said it would remain in the west African country.

Asked what this meant for Russia's role in Africa, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "The Russian presence in Africa is growing. We really intend to comprehensively develop our interaction with African countries, focusing primarily on economic and investment interaction. "This also corresponds to and extends to such sensitive areas as defence and security. In this regard, Russia will also continue interaction and cooperation with African states."

## India's \$80b coal-power boom is running short of water

CHANDRAPUR/SOLAPUR, India (Reuters): April marks the start of the cruellest months for residents of Solapur, a hot and dry district in western India. As temperatures soar, water availability dwindles. In peak summer, the wait for taps to flow can stretch to a week or more.

Just a decade ago, water flowed every other day, according to the local government and residents of Solapur, some 400 km inland from Mumbai. Then in 2017, a 1,320-megawatt coal-fired power plant run by state-controlled NTPC began operations. It provided the district with energy - and competed with residents and businesses for water from a reservoir that serves the area.

Solapur illustrates the Catch-22 facing India, which has 17% of the planet's population but access to only 4% of its water resources. The world's most populous country plans to spend nearly \$80 billion on water-hungry coal plants by 2031 to power growing industries like data center operations. The vast majority of these new projects are planned for India's driest areas, according to a power ministry document reviewed by Reuters, which is not public and was created for officials to track progress.

Many of the 20 people interviewed by Reuters for this story, which included power company executives, energy officials and industry analysts, said the thermal expansion likely portended future conflict between industry and residents over limited water resources. Thirty-seven of the 44 new projects named in the undated power ministry

shortlist of future operations are located in areas that the government classifies as either suffering from water scarcity or stress. NTPC, which says it draws 98.5% of its water from water-stressed areas, is involved in nine of them.

NTPC said in response to Reuters' questions that it is "continuously striving towards conservation of water with best of our efforts in Solapur," including using methods like treating and reusing water. It did not answer queries about potential expansion plans. India's power ministry has told lawmakers in parliament, most recently in 2017, that the locations of coal-fired power plants are determined by factors including access to land and water and that state governments are responsible for allocating water to them.

Access to land is the dominant consideration, two federal groundwater board officials and two water researchers told Reuters. India's complex and arcane land laws have delayed many commercial and infrastructure projects for years, so power operators under pressure to meet burgeoning demand pick areas where they are likely to face little resistance, said Rudrodip Majumdar, an energy and environment professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bengaluru.

"They look for areas with easy land availability - minimum resistance for maximum land - even if water is available only far away," he said. The federal power ministry, as well as energy and water authorities in Maharashtra state, where Solapur is located, did not respond to queries.

Delhi attempted to reduce its reliance on coal before reversing track after the COVID pandemic. It has invested heavily in renewable energy sources like solar and hydro, but thirsty thermal power will still be dominant for the coming decades.

India's former top energy bureaucrat Ram Vinay Shahi said ready access to power was strategically important for the country, whose per-capita power consumption is far lower than its regional rival China. "The only energy resource we have in the country is coal," he said. "Between water and coal, preference is given to coal."

Solapur resident Rajani Thoke plans her life around water in high summer. On days with supply, "I do not focus on anything other than storing water, washing clothes and such work," said the mother of two, who strictly polices her family's water use. Sushilkumar Shinde, the federal power minister who approved the Solapur plant in 2008, when the area had already been classified "water scarce," told Reuters he helped NTPC procure the land by negotiating payments to locals.

The member of the opposition Congress party, who won election to retain Solapur's parliamentary seat a year after the plant's approval, defended the operation on grounds of NTPC's sizable investment. The \$1.34 billion plant generated thousands of jobs during its construction and now provides part-time employment to about 2,500 locals. "I made sure farmers got good money for the land NTPC acquired," he said, adding that mismanagement by local

authorities was to blame for water shortages.

Solapur municipal official Sachin Ombase acknowledged that water distribution infrastructure had not kept up with population growth, but said that authorities were trying to address the problem. Shinde said "there was nothing" in Solapur in 2008 and that residents who received land payments had no reason to oppose the plant. Researcher Shripad Dharmadhikary, who founded environment advocacy group Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, said local politicians often supported splashy infrastructure projects to boost their popularity.

Any "problems come up much later," he said. Even before the Solapur plant started operating, there were signs of the trouble to come. The first of its two units was supposed to start generating power by the middle of 2016, but it was delayed by more than 12 months because of years of severe water shortages, according to a 2020 regulatory filing. The absence of nearby water resources meant the station ended up drawing on water from a reservoir about 120 km away. Such distances can sharply increase costs and the risk of water theft, said Dharmadhikary and two plant sources.

As of May 2023, the station is among India's least water-efficient, according to the latest available federal records. It also has among the lowest capacity utilization rates of coal-fired plants, according to data from government think-tank NITI Aayog. NTPC said its data indicates

the Solapur plant has an efficiency ratio in line with the country's norms. Indian stations typically consume twice as much water as their global counterparts, according to the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment think-tank.

Solapur plant officials told reporters in March that capacity utilization will improve with increasing demand, indicating that water consumption could surge in the future. A forthcoming survey on water use in Solapur led by state groundwater authorities and reviewed by Reuters showed that irrigation demand in the district outstrips supply by a third.

Dharmes Waghmore owns farmland a few miles from the plant and said that developing it would provide more financial security than his current casual work. But he said borrowing money to develop the land by drilling a bore well is too risky: "What if there's no water?" Kuladeep Jangam, a top local official, said authorities were struggling to draw businesses to Solapur.

The lack of "water neutralizes all other pull factors," he said. Since 2014, India has lost 60.33 billion units of coal-power generation across the country - equivalent to 19 days of coal-power supply at June 2025 levels - because water shortages force plants to suspend generation, according to federal data. Among the facilities that have struggled with shortages is the 2,920 MW Chandrapur Super Thermal Power Station, one of India's largest.

Located about 500 km northeast of Solapur but also in a water-stressed area, the plant shuts several

of its units for months at a time when the monsoon delivers less rain than usual, according to NITI Aayog data. Despite the challenges, the plant is considering adding 800 MW of new capacity, according to the power ministry list seen by Reuters and half a dozen sources at Mahagenco, which operates the station. The document indicates the plant hasn't identified a water source for the expansion, though it has already sourced its coal.

State-owned Mahagenco did not respond to Reuters' questions. The plant's thirst for water has previously led to tensions with residents of nearby Chandrapur city. Locals protested the station during a 2017 drought, prompting officials such as local lawmaker Sudhir Mungantiwar to order it to divert water to homes. Mungantiwar, however, says he supports the expansion of the plant, which he hopes will lead to it retiring water-inefficient older units.

But the station has already delayed a plan to decommission two polluting and water-guzzling power units with a capacity of 420 MW by about seven years, citing instructions from the federal government, the company sources said. The Indian government asked power companies not to retire old thermal plants until the end of the decade due to a surge in demand following the pandemic, Reuters has reported. Chandrapur resident Anjali, who goes by one name, said she is resigned to visiting a tap installed by the station near one of its gates for drinking water. "We're poor, we make do with whatever we can get," she said.



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## Adding work needs to Medicaid isn't a bad idea

OVER the past 46 years that I've been part of America's job training system, work requirements for government benefits have been proposed several times. Each time these work rules have been initially denounced by opponents as "cruel," "punitive," "blaming the victim" — with accompanying fears that benefit recipients were not ready to be employed and would lose needed benefits.

Yet each time work requirements have been implemented, they have resulted in increased employment and other life benefits for a significant segment of participants, their families and local communities. Those are the metrics by which to measure success; reducing the rolls of benefit programs has not been the main goal sought by advocates of previous work requirements.

The results have been documented over the years by scholars representing a range of viewpoints: Harry Holzer of Georgetown, Lawrence Mead of New York University and the professional research staff at MDRC, to cite a few. These results have been seen with work rules imposed for welfare recipients, recipients of various General Assistance benefits and parents who owe child support.

They will be seen again if the proposed Medicaid work rules go forward and are implemented seriously and with purpose.

Individuals on welfare and other benefit programs often need a push into the job world. They may lack confidence, have become discouraged or have no idea how to get started. Work rules provide that push. They also provide a support network for job placement and retention. America Works is one of the nation's largest job agencies serving unemployed people, referred by various government benefit programs. Each participant is assigned a job counselor and develops an individual employment plan. The counselor is to identify job openings, assist the participant in applying, advocate for the participant to employers. The counselor is also trained to be the coach whom all job seekers need: keeping spirits up through the (likely many) rejections, serving as a problem solver during the placement process and troubleshooting when job issues inevitably arise after placement. At each stage, the participant is no longer on their own.

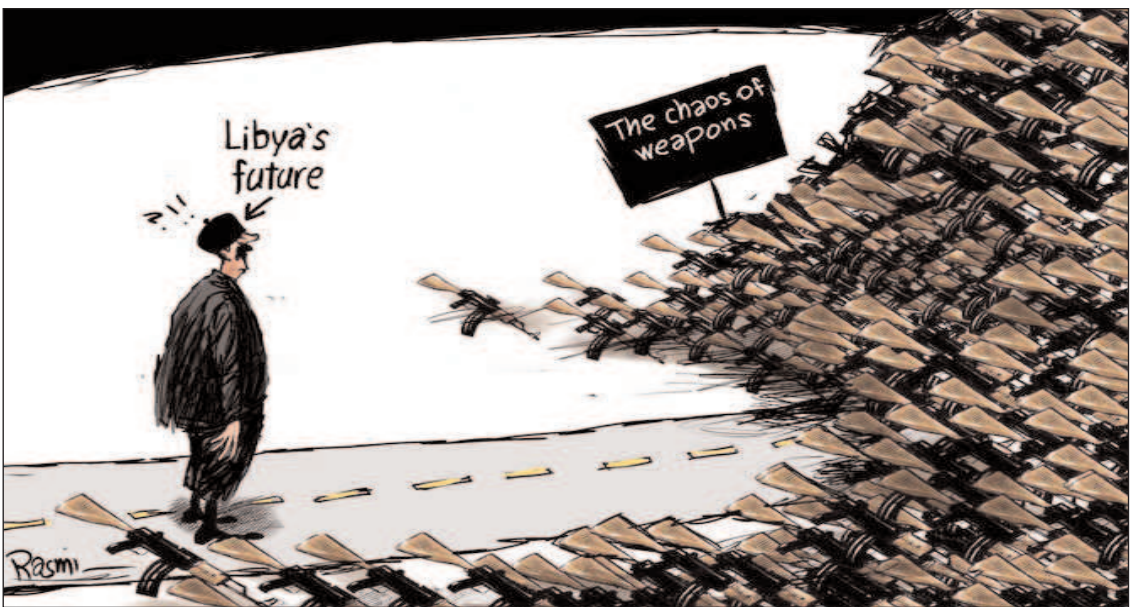
Since the early 1980s, work rules have been most extensively tested, studied and monitored in the welfare system, first as pilot projects by individual states and later under the federal welfare reform of 1996. Welfare scholars of the 1980s, including Manpower Demonstration Research Corp. President Judith Gueron would highlight how much previous welfare policies divorced from work requirements had underestimated the work orientation and strengths of welfare recipients. Researchers of welfare-to-work programs of the 1990s and early 2000s at the Urban Institute and with a consortium of university centers would confirm the widespread work orientation of welfare recipients, as well as their abilities to function in the work world. This is not to romanticize welfare-to-work. Despite the counseling and supports (transportation subsidies, child-care subsidies), a good number of participants drop out during the placement process or within a year of job placement. They do so because of chaotic personal lives or mental illnesses or developmental disabilities that the job placement system is unable to address. They do so because of an absence of a family network, or because they don't want to risk the other housing, healthcare and food stamp benefits they receive beyond the welfare payment. Even those who obtain jobs often struggle economically.

At the same time, for those who are able to maintain a job, the job frequently brings values beyond the income. Jason Turner, the architect of the early Wisconsin welfare-to-work successes and later commissioner of New York City's Human Resources Administration, references the power of the job, drawing on his experiences over four decades. A job brings structure to participants in work requirement programs, somewhere to go every day. It brings a new confidence, which can translate into addressing daily life responsibilities that previously seemed overwhelming.

In theory, the importance of employment is hailed across the political spectrum. In practice, though, the ties of government benefits to employment have been weakened in the past two decades — and so many opportunities to demonstrate the value of this connection have been missed. Welfare-to-work requirements have been diluted in major cities and blue states. Employment efforts for recipients of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance have stalled. Guaranteed incomes schemes removed from employment have gained currency.

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## When a three-paisa rise mattered

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

SINCE the earliest flickers of my conscious memory, I have seen the several federal budgets of Pakistan presented with much fanfare and anticipation each June. It was a season not unlike a grand festival, awaited with equal parts anxiety and hope—especially by the business community and government servants. The former looked to it with a calculating eye; which commodities would bear the new burden of tax, what levies might shift the market tides in their favour. The latter, more modestly, wondered how many increments would be awarded to their salaries and pensions. The days leading up to the budget were filled with speculation, and for some, strategic preparation. There were traders who, by mere virtue of stocked goods in their warehouses, found themselves richer overnight, simply because the new duties declared from the treasury benches inflated the prices of their inventory.

In those days, the post-budget press conference of the finance minister held an air of solemnity and consequence. Every word, every phrase, was weighed and measured by industrialists and economists alike. In the National Assembly, thick budget booklets were distributed—heavy tomes filled with numbers and aspirations. Few members of the House had the patience or interest to consult these volumes, but they were a treasure trove for journalists and parliamentary researchers, who would mine them for days and weeks to follow.

Time, however, has galloped on. The budget—once an exercise in delicate statecraft and public sentiment—is now a behemoth whose size and scale are met with little more than weary nods. Gone are the days when a slight increase of a few paisas in a commodity's price would provoke spirited debates and media frenzies. There was once a time when even a

marginal adjustment in the cost of everyday items would be met with fiery protest or passionate defense. That innocence—or perhaps that vigilance—seems lost.

In a recent sitting with the esteemed Mr. Naeem Siddiqui, the former Librarian of the National Assembly and a walking encyclopedia of parliamentary chronicles, I was treated to memories of a different age—when budgets were not merely fiscal instruments but human stories. He recalled an episode from the Ayub Khan era, when Mr. Muhammad Shoaib served as the Finance Minister. During the budget debate, a Bengali member named Mr. Afsaruddin Ahmad Khan stood and raised what seemed a minor but symbolic grievance. He declared in the House that Coca-Cola, which had hitherto sold at 50 paisa, was now being sold for 53 paisa. "You may not know," he said to the minister, "because you drink it from government-hosted tables. We drink it from our own pockets." It was an unpretentious statement, but it carried the force of truth. In those days, market rates did not fluctuate daily, and when they did, it was usually the state that prompted the change.

Finance Minister Shoaib, perhaps flustered by the unexpected specificity of the critique, replied with a modest admission. "Only one item, the postcard, which was priced at three paisa, has now been raised to five." Yet even this small increase prompted a strong reaction. When the cost of a Bottle of kerosene oil rose from 25 paisa to 28 paisa, a trade unionist and labour leader from East Pakistan named Mehboob-ul-Haq voiced his concern with notable eloquence. He reminded the House that such correspondence was not merely commercial, but a vital thread in the social and emotional fabric of the country. "Those who send letters in envelopes

can afford them; the poor rely on postcards," he remarked.

There was another instance where kerosene oil—a staple in the homes of the common man—saw a nominal increase of three paisa. Again, Mehboob-ul-Haq rose with a clarity of thought rarely heard today. He pointed out that in the dimly lit huts of East Pakistan, where kerosene lamps were the only source of light, this increase would extinguish not just flame but hope. "When the lamps do not burn," he warned, "the millions spent on family planning will go to waste." The Finance Minister was convinced by their arguments and withdrew the 3 paisa increase.

How stark is the contrast when one compares the scope and scale of past budgets with the fiscal leviathan we now encounter annually. In the days of Ayub Khan, the federal budget hovered modestly around Rs. 2 to 3 billion. During Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's tenure, it gradually crossed Rs. 20 billion as nationalisation expanded the state's role. Under General Zia-ul-Haq, the figure rose to around Rs. 100 billion, reflecting a growing state machinery and an economy adjusting to regional conflicts and foreign aid.

With the democratic wave in the 1990s, the budgets under Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto saw expenditure climb above Rs. 300 billion, while General Pervez Musharraf's era ushered in a phase of economic liberalisation, with budgets swelling beyond Rs. 1 trillion. By the time the Pakistan Peoples Party concluded its tenure in 2013, the federal budget had crossed Rs. 3 trillion. During Imran Khan's government, this figure surged past Rs. 7 trillion, largely due to debt servicing, defence allocations, and pandemic-related fiscal strains.

Now, in the present year, the federal budget

has breached Rs. 18 trillion—a number once unimaginable. Of this, debt servicing alone consumes over Rs. 9.5 trillion, a tragic testament to the weight of past borrowings. Defence allocations hover near Rs. 2.1 trillion, subsidies amount to nearly Rs. 1.4 trillion, and the development budget, unfortunately, receives a considerably smaller portion than what is required for long-term national growth. Salaries, pensions, and grants to provinces complete the fiscal portrait. And yet, despite this massive outlay, the common man finds little comfort in the figures. The street remains restless, the shopkeeper anxious, the salaried class disillusioned.

These recollections and comparisons are not merely nostalgic footnotes from a bygone era. They are a mirror held up to our current reality. The budget of today, with its astronomical figures and technical jargon, may well be more expansive, more complex—but is it more humane? Do its architects sit with the same sensitivity to the small household, the evening lamp, or the postage-stamped letter from a village to a city?

We must ask ourselves whether the Federal Budget, in all its ambition, still serves the people it was meant to uplift. Or has it become a ritual of figures and forecasts, divorced from the realities that once made every paisa count? It is not a matter of arithmetic alone, but of conscience. When a government raises taxes, it ought to also raise the trust of the people. When it announces relief, it must ensure its reach is not limited to paper but felt in the life of the common citizen. To recall those earnest debates of the past is not to yearn for simpler times, but to remind our present of the dignity of governance. Let the budget not be a ceremonial exercise cloaked in numbers but a document of national intent—one that speaks, as it once did, to the hearts of those who light lamps in the darkness.

## American anger should not stop at Israel's border

Ray Hanania

AN Egyptian immigrant who had overstayed his visa in the US and was angry with Israel's killings in Gaza was last week arrested and charged with a hate crime after he threw firebombs at a pro-Israel rally in Boulder, Colorado.

Americans are angry about the attack, which has been presented as another act of Arab and Muslim terrorism and an act of anti-semitism because the targets were supporting the release of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza.

The suspect, identified as Mohammed Sabry Soliman, told police after his capture that he was angry at what Israel and the "Zionists" were doing to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Soliman also told investigators that he wanted to "kill all Zionist people and wished they were all dead," according to court documents.

No act of violence should be condoned or encouraged. Eight people suffered severe burns and were hospitalized as a result of the attack, during which Soliman yelled "Free Palestine."

The attack is tragic in many ways. What Soliman did was wrong. Violence is never justifiable. Injuring innocent people over a political

issue or government policies is immoral as well as illegal.

The problem is that Americans are the biggest hypocrites when it comes to the rule of law. Americans are the worst when it comes to embracing consistent morality. Americans scream when someone commits an act of aggression against them, but are silent when their country's actions fuel acts of aggression against others.

The hypocrisy of how Americans respond to violence is one of the greatest inhumanities in the world today.

Soliman was clearly motivated by American hypocrisy over US policy in the Gaza Strip.

When you examine the Arab-Israeli conflict honestly and fully, you can only conclude that America has been the major enabler of violence in the Middle East — but only in one direction: against any person or nation that challenges Israel.

America funds Israel. America arms Israel. America protects Israel against attempts to punish it for its war crimes. America is complicit in Israel's killing of innocent people — women and children who are just as innocent as those injured by Soliman.

Instead of addressing this hypocrisy by enforcing international law and the fundamental principles of morality fairly and across the board in all circumstances, Americans selectively decide who they should feel sorry for and who they should condemn. They rightly condemn Soliman for his act of violence. But they refuse to condemn Israel's government for its violence.

In fact, Americans give Israel protection against criminal prosecution for violating the basic principles of the international rule of law. The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his war crimes in Gaza. But instead of enforcing this and arresting Netanyahu, America instead announced sanctions against members of the court.

You cannot cry about crime when the victim is someone you sympathize with and ignore crime when the victim is someone you are helping to injure and kill. Most people in the world know this. I just returned from a tour through Europe and I was astounded by how much sympathy Europeans have for the Palestinian cause and how much anger they harbor toward Israel, which has killed more than 60,000 Palestinians in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023.

The killings continue every day. But the difference is, when an Egyptian blinded by anger and rage over the massacre of women and children in Gaza commits a heinous crime, Americans scream in outrage. But when an Israeli soldier intentionally shoots a female Arab journalist in the head or drops a bomb on a Gaza tent city, massacring dozens of starving civilians, Americans shrug their shoulders.

Americans also apply certain terms differently. A "hostage" is an Israeli who has been illegally captured by Palestinians. But the same word is not used to describe a Palestinian illegally captured by Israel.

I am angry with what Soliman did. But my anger does not stop on the border with Israel. My anger goes beyond that one tragic and horrendous act of violence in Colorado to also reflect the inhumanity of the Israeli violence in Gaza, which is paid for by America.

Justice must be for everyone, not just those we embrace politically.

## The Freedom Flotilla achieved its mission

Yara Hawari

IN the early hours of June 9, Israeli forces intercepted the Madleen ship in international waters, near the coast of the Gaza Strip. The yacht, carrying 12 activists from seven countries and humanitarian aid and food supplies, had been sailing for just over a week. Among the activists was Greta Thunberg, who has been consistently demonised and mocked by Israeli politicians and others for her support of the Palestinian struggle.

The aid on board was a symbolic quantity, and it would not have made much of a difference had it reached the starving Palestinians in Gaza. The United Nations estimates that at least 500 trucks of aid are needed daily in order to meet their basic needs. It was also expected that Israeli forces were going to stop it before it reached Gaza's shores.

Nevertheless, the Madleen carried out an important mission. It demonstrated to the world and to governments that are refusing to abide by their international legal obligations to stop the genocide and lift the blockade that Gaza will not be forgotten.

The Madleen was organised by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC), a grassroots group which campaigns in solidarity with the Palestinian people. In May, another of their boats — Conscience — was attacked by drones just outside of Maltese territorial waters. The damage was so significant that it was not able to continue its journey to Gaza.

The FFC is part of a decade-and-a-half-long effort by activists to break the blockade of Gaza. In 2010, a flotilla of six ships from Turkey sailed for the Strip before Israeli troops intercepted it in international waters. The largest ship — the Mavi Marmara — was stormed by Israeli commandos who opened fire and killed nine activists.

In the aftermath of the bloody raid on the flotilla, Noam Chomsky wrote: "For decades, Israel has been hijacking boats in international waters between Cyprus and Lebanon, killing or kidnapping passengers, sometimes bringing them to prisons in Israel including secret prison/torture chambers, sometimes holding them as hostages for many years. Israel assumes that it can carry out such crimes with impunity because the US tolerates them and Europe generally follows the US lead." Under international law, the interception of both — the Mavi Marmara and the Madleen — is unlawful. Israeli forces have no legal authority to detain international activists in international waters. As Huwaida Arraf, a Palestinian American lawyer and FFC organiser, said: "These volunteers are not subject to Israeli jurisdiction and cannot be criminalised for delivering aid or challenging an illegal blockade — their detention is arbitrary, unlawful, and must end immediately." Gaza lies on the Mediterranean Sea, and yet it has been hermetically sealed from its Mediterranean neighbours for decades. Israel's air, land and sea blockade began in 2007, but even before that, Israeli naval forces monitored and restricted access to Gaza's coastline. The 1993 Oslo Accords did not grant the Palestinians full sovereignty over their own waters, giving them instead access to 20 nautical miles (37km) from the Gaza coast for fishing, recreation and the extraction of natural resources such as gas. This is just 10 percent of the 200-nautical-mile limit for sovereign countries set under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

and journalists — all Turkish citizens. To date, the victims of Mavi Marmara have yet to receive justice.

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The Madleen may have been stopped at sea, but its message travels far: The blockade is not invisible, nor will it be forever. Each intercepted vessel, each detained activist, each act of defiance reaffirms that Gaza is not forgotten — and that until freedom is restored and justice achieved, the sea will remain a front line in the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

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But even these 20 nautical miles were never respected by the Israeli regime, which restricted the Palestinians to smaller and smaller spaces on the coastline. This has completely cut the Palestinians off from the outside world and has had a disastrous impact on Gaza's seafaring tradition and fishing industry.

Fisherpeople have been forced to fish in a very restricted area, which has inevitably led to overfishing. Since the beginning of the genocide, Gaza's fisherpeople have been targeted and killed and had their boats bombed and equipment destroyed. Among them is Madleen Kulab, the only Palestinian female fisher in Gaza, after whom the Freedom Flotilla ship was named.

The mother of four has been repeatedly displaced during the genocide and is now sheltering in her damaged home. Her fishing days are over.

Under international law, UN members have the obligation to act when a severe crime like genocide is taking place. They have the duty to impose sanctions, including arms embargo. Instead, the European Union,

from where the majority of the activists on the Madleen hail, has not only renounced this obligation, but also continued to supply weapons to Israel, despite public opinion among Europeans overwhelmingly opposing the Israeli regime and its continuing genocide.

The activists on the Madleen knew they would not reach their destination, but they chose to partake in this life-threatening act of solidarity to bring the world's attention back to Gaza and to draw attention to the criminal inaction of their governments. As Greta said: "We are doing this because no matter what odds we are against, we have to keep trying, because the moment we stop trying is when we lose our humanity."

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# Trump seizes on Los Angeles protests in contentious use of military amid migrant crackdown

**THIS is the show-down the White House has been waiting for. Unrest sparked by federal immigration raids in Los Angeles provided a questionable catalyst for President Donald Trump to stage a demonstration of military force.**

His deployment of National Guard troops, against the wishes of California's governor and LA's mayor — both Democrats — appears at this point to be mostly for show, intended to create the perception of the administration getting tough.

But the reservists' presence at a fraught, politicized moment could worsen tensions and even become a trip wire that prompts more aggressive administration action. Northern Command said Sunday evening that 500 US Marines were now on "prepared to deploy" status ahead of what would be a stunning and constitutionally dubious escalation if they were to show up in Los Angeles.

Trump wrote on Truth Social on Monday: "Looking really bad in L.A. BRING IN THE TROOPS!!!" The president did not specify whether he was talking about National Guard reservists or active-duty soldiers, but his post cemented an impression that the administration is seeking a confrontation, which would pose fresh questions about Trump's aggressive use of presidential power.

Overnight, CNN witnessed police using flash-bangs and tear gas to disperse crowds, with some officers hitting protesters, as well as protesters setting self-driving cars on fire. Police have declared all of downtown Los Angeles an unlawful assembly area after arresting dozens over the weekend.

Trump's rhetoric suggests he's eyeing political objectives that go beyond the immediate situation in Los Angeles, which, compared with historical precedents, hardly seems to justify a unilateral presidential intervention.

He is delivering a warning to Democratic jurisdictions nationwide that oppose his deportation moves. And he's not simply demonstrating his desire to militarize his crackdown on undocumented migrants, which he promised in the 2024 campaign despite legal constraints. He's implying he'll use the military, specifically the National Guard, to act against protest and dissent — a prospect that is troubling in a democratic society.

Trump's move on Saturday is also a hint that he's willing to trample tradition and potentially constitutional limits down the line

and that he wants to exploit what Republicans see as Democratic weakness on public order. And it buttresses the authoritarian image-making of a strongman commander in chief who ended last week ringside at a UFC fight and who will cap this week with tanks rumbling through the capital, on his birthday, at a parade ostensibly marking the Army's 250th anniversary.

Trump gave the order to send 2,000 National Guard troops to Los Angeles after several days of protests and unrest following Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids that netted dozens of arrests. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Saturday night that the move was necessary because of the failure of California authorities to protect federal immigration officials and their own citizens.

CNN's Priscilla Alvarez and Betsy Klein reported that White House officials first decided to rush federal agents and resources to Los Angeles to protect ICE agents and guard one of the federal buildings where protests gathered. On Saturday evening, the decision was taken to send in the guard.

Despite the heated rhetoric of administration officials and Republican lawmakers on Sunday, however, there were few signs that disorder is raging out of control or that local authorities cannot cope. California Gov. Gavin Newsom has accused Trump of taking a "purposefully inflammatory" step, and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said National Guard deployments were not "called for." And by the standards of outbursts of unrest in the US over the past few decades, the situation in Los Angeles does not appear especially acute.

On Sunday, National Guard troops took up positions in three locations in Los Angeles, in what appeared to be the first instance in decades of reservists being deployed by a president without coordination with a governor.

CNN crews captured California National Guard troops, operating under the authority of Trump rather than Newsom after the president called them into federal service, pushing back demonstrators outside a detention center. A federal officer was seen firing what appeared to be a gas canister.

The stationing of troops at federal facilities is a potentially significant distinction since they were not initially being used in active law enforcement. Such a step would infringe on the Posse Comitatus Act, which bars federal troops from participating in law enforcement unless specifically authorized by the law or

Stephen Collinson

Congress.

Even in this case, though, the legal situation is not definitive. The administration has not so far invoked the Insurrection Act, which in some circumstances permits the president to use the military to end an insurrection or rebellion of federal power in a state.

An objective analysis of the situation in Los Angeles suggests no such extreme disorder yet. But one top administration official seems to be choosing his language with precision. Domestic policy adviser Stephen Miller posted on X that there were two choices: "Deport the invaders, or surrender to insurrection."

The echoing of the Insurrection Act by a powerful administration figure who claims an "invasion" of migrants justifies Trump's use of emergency and all but unlimited executive power is probably not a coincidence. The president doubled down in a Sunday Truth Social post, claiming "violent, insurrectionist mobs are swarming and attacking" federal agents.

The National Guard deployment clearly risks politicizing the military. But it's a political no-brainer for the White House.

Images of troops in combat gear, and the administration's vows to enforce order if local leaders won't, boost Trump's tough-guy image, which is an important factor in his appeal to his supporters. It bolsters Republican claims of fecklessness in liberal-run cities that have been plagued by homelessness and crime.

By sending troops in over Newsom's head, Trump escalates his feud with the governor, who is one of the most prominent national Democrats at a time when Trump is threatening to pull federal funding to the state. This may also serve as a warning to other blue states that they could see the militarization of the deportation program if they don't cooperate.

Then there's the distraction factor.

The theatrics of troop arrivals may help disguise the fact that deportations have yet to reach the levels some supporters likely hoped for. And at a dicey political moment, following his public estrangement from Elon Musk and with doubts hanging over his massive domestic spending bill, escalating an immigration controversy serves to change the subject for Trump. Immigration has long been one of his reliable political havens. Still, a new CBS poll Sunday showed that while a majority approve of Trump's goals on the issue, 56% fault his approach.

Top Republicans were quick to back Trump's California moves after days when Washington was consumed by the president's psychodrama with Musk.

"You have a very weak, lawless-leaning governor in Gov. Newsom, who's not enforcing the nation's laws," Republican Sen. Markwayne Mullin of Oklahoma told CNN's Dana Bash on "State of the Union." He went on, "The president has made it very clear: If the governor or the mayor of the city isn't willing to protect the citizens of his state or the city, then the president will."

Another Republican senator, Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, had few concerns about using National Guard troops. "You provide massive manpower to prevent violence," he told Bash. "It would be nice if Democrat politicians wouldn't keep stirring it up and keep asking people to go out there and protest against lawful law enforcement actions. That's kind of hard to stomach."

Oklahoma's other Republican senator, James Lankford, said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that Trump was trying to "de-escalate all the tensions" by sending troops.

Democrats, however, lashed out at Trump's move.

"My concern, of course, is that this inflames the situation and that he is hellbent on inflaming the situations," Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"Individual governors look at their states. They make decisions," Klobuchar said. "But in this case, the president, time and time again, has shown this willingness to, one, violate the law, as we've seen across the country in many different situations outside of the immigration context. And two, inflame situations."

Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent who caucuses with Democrats, warned on "State of the Union" that "we have a president who is moving this country rapidly into authoritarianism."

Sanders added: "This guy wants all of the power. He does not believe in the Constitution. He does not believe in the rule of law ... he thinks he has a right to do anything he wants."

Concerns Trump is flexing authoritarian impulses and that the administration would relish confrontations that allow it to move in this direction were underscored by a post on X by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. He wrote that if violence continued, "Active duty Marines at Camp Pendleton will also be mobilized — they are on high alert."

A threat by the defense secretary to deploy a force

whose battle honors include Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima and Fallujah onto American streets does not only offend principles of democratic republican government. It would almost certainly be illegal, unless Trump invokes the Insurrection Act. At this point, the conditions of that legislation look nowhere near being met. Trump said Sunday he was not yet ready to invoke the act.

Still, all this is chilling given his warning last year that he'd be prepared to use the military against "the enemy from within."

This also comes after four months in which the administration has used questionable presidential power to target institutions from law firms to universities to the media. And it has used contentious national emergencies declared to unlock authorities on trade and immigration.

Common Defense, the country's largest grassroots veterans organization, condemned Trump's deployment of the California National Guard. "The militarized response to protests in Los Angeles is a dangerous escalation that undermines civil rights and betrays the principles we swore to uphold," said Naveed Shah, the group's political director and a US Army veteran.

Hegseth's post underscores one reason why critics regarded him as unsuitable to serve as defense secretary — the fear he'd do anything that Trump told him to, unlike first-term Pentagon chief Mark Esper, who wrote in his book that the president asked whether troops could shoot in the legs demonstrators who gathered at the White House amid the George Floyd protests.

Hegseth dodged in his confirmation hearing when repeatedly asked by Hawaii Democratic Sen. Mazie Hirono whether he'd carry out such an order from Trump. And he also hedged when asked by Michigan Democratic Sen. Elissa Slotkin whether he agreed that there were some orders a president may give that were unconstitutional. "I am not going to get ahead of conversations I would have with the president. However, there are laws and processes inside our Constitution that would be followed," Hegseth said.

Little in Hegseth's tenure so far suggests he'd stand up against any of the president's more extreme ideas. That's one reason why Trump's unilateral deployment of reserve troops to Los Angeles seems like the initial thrust of an expanding administration effort to use the military in a domestic context.

— CNN

# Gaza war must end for the sake of humanity

Michael Jansen

permanent members (France, Britain, China and Russia), the fifth the US, cast its veto, the latest on five ceasefire resolutions. US ambassador Dorothy Shea defended the Trump administration's negative stand by saying, "Any product that undermines our close ally Israel's security is a non-starter." Her unfortunate use of the word "product" shows contempt not only for the resolution — which was supposed to end the killing, maiming, and dispossession of Palestinians in Gaza - but also for the Security Council and the United Nations as a world body.

As if her words were not damaging enough, US Secretary of State Marco expanded on her remark by stating, "We will not support any measure that fails to condemn Hamas, does not call for Hamas to disarm and leave Gaza, draws a false equivalence between Israel and Hamas, or disregards Israel's right to defend itself." There is no "equivalence" between Hamas, a liberation movement, and Israel, an illegal occupier, according to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Rubio said that Hamas could end "this brutal conflict immediately" by laying down its arms and releasing all remaining hostages, including the remains of four Americans. "Many members of the Security Council still refuse to acknowledge this reality and performative efforts like this resolution undermine diplomatic efforts to reach a ceasefire." He followed up by repeating the Israeli propaganda line: "This resolution would have only empowered Hamas to continue stealing aid and threatening civilians." UN agencies argue there is "no evidence" that Hamas is stealing aid and Hamas has ceased "threatening (Israeli) civilians" since Israel mounted its 20-month war on Gaza.

In this region it is the US and Israel which are flagrantly violating the laws of war and peace as well as humanitarian law as defined in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 which was adopted after the horrors of World War II. The body of this Convention spells out regulations which apply to protected persons, including civilians in occupied territory. In addition, the Convention provides rules for hospitals and safety zones, hospital staff, the wounded and sick (including land, air and sea transport to safety), free passage and delivery of food and medical supplies, and humanitarian workers and organisations.

As Article 49 deals with

the behaviour of occupying powers, it should be applicable to Israel's conquest of Palestinian territory. The Article reads: "Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive." The Article also states that persons evacuated due to conflict "shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased." The Article ends with the prohibition which Israel has ignored since its expansion by war in 1967: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." That means there must be no Israeli settlers in occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with the ICJ ruling of July 2024.

It is unfortunate that that Israel's US-backed Gaza war has coincided with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia has been condemned and sanctioned for mounting a military offensive against Ukraine which has killed 12,000 Ukrainian civilians out of 37.7 million and wreaked limited destruction on Ukrainian cities, towns and infrastructure. Europe has provided weapons and funds for Kyiv, as this war is on European soil and Europeans believe threat hangs over them. In a conflict far from Europe, Israel has killed more than 54,000 Palestinians in Gaza, starved 2.3 million Gazans, and destroyed the coastal strip. There is no comparison between the two conflicts, but "double standards" instead of the Geneva Conventions have ruled.

As global popular outrage over US-backed Israel's brutal behaviour and violations of the laws of war has peaked, Europe has finally responded. On May 28th, Spain, Ireland, and Norway recognised a Palestinian State. Last week French President Emmanuel Macron warned of "double standards" and called for return to the "two state solution" by creating a Palestinian state. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer belatedly described Israel's war in Gaza as "appalling, counterproductive and intolerable." German Chancellor Friedrich Merz called Gaza a "human tragedy and political catastrophe," questioned "the goal of the Israeli army in Gaza," and said that the harm to civilians "can no longer be justified as a fight against terrorism." Actions speak louder than words. Bombed and starving Gazans await international intervention.

# The real reason why Israel is arming gangs in Gaza

**FOR months, Israel and its defenders have insisted that Hamas is stealing humanitarian aid. They used that claim to justify the starvation of two million people in Gaza – to bomb bakeries, block food convoys and shoot desperate Palestinians waiting in bread lines. We were told this was a war on Hamas and ordinary Palestinians were just caught in the middle.**

Now we know the truth: Israel has been arming and protecting criminal gangs in Gaza that engage in stealing humanitarian aid and terrorising civilians. One group led by Yasser Abu Shabab, which is reportedly linked to extremist networks and has engaged in a variety of criminal activities, is directly receiving weapons from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

And Netanyahu is proudly admitting to it. "What's wrong with that?" he said when confronted. "It saves the lives of [Israeli] soldiers."

What's wrong? Everything.

This isn't just a tactical decision – it's an admission of true intent. Israel never wanted to protect Palestinian civilians. It wants to break them. Starve them. Turn them against each other. Then blame them for the resulting chaos and suf-

fering.

This strategy isn't new. It's colonialism 101: create anarchy, and then use it as proof that the colonised cannot govern themselves. In Gaza, Israel isn't just trying to defeat Hamas. It's trying to destroy any future in which Palestinians might govern their own society.

For months, Western media repeated the unverified claim that Hamas was stealing aid. No evidence was shown. The United Nations repeatedly said there was no proof. But it didn't matter. The story served its purpose – it justified the blockade. It made starvation look like a security tactic. It made collective punishment look like policy.

Now the truth is out. The gangs terrorising aid routes were the ones Israel supported. The myth has collapsed. And yet where is the outrage?

Where are the stern statements from the governments of the United States and United Kingdom – the same ones who claimed to care about humanitarian delivery? Instead, we are getting silence. Or worse – a shrug.

Netanyahu's open admission isn't just arrogance. It's confidence. He knows he can say the quiet part out loud. He knows Israel can violate international law, arm criminal gangs, bomb schools, starve civilians – and still be welcomed

on the world stage. Still receive weapons. Still be praised as an "ally".

This is what total impunity looks like.

And this is the cost of believing Israel's PR machine – of letting it pose as a reluctant occupier, a humane military, a victim of circumstance. In truth, it's a regime that

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political arena.

Israel's policy wasn't driven by a misunderstanding. It was strategic. It knew that empowering rivals to the PLO would fracture Palestinian unity. The goal wasn't peace – it was paralysis.

That same strategy continues today – not just

in Gaza but in the occupied West Bank too. The Israeli government is actively dismantling the Palestinian Authority's (PA's) ability to function. It withholds tax revenues that make up the majority of the PA's budget, bringing it to the brink of collapse.

It protects settler militias attacking Palestinian villages. It conducts daily military raids in PA-administered cities, humiliating its forces and making them look powerless. It blocks international diplomatic efforts by the PA while mocking its legitimacy.

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tias attacking Palestinian villages. It conducts daily military raids in PA-administered cities, humiliating its forces and making them look powerless. It blocks international diplomatic efforts by the PA while mocking its legitimacy.  
It allows Israel to say, "Look, they can't govern themselves. They only understand violence. They need us."  
It's not just brutal. It's deeply calculated.  
But Gaza and the West Bank are not a failed state. They are places that have been systematically denied the chance to become one.  
Gaza is my home. It's





## ICT exports rise by 23.7%, reaching \$2.825 billion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) exports rose by 23.7% in the first nine months of fiscal year 2025 (July–March), reaching \$2.825 billion compared to \$2.284 billion during the same period last year. This marks a \$541 million increase.

The Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25, presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, shows the ICT sector had the highest trade surplus among all services, amounting to \$2.429 billion—up 21.6% from \$1.997 billion the previous year.

The overall services sector saw a trade deficit of \$2.318 billion during the same time.

The ICT sector made up 45.31% of total services exports, maintaining its top position. The second-highest contributor was “Other Business Services” at \$1.229 billion.

Freelancers from Pakistan added \$400 million to the economy during this period.

To promote ICT exports, the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) helped 256 IT companies join 15 international and two local events. This support generated over \$48 million in new business. The TechdestiNation Pakistan campaign was

expanded to promote the country as a top IT hub. A podcast under the same name was also launched to highlight industry success stories.

To boost long-term exports, the Technology Export Marketing Programme began, focusing on markets like the UAE, USA, and UK. The goal is to reach \$15 billion in annual IT exports.

On the infrastructure side, PSEB manages over 50 Software Technology Parks (STPs) and e-Rozgaar centres across cities like Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Gilgit, and Swat. These centres support over 350 ICT companies and around 4,600 workers, 21% of them women.

PSEB aims to launch 250 e-Rozgaar centres by FY2027, with 50 expected to start operations in FY2025. These will help create 20,000 new jobs and promote digital freelancing and entrepreneurship.

The IT and telecommunications sectors play a vital role in building an inclusive and sustainable economy. It supports innovation, improves productivity, creates jobs, especially for women, and enhances public services.

The government has made digital growth a national priority. It has included E-Pakistan as one

of the five main pillars of the URAAN Pakistan initiative.

To support this goal, a strategy is being implemented to improve IT infrastructure, enhance cybersecurity, develop talent, encourage startups, and attract investment.

This strategy also includes using artificial intelligence in sectors like farming, healthcare, and public administration, along with emerging technologies like quantum computing.

Efforts are also underway to make IT services more affordable and available in rural and underserved areas to help lift low-income households and improve their quality of life.

To strengthen international cooperation, Pakistan and China have formed a Joint Working Group on the IT industry (JWG-IT). They plan to work together in areas like infrastructure, cybersecurity, policymaking, and skill development.

This collaboration supports a planned “Innovation Corridor” between the two nations, aiming to boost progress in areas such as cloud computing, AI, and semiconductors.

According to Kearney's 2023 Global Services Location Index, Pakistan is one of the top global destinations for IT outsourcing.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) ranks Pakistan as the second-largest provider of digital labor, especially in software development and tech services.

Pakistan is also among the top three global suppliers for a wide range of digital tasks, including data entry, creative work, professional services, marketing, and translation.

The country's main tech hubs are in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad/Rawalpindi. Most IT companies serve international clients and use modern tools and techniques for software development and business services.

Pakistan's ICT firms offer everything from custom software to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and serve some of the world's top companies. Multinational firms like IBM®, Symantec®, S&P Global®, Teradata®, and VMware® have set up research, consulting, and BPO centres in Pakistan. These ventures create high-paying jobs, enhance the country's global image, and attract foreign investment.

As of March 2025, over 30,000 IT and ITes companies are registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), showing the sector's rapid growth and economic potential.



RAWALPINDI: A man collecting sacrificial animal skins at local market.

### SCCI delegation meets MNA

SUKKUR (APP): A delegation from the Sukkur Chamber of Commerce (SCCI), led by President Muhammad Khalid Kakizai, met with senior politician and Member of the National Assembly, Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah, at his residence on the third day of Eid.

The delegation included Vice President Malik Owais Rais and former President Aamir Ali Khan Ghori.

During the meeting, the delegation discussed several key issues, including the deteriorating law and order situation in Sukkur, the public's grievances stemming from Suki Electricity Company's (SEPCO) inefficient performance, and concerns related to environmental changes. The discussion also touched on the recently presented federal budget in the National Assembly.

The delegation and Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah exchanged views on the potential impacts of the budget and the challenges faced by the business community at the local level. Shah assured the delegation that he would raise these important issues at the national level and make every effort to find solutions to these problems.

The meeting highlighted the chamber's efforts to engage with key stakeholders to address pressing issues affecting the business community and the general public in Sukkur.

### New data released

RIYADH (Arab News): Jordan's foreign exchange reserves remained largely unchanged in May, standing at \$22.76 billion, as per new data released by the Central Bank of Jordan.

The slight month-on-month dip — about 0.2 percent from April — reflects broad stability in the Kingdom's external buffers.

Jordan's foreign exchange figures are broadly in line with trends observed across other Middle East and North African countries. The Qatar Central Bank recorded a 3.6 percent increase in its foreign currency reserves and liquidity, reaching 258.135 billion Qatari riyals in May, up from 249.165 billion riyals in May 2024.

Egypt's foreign exchange reserves rose to \$48.525 billion by the end of May, compared to \$48.144 billion in April, marking an increase of \$381 million. “The Central Bank of Jordan stated in a statement today that its total foreign reserves are sufficient to cover the country's imports of goods and services for approximately nine months.”

## Malik stresses regional trade promotion

LAHORE (APP): Strengthening regional trade is need of the hour as it is a more effective substitute for achieving comparative advantages in international trade for sustainable economic growth.

Talking to commerce reporters here on Monday, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former president Iftikhar Ali Malik said that South Asian countries can take all the advantages of regional economic integration to enhance their bargaining power in international trade by representing a market that accounts for approximately 25.29 percent of the world's population.

He was of the view that integration would also make the region more attractive for foreign and local investors, similar to EU (European Union),

ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) and USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement). Unfortunately, South Asia is currently the least economically integrated region in the world, with regional trade accounting for only about five percent of the total potential trade, he added.

Malik said the potential for intraregional trade in South Asia is estimated to be two times its current level which indicates a significant 67 percent of unrealised trade opportunities. If potentials are exploited, the region could see a benefit of approximately three percent of its GDP.

He said the primary barrier to increased regional trade is political issues. When political considerations are prioritised over economic benefits, the

costs can be significant for the region. As a result, around 40 percent of the world's poor reside in South Asia, making it the region with the second-highest poverty rate after Africa. He said political leadership must recognise this reality and learn from the experiences of the EU and ASEAN understanding that economic development should not be sacrificed for political gain.

He cited that US and other global leaders in the West share a common goal of industrial policy (IP) which are state-led government programmes such as trade protection, subsidies, tax incentives and R&D funding —that support strategic industries or sectors which aim to promote the competitiveness of local industry, protect jobs and enhance growth.

## California fuel imports hit four-year high

NEW YORK (Reuters): California's fuel imports rose to the highest in four years in May as refiners turned to historical trading partners in Asia and tapped some unusual routes to make up for shortages in the No.2 US oil consumer state, according to shipping data and traders.

The rise in shipments to California offers an early look at the future of the biggest gasoline and jet fuel markets in the US, which are expected to become more reliant on imports after Phillips 66 (PSX.N) and Valero (VLO.N) close two major refineries in the state by next year, amid growing regulatory and cost pressures, and declining demand for gasoline.

“California's refining capacity is shrinking faster than its fuel demand is declining, forcing the state into a long-term import-dependent position,” Kpler analyst Sumit Ritoli said.

California's total petroleum product imports rose to 279,000 barrels per day (bpd) in May, the highest since June 2021, when a similar volume was imported, according to data from vessel tracker Kpler.

About 187,000 bpd, or nearly 70% of the imports came from South Korea and other Asian exporters, who have historically been the top trading partners for California and other West Coast states, which are geographically isolated from major US refining centers along the Gulf Coast.

Recent outages in California at refineries owned by Chevron (CVX.N), opens new tab, PBF Energy (PBF.N) and Valero (VLO.N) caused a supply crunch in markets along the US West Coast that necessitated more imports, traders and analysts said.

“We have seen tighter supplies due to several refinery outages,” StoneX oil analyst Alex Hodes said. That boosted prices in the US Pacific Northwest substantially and led to increased imports, he said.

There were several days where San Francisco gasoline was more than \$40 a barrel above Gulf Coast pricing, nearly double the year-to-date average of \$21, WoodMac analyst Austin Lin said.

California's imports from the Bahamas, a trade route rarely used by West Coast refiners, hit a record high of 38,000 bpd in May, Kpler data showed. The previous record was 29,000 bpd in March.

Flows on the route from the Caribbean were sporadic before this year's refining outages, averaging just 6,000 bpd throughout last year, the data showed.

The Bahamas does not refine oil but exports fuel and blending components shipped there from the US Gulf Coast refining hub as part of a workaround to a century-old US shipping law to supply fuel to the East Coast when pipeline shipments are insufficient.

The Jones Act bars movement of goods

between US ports unless carried by ships built domestically and staffed by local crew. However, there were only 55 such petroleum tankers as of the start of 2024, according to a government report, making them expensive and hard to procure.

Sailing a tanker from Texas to California via the Bahamas is typically too expensive, but the recent refinery outages opened up the arbitrage to the West Coast from everywhere, a second US gasoline trading source said.

Ample availability in the Atlantic Basin of alkylate - a blending component highly sought for California's unique blend of CARBOB gasoline - could have also contributed to the uptick in imports from the Bahamas, Sparta Commodities analyst Philip Jones-Lux said.

Meanwhile, California imported 39,000 bpd of gasoline and alkylate from India last month, the highest since January 2024, Kpler data showed.

More waterborne imports will raise fuel costs in the most populous US state, GasBuddy analyst Patrick De Haan said.

However, the opening up of these unusual trade routes in May shows the state still has options to shield consumers from extraordinary price spikes, he said.

Retail gasoline prices averaged \$4.68 a gallon in California on Friday, while the national average was \$3.12, according to GasBuddy data.

## Pakistan, China ink technology transfer, labour training agreement

LAHORE (APP): A landmark five-year agreement has been signed between China and Pakistan aimed at facilitating the transfer of cutting-edge technology and the training of skilled professionals in line with evolving global trends.

The agreement, formalised between the Guangdong Shoe-Making Machinery Association a Chinese government-affiliated organisation and the Pakistan Industrial Sewing Machines Importers and Dealers Association (PISMIDA), seeks to bolster Pakistan's capabilities in the fields of footwear manufacturing, leather processing, and garment machinery by introducing state of the art equipment and technology, according

to PISMIDA Vice Chairman Muhammad Yaseen here Monday.

As part of the agreement, Pakistani workers will receive specialized training aligned with modern industrial requirements, enhancing local expertise in advanced machinery and production techniques. The initiative also includes a strong focus on innovation in leather-based product manufacturing and garments, positioning Pakistan to better compete in international markets.

PISMIDA Vice Chairman Muhammad Yaseen represented Pakistan at the global exhibition “JISMA” held in China, where he was invited as a special guest by the event organiz-

ers. During the event, he engaged in high-level meetings with international association representatives and commercial attaches to discuss bilateral cooperation and explore strategic growth opportunities.

Speaking about the agreement, Yaseen described it as a historic milestone that will offer immense benefits across several Pakistani industries. “Following Eid-ul-Azha, we will hold detailed sessions with stakeholders from relevant sectors to brief them on the agreement's benefits and guide them on how to leverage these new opportunities,” he added.

He noted that the agreement emphasizes strategic

cooperation, long-term partnerships, exchange of expert delegations, and collaboration in technology, workforce development, and industrial management. It also aims to identify shared growth prospects in both countries' markets, promoting mutual industrial advancement.

If our industries adopt these modern technologies, we can significantly enhance production quality and efficiency, which will in turn boost our exports, Yaseen added. With government support, this initiative has the potential to spark a technological revolution in Pakistan's manufacturing sector and transform vocational training nationwide.

## Asian markets rally ahead of latest China-US trade talks

HONG KONG 9 (AFP/APP): Stocks rallied Monday on hopes that a fresh round of China-US trade talks later in the day will ease tensions between the economic superpowers, while investors were also cheered by forecast-topping US jobs data.

The gains extended a run-up across global markets in recent weeks as fears about President Donald Trump's tariff blitz subside and countries make deals with Washington.

All eyes are on London, where top officials from China and the United States are due to meet for more negotiations aimed at preserving a fragile truce agreed last month that slashed eye-watering tit-for-tat levies.

The talks come days after Trump and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping held their first publicly announced telephone talks since the Republican

returned to the White House.

They were helped by news that Beijing had on Saturday approved some applications for rare-earth exports, while aviation giant Boeing will start sending commercial jets to China for the first time since April.

The impact of the trade row was highlighted Monday in data showing Chinese exports to the United States sank more than 34 percent on-year in May and almost 13 percent from the previous month.

However shipments to other regions including the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations surged.

Separate data showed Chinese consumer prices fell in May for the fourth straight month.

Optimism that the two sides will make a breakthrough boosted Asian markets, with Hong Kong up more than one percent,

while Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore, Mumbai, Bangkok, Taipei and Manila also advanced.

London rose at the open though Paris and Frankfurt edged down.

The gains followed a strong lead from Wall Street, where all three main indexes closed more than one percent higher after figures showing the world's largest economy created a forecast-beating 139,000 jobs last month.

While the figures for the previous two months were revised down, the data indicated that the economy remained robust, and tempered worries sparked by Wednesday's report by payroll firm ADP showing a big miss on private hiring.

Eyes will now turn to the Federal Reserve as it decides whether to lower interest rates, with many economists warning that Trump's tariffs could reignite inflation, hit sup-

ply chains and drag on consumer sentiment.

“The May minutes and recent comments by several (policy board) members... suggest the Fed is highly attentive to the risk that tariffs will lead to a persistent inflation shock,” wrote analysts at Bank of America.

“Those risks could come into focus for markets by the fall.”

Michael Hewson at MCH Market Insights remained positive on the outlook for the US economy.

“For now, the US economy continues to look reasonably resilient although the recent ADP jobs report showed some evidence of a slowdown in May,” he said in a commentary.

“However on the whole there is little sign that the economy is on the cusp of an economic shock at the moment, despite the unpredictable nature of the current US administration.”

## Non-oil sector drives Saudi Arabia's GDP growth to 3.4% in Q1

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia's economy expanded by 3.4% year on year in the first quarter of 2025, propelled by robust growth in non-oil activities, according to official data.

The estimates released by the General Authority for Statistics showed that the seasonally adjusted real gross domestic product also saw a quarterly rise of 1.1 percent, signaling sustained economic momentum.

The non-oil sector emerged as the primary engine of growth, increasing by 4.9 percent compared to the first quarter of 2024. In contrast, oil activities contracted by 0.5 percent year on year, reflecting

ongoing volatility in the energy sector.

Saudi Arabia's GDP growth aligns with the broader Middle East trend, where countries are steadily advancing economic diversification.

The UAE's Ministry of Economy forecasts a 5-6 percent growth rate in 2025, fueled by robust performance in key sectors such as technology, renewable energy, trade, financial services, and infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings has lowered Qatar's 2025 real GDP growth forecast from 2.9 percent to 2.6 percent, citing the effects of US tariffs on global growth, weaker

energy prices, and heightened investor caution amid rising international uncertainty.

In a release covering the latest Saudi Arabia figures, GASTAT stated: “The main driver of growth in real GDP was non-oil activities, which contributed 2.8 percentage points. Government activities and net taxes on products also contributed positively adding 0.5 and 0.2 PP respectively.”

**Sectoral performance**

According to the GASTAT report, several non-oil sectors posted strong growth across the quarter, with the wholesale and retail trade, restaurants, and hotels sector leading at an

8.4 percent annual increase.

The transport, storage, and communication sector also showed robust performance, growing by 6 percent year on year.

Meanwhile, finance, insurance, and business services expanded by 5.5 percent despite experiencing a slight 0.1 percent quarterly dip.

These gains highlight the diversification and resilience of the economy beyond the oil industry.

Gross fixed capital formation jumped by 8.5 percent annually, underscoring confidence in the economy, while government spending rose by 5.2 percent. Private consumption grew by 4.5

percent year on year, though it declined slightly from the previous quarter.

**Trade balance improvement**

Saudi Arabia's exports rebounded sharply, rising by 12.3 percent quarter on quarter, while imports fell by 10 percent over the same period, narrowing the trade deficit.

The data highlights the Kingdom's progress in diversifying its economy under Vision 2030, with non-oil sectors increasingly offsetting fluctuations in oil revenues.

In its latest World Economic Outlook report, the International Monetary Fund projected Saudi

Arabia's GDP to grow by 3 percent in 2025, a downward revision from its January estimate of 3.3 percent. The IMF also trimmed its projection for 2026, reducing the expected growth rate by 0.4 percentage points to 3.7 percent.

These forecasts reflect broader trends in the global economic environment, where shifts in energy markets and oil production adjustments continue to play a pivotal role in shaping near-term growth prospects.

The Kingdom's economic performance remains closely tied to hydrocarbon sector dynamics, but ongoing reforms under Vision

2030 are gradually reducing this dependence, fostering more sustainable, long-term growth.

Further reinforcing this outlook, a December 2024 report from Mastercard Economics emphasized the accelerating expansion of Saudi Arabia's non-oil sector, which has become a key driver of economic resilience.

The analysis projected that the Kingdom's GDP will grow by 3.7 percent year on year in 2025, a figure slightly higher than the IMF's estimate, largely due to strong performance in non-oil industries such as tourism, entertainment, technology, and manufac-

turing.

The Mastercard report also noted that economic diversification will remain a top priority in 2025, with Saudi authorities leveraging the country's strong fiscal buffers to fund ambitious infrastructure projects and attract private investment.

Key initiatives include mega-developments like NEOM, the Red Sea Project, and Qiddiya, alongside investments in renewable energy and digital transformation.

“Population growth is an important driver of economic activity, and particularly private consumption,” the report added.





## In brief

## Neymar tests positive for COVID

BRASÍLIA (Agencies): Brazil forward Neymar has been sidelined after testing positive for COVID-19, his club Santos said in a statement as quoted by Brazilian media. The 33-year-old began showing symptoms on Thursday and was immediately removed from team activities. Medical tests later confirmed the viral infection, the Brazil Serie A side said on Saturday. The club did not disclose how long Neymar will be out of action and did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Neymar is already ruled out of Thursday's league match at Fortaleza through suspension. The Fortaleza match will be Santos' last outing before the Brazilian league pauses for the June 14-July 13 Club World Cup in the United States. The former Barcelona forward's future at Santos remains undecided, with his contract set to expire on June 30. Limited by injury, he has made 12 appearances for Santos across all competitions this season, contributing three goals and three assists.

## NZ Rugby chief Robinson quits

WASHINGTON (AFP): New Zealand Rugby chief executive Mark Robinson announced his surprise resignation Monday, saying he will step down at the end of the year. The former All Blacks has led the organisation for the past six years, navigating the through the financial challenges of the Covid pandemic. "The past six years have been a period of rapid change, or unprecedented challenges through the pandemic, and significant evolution across commercial, competitions and structures," Robinson said. "I will reflect on that as I get closer to stepping away, but I firmly believe the foundations of our organisation are extremely strong and the game is well-placed for the future." Robinson said he will move to Australia at the end of 2025, so he can spend more time with his family. New Zealand Rugby chair David Kirk said Robinson had led with "passion". "Mark has driven significant change, both in New Zealand and internationally, and the board believes the organisation is well-placed to capitalise on this," he said. "Mark will continue to lead for the remainder of the year as we conclude key projects, and the board will now commence recruitment for the new role." Robinson played nine Tests for the All Blacks between 2000 and 2002 and had stints with clubs in England and Japan.

## Spain focused on WC after defeat

MUNICH (AFP): Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said his side were "already thinking about the World Cup" after Sunday's Nations League final loss on penalties to Portugal in Munich. "From this very moment we are already thinking about the next World Cup, which is our goal. With the way we approach things, we are sure to go far in the future," de la Fuente said. "Our team is always in a position to win, there is a lot of commitment, a lot of roots. We will always be close to winning." Spain led twice but were twice pegged back before the match went to extra time with scores locked at 2-2. After each side converted their first three penalties, Spain forward Alvaro Morata's effort was saved by Diogo Costa and Portugal's Ruben Neves converted to win the shootout 5-3.

# Portugal beat Spain in shootout to win Nations League

MUNICH (Agencies): Portugal beat neighbours Spain in a penalty shootout to settle a frantic final in Munich and win their second Nations League trophy. Cristiano Ronaldo pulled Portugal level at 2-2 in the 61st minute, but there was nothing else to separate the two sides when the referee signalled the end of normal time.

Subbed off before extra time, Portugal captain Ronaldo dropped to the turf and sobbed tears of joy on the sidelines after Ruben Neves slotted home the winning penalty following Diogo Costa's save from Alvaro Morata's spot-kick. Winners of the 2023 edition, Spain had opened the scoring in the 21st minute when Martin Zubimendi poked home after Portugal failed to clear their lines.

Their lead was short-lived as Nuno Mendes slammed a low, angled strike past Unai Simon and into the far corner of the net five minutes later.

Mikel Oyarzabal, who



netted a late winner in last summer's European Championship final against England, restored La Roja's advantage before the break.

But Ronaldo came to Portugal's rescue as he shrugged off Marc Cucurella to reach Mendes' deflected cross and hook a volley in from close range.

Goncalo Ramos, Vitinha, Bruno Fernandes and Nuno Mendes all calmly fired their penalties home before

Morata's weak effort was stopped by Costa.

And as Neves converted the final spot-kick, Portugal became the first team to win two Nations League titles - denying Spain, who were vying for the same honour.

Portugal win emotional for Ronaldo

The final was hyped as the first meeting between five-time Ballon d'Or winner Ronaldo and highly rated teenager Lamine

ting home their second.

But Ronaldo, as he has done so often, showed up when it mattered for Portugal - pouncing ruthlessly on a loose cross for his 138th international goal.

The 40-year-old was unable to have the final say, however, after he was replaced by Goncalo Ramos late in normal time.

Yamal, meanwhile, was subbed off in extra time without having made a meaningful impact after being largely marked out of the game by Portugal full-back Mendes.

After Spain came agonisingly close to an extra-time winner with efforts from Pedro Porro and Cucurella, Ronaldo could barely watch the shootout - hiding behind coaching staff as his team-mates stepped up to the penalty spot.

Ronaldo, after an initial outpouring of emotion, wiped his tears away and celebrated joyfully before lifting the trophy as confetti fell around Allianz Arena.

## Australia favourites to retain WTC crown against South Africa

LONDON (Agencies): Australia will have to dust off the cobwebs but are still fancied to successfully defend their World Test C'ship crown against equally ring-rusty South Africa in the final at Lord's, starting on Wednesday.

The five-day clash comes on the heels of a plethora of limited overs cricket over the last five months and both teams have been scrambling to prepare for a high-profile return to the red-ball game.

Australia have not played a test since beating Sri Lanka in Galle in February when they made sure of a top-two finish in the standings from results for the 2023-25 WTC cycle.

South Africa were assured of top place when they won their last test against Pakistan at home in January to book a first-ever finals appearance.

It came on the back of a run of seven successive wins, but the fact they did not play against the Aussies or England has seen their achievement dismissed as too easy.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan said they reached the final "on the back of beating pretty much nobody," which was a result of the lopsided test schedule where Australia, England, and India dominate and South Africa elect to play more financially lucrative limited-overs internationals.

But an upset win for South Africa could change that. "It's the biggest thing in this team's existence. It's the biggest thing for South African cricket at the moment," said their coach Shukri Conrad. Australia have been warming up with training sessions at Beckenham in Kent as they grapple with selection choices.



LONDON: Usman Khawaja and Andrew McDonald have a chat during training.

## Alcaraz stuns Sinner in all-time great French Open final

PARIS (AFP): Carlos Alcaraz saved three championship points as he produced an astonishing fight-back from two sets down to beat Jannik Sinner in a French Open final for the ages on Sunday.

Reigning champion Alcaraz rallied from the brink of defeat to overcome world number one Sinner 4-6, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (10/2) after five hours and 29 minutes to clinch his fifth Grand Slam title.

The 22-year-old Spaniard is now unbeaten in five Grand Slam finals after snapping Sinner's 20-match winning run at the majors.

"This was the most exciting match that I've played so far without a doubt," said Alcaraz. "I think the match had everything." Alcaraz pulled off his first ever comeback from two sets down in the longest Roland Garros final in history, recovering from 5-3 down in the fourth set when Sinner had three match points.

"Today was all about believing in myself. Never doubted myself today and I tried to go for it," he said.

"Real champions are made in those situations." Alcaraz is the first man to win a Grand Slam title after saving match point since Novak Djokovic beat Roger Federer in the 2019 Wimbledon final. The only other man to do it in the Open era was Gaston Gaudio at Roland Garros in 2004.

Sinner fell agonisingly short of a third successive Grand Slam crown after last year's US Open title and back-to-back Australian Open triumphs. "It's easier to play than talking now," said a devastated Sinner. "I won't sleep very well tonight but it's OK."

"We try to delete it somehow and take the positive and keep going. There are no other ways," he added. "It hurts, but you cannot keep crying." Sinner suffered his fifth straight loss to Alcaraz in what was their first meeting in a Grand Slam final -- and the first championship match at a major between two men born in the 2000s.

Alcaraz leads 8-4 overall having also beaten Sinner in the final in Rome, where the Italian returned to competition in May after a three-

month doping ban.

Sinner floored by Alcaraz comeback

Alcaraz put the pressure on Sinner by carving out three break points to start Saturday's final, but the Italian resisted and soon had a chance of his own. He couldn't take advantage and found himself having to fend off two more break points at 1-1, producing clutch serves to grind out another tough hold.

Alcaraz's persistence paid off in the fifth game when he broke to nudge 3-2 ahead, only for the Spaniard to immediately hand the lead back. The unshakable Sinner threatened to break again at 4-3, with a brief lapse from Alcaraz eventually enabling Sinner to snatch the first set. Sinner hit the accelerator to start the second set, surging 3-0 in front. After facing seven break points in the opener, he tightened up considerably on serve.

But Alcaraz brought up his first break point of the second set with Sinner serving for a two-set lead, duly pouncing on the opportunity.



crowd.

Duckett fell for an 18-ball 30 before Buttler and Brook combined for another stand of 40, with England seemingly cruising to victory as Buttler was dropped on 43 by Charles as he misused one to deep mid-wicket.

It did not cost too much in terms of runs as Charles held on with just four runs added to Buttler's total, before Brook was caught

at long-off an over later, but the tourists could not capitalise. England still needed 71 from 39 when Brook fell but Bethell delivered his swagger and confidence with two towering sixes off Alzarri Joseph in the 16th over, one clipped effortlessly over square leg and the other slammed straight.

Banton's knock emulated the innovation of Buttler and Duckett, deftly

nudging the ball into the gaps and reversing past the keeper with ease while also stirring two sixes of his own. England's white-ball resurgence under Brook continues to impress as they head to Southampton with an opportunity to deliver a dominant clean sweep to start his reign.

Rashid punished in Windies' brutal finish

It was a fluctuating



## Sana Mir inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

LONDON (Agencies): Former captain of the Pakistan women's cricket team Sana Mir on Monday, was inducted into the International Cricket Council (ICC) Hall of Fame.

The former off-spinner, who represented Pakistan for around 15 years, became the first woman cricketer from the country to be added to the prestigious list of sports.

Overall, she is the eighth Pakistani cricketer to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame, joining the likes of Imran Khan, Wasim Akram, Javed Miandad, Abdul Qadir, Zaheer Abbas, Waqar Younis and Hanif Mohammad.

Mir also became only the 14th female cricketer in the world to be inducted into the elusive list.

"This is quite an emotional moment for me," said Mir on her induction. It has been a long journey from playing cricket on the streets of Pakistan to getting here.

"There was a time when there were not enough women cricketers in Pakistan and nobody to look up to as a role model. Today, there are so many female cricketers who are examples for everyone."

Mir, who made her international debut for Pakistan in December 2005 against Sri Lanka at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi, went on to represent the green shirts in 120 ODIs and 106 T20Is.

During her illustrious career, she picked up 240 international wickets across white-ball formats besides scoring 2450 runs with the help of three half-centuries.

She was also the first Pakistani woman cricketer to top the ICC Women's ODI Players Rankings besides being the first Asian woman cricketer to play 100 T20Is as well as the first Pakistani woman to complete the century of ODIs.

Sana Mir was also the first woman cricketer to be named the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Cricketer of the Year. Mir was also one of the longest reigning captains of the Pakistan women's cricket team, leading the green shirts for eight years, which included two Asian Games gold medal triumphs in 2010 and 2014, respectively.

## Zimbabwe's local coach suspended on Sikandar Raza's complaint



HARARE (Agencies): Sikandar Raza has lodged a complaint with the Harare Metropolitan Cricket Association (HMCA), accusing a local coach - Blessing Mafuwa - of racial abuse during a Vigne Cup game on June 1.

Raza was playing for Old Hararians against Rainbow Cricket Club at the Old Hararians Sports Club when the alleged incident took place. ESPNcricinfo has seen the complaint Raza has filed. He alleged that Mafuwa made derogatory comments towards him when he was walking off the field. While Raza didn't name Mafuwa, HMCA chairperson Tafadzwa Madoro did.

Responding to a query on the matter from ESPNcricinfo, Madoro said on late Sunday night, "We received a report of racial abuse that our T20 captain [Raza] suffered, last week. We are in the process of investigating. Blessing Mafuwa will attend a hearing this coming Tuesday. He will answer charges from the report. In the interim, he is suspended from all activities in the HMCA."

"We don't take racism allegations lightly. We don't condone any racial abuse in HMCA. We will want to investigate this as quickly as possible."

Speaking to ESPNcricinfo on Sunday evening, Raza had said he expected "a full investigation" of the incident. "If found guilty, an example should be made out of him so that stuff like this never happens again to this and future generations," Raza said.

During the match, Raza struck 78 off 56 balls as his club made 402 for 9 in 50 overs. In reply, Rainbow made 225 for 8 in 39 overs, losing the game by 142 runs via the DLS method. Raza recently won the PSL 2025 title with Lahore Qalandars, hitting the winning runs in a dramatic final in Lahore. This was Raza's second T20 franchise trophy in 2025 after the ILT20.

## England chase 197 to seal T20 series win v Windies

BRISTOL (Agencies): England sealed a series win over West Indies with a game to spare after a superb chase of 197 in the second T20 at Bristol.

Former captain Jos Buttler struck 47 and his successor Harry Brook made 34 as England reached 112-2 in 12.2 overs, before they fell in consecutive overs with 85 still required to swing the game back in the tourists' favour.

But Jacob Bethell's stunning cameo of 26 from 10 balls, including three huge sixes, and Tom Banton's unbeaten 30 off 11 set up a four-wicket win with nine balls remaining.

England had earlier been eyeing a much smaller target as they had restricted West Indies to 121-4 at the start of the 17th over, only for an onslaught of 75 runs from the final four overs to follow.

Luke Wood had given England the perfect start by pinning Evin Lewis lbw with a swinging yorker from the first ball of the match, before captain Shai Hope's elegant 49 led the recovery

in a stand of 90 with Johnson Charles, who made 47.

Their innings had been in danger of floundering with just 32 runs scored in 5.1 overs after Hope's dismissal in the 11th, but Rovman Powell clubbed 34 from 15 balls and former skipper Jason Holder whacked an unbeaten 29 off nine.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid bowled the penultimate over as England again only selected two seamers, and conceded 31 runs to finish with 1-59 - the most expensive figures of his T20 career.

Sensational chase seals series in style

In the highest-scoring T20 international without any batter of either side passing 50, England's chase was a remarkable team effort.

Jamie Smith was caught off Holder for four in the second over but Ben Duckett and Buttler added 63 with a remarkable array of scoops, reverse-sweeps and switch-hits that had West Indies' bowlers in disbelief, and spectators bracing themselves in the

crowd. Duckett fell for an 18-ball 30 before Buttler and Brook combined for another stand of 40, with England seemingly cruising to victory as Buttler was dropped on 43 by Charles as he misused one to deep mid-wicket.

It did not cost too much in terms of runs as Charles held on with just four runs added to Buttler's total, before Brook was caught

at long-off an over later, but the tourists could not capitalise. England still needed 71 from 39 when Brook fell but Bethell delivered his swagger and confidence with two towering sixes off Alzarri Joseph in the 16th over, one clipped effortlessly over square leg and the other slammed straight.

Banton's knock emulated the innovation of Buttler and Duckett, deftly

nudging the ball into the gaps and reversing past the keeper with ease while also stirring two sixes of his own. England's white-ball resurgence under Brook continues to impress as they head to Southampton with an opportunity to deliver a dominant clean sweep to start his reign.

Rashid punished in Windies' brutal finish

It was a fluctuating

innings from West Indies, as England's bright start with the ball saw them concede just 12 from the first three overs of the power-play and 43 from the next.

Wood accounted for Lewis with his extravagant swing, and the batter's review one of pure desperation as the ball was crashing into middle stump.

Charles' scratchy innings of 47 off 39 balls led to some suggestions it was a tricky pitch but considering the fluency of the rest of the line-up - and eventually England's - his relative sluggishness in the middle overs contributed to his side posting a below-par total.

Hope's strike rate was not much better but he enjoyed pace on the ball, as he whacked Brydon Carse for two stunning sixes over long-off and looked in such sparkling form that only a piece of magic from Rashid could dismiss him. England's leg-spinner tempted Hope into coming down the pitch, turned the ball past

the off stump and Buttler whipped off the balls.

Brook rotated his bowlers efficiently through the middle as the runs dried up, with Sherfane Rutherford caught on the boundary off Bethell for six and Charles was bizarrely bowled by nutmegging himself to give Wood a second wicket.

But that kickstarted the chaos as Powell struck three sixes to take West Indies to 149-5 at the end of the 18th, before Brook had no choice but to bowl Rashid at the death with such short straight boundaries for the batters to target.

Holder capitalised, pulling a drag down over square leg first ball before squaring two more sixes down the ground in simple but brutal fashion.

He handed Shepherd the strike who then repeated the dose on a difficult day for spinners - Liam Dawson, the hero of the series opener with four wickets, was also reminded of cricket's fickle nature with figures of 0-43.





## In brief

### Electricity installed capacity stands at 46,605 MW

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country's total installed electricity capacity stood at 46,605 MW by end of March 2025. According to Economic Survey report for year 2024-25 released on Monday, the percentage shares of hydel, nuclear, renewable, and thermal were 24.4 percent, 7.8 percent, 12.2 percent, and 55.7 percent, respectively. Out of total installed capacity, the share of hydel stood at 11,368 MW, Thermal 25,937 MW, Nuclear 3,620 MW and Renewable 5,680 MW. The share of thermal power as a dominant source of electricity supply has declined over the past few years, showing an increased reliance on indigenous sources, the report said. Out of total electricity generation of 90,145 GWh, the share of hydel, nuclear, and renewable stood at 53.7 percent, which could be taken as a good sign for the economy as the sources of electricity generation shift from thermal to cleaner sources. During FY2025 (July-March), the total electricity consumption was reported at 80,111 GWh. The household sector is the largest consumer of electricity, consuming 39,728 GWh (49.6 percent), followed by the industrial sector with 21,082 GWh (26.3 percent). Moreover, agriculture and commercial sectors consume 4,566 GWh (5.7 percent) and 6,898 GWh (8.6 percent), respectively, whereas the electricity consumption in other sectors (streetlights, general services, and other government) was 7,037 GWh (9.8 percent).

### DIG reviews security measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Muhammad Jawad Tariq remained in the field on the Third day of Eid on Monday, inspecting security arrangements and meeting officers deployed at check posts and recreational spots to ensure the safety of citizens. An official told APP that DIG Tariq reviewed the Eid security plan at key locations, emphasizing that all possible measures had been implemented under the special directions of the Islamabad Police leadership. He said strict compliance with the security plan was being ensured. DIG Tariq said that officers standing in the scorching heat for the protection of citizens are the real heroes, deserving appreciation for their dedication. He reiterated that there would be zero tolerance for one-wheeling and rowdy behavior, urging parents to closely monitor their children's activities during the Eid holidays. He said strict action would be taken against individuals involved in illegal acts or public nuisance. The DIG further stated that entry of unruly individuals into family areas such as Daman-e-Koh and Lake View Park would not be permitted under any circumstances. DIG Tariq said the Islamabad Police is tirelessly working around the clock for the safety and security of citizens.

### CTO ensures smooth traffic

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider remained present on the city's major thoroughfares and recreational points on the third day of Eid to review the traffic situation and ensure smooth vehicular movement. An official told APP on Monday that over 300 Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) personnel were actively engaged in maintaining traffic flow across the city during the Eid holidays as part of a comprehensive strategy. CTO Zeeshan issued further directives to improve the flow of traffic and appreciated the dedication of traffic personnel performing duties away from their families.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari offering Eid-ul-Adha prayers at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —INP Photo

## Solar-powered irrigation systems can help improve farming

ISLAMABAD (INP): As climate change, high energy costs, and water shortage continue to affect farmers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), experts have called for using solar-powered irrigation systems (SPIS) to help solve these problems.

Solar irrigation uses sunlight instead of fuel to pump water, making it cheaper, environment-friendly, and better for long-term use. A meeting was held in Peshawar where experts, government officials, farmers, and private companies came together to discuss how solar irrigation can improve farming in KP.

The workshop was organised by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) as part of its work on climate-friendly water solutions

in Pakistan.

The programme is supported by the UK government and CGIAR's Climate Action Science Program. Dr Mohsin Hafeez, Director at IWMI, said that most of Pakistan's water is used in farming, but much of it is wasted due to poor methods. He explained that around half of the water farmers use comes from underground, and this underground water is running low because it is being used faster than it is being refilled.

He said solar irrigation systems can help reduce pressure on underground water and also cut fuel costs for farmers. "Solar irrigation is not just about technology. It helps farmers save money and prepares them to face climate problems," said Dr Mohsin. He added that IWMI is working with the

KP government to expand solar irrigation in a fair and smart way. Two digital tools were introduced at the event — the Solar Suitability Mapping (SSM) and the Solar Irrigation Pump Sizing Tool (SIP-ST). These tools will help decide where solar pumps can be used best and what size of pump is needed for each farm.

Engr Kalsoom Rehman from the Agriculture Engineering Department said that although solar pumps cost more in the beginning, they last longer and don't need much maintenance. She said farmers need proper guidance when setting up these pumps to avoid overuse of groundwater. She also said solar pumps are already becoming popular in KP, especially in areas that don't get canal water.

## 'Islamabad achieves zero waste goal': CDA Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa Monday expressed gratitude to sanitation workers for their role in distributing biodegradable bags to over 200,000 households in Islamabad, supporting the city's waste management efforts, as the government successfully completed the Zero Waste Operation initiative in the capital.

In an exclusive interview with PTV News, CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa credited citizens' support for the successful completion of Islamabad's cleanliness drive. He hailed sanitation workers as heroes, acknowledging their tireless efforts in maintaining the city's

cleanliness and disposing of waste properly.

CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa revealed that this year, under the leadership of federal minister for interior Mohsin Naqvi, drone cameras were utilized for the first time during the Zero Waste Drive, enhancing monitoring and enforcement efforts to maintain cleanliness in Islamabad.

Randhawa stated that over 150 dumping sites were designated and approximately 1362 tons of waste were disposed of during the Zero Waste Operation in Islamabad.

Muhammad Ali mentioned that rose water, perfume and disinfectant lime were used at sacrificial

sites in Islamabad to maintain cleanliness and hygiene during Eid.

Chairman Randhawa proudly stated that the Capital Development Authority had done an excellent job in managing the city's cleanliness, making Islamabad a shining example of effective urban management.

The public has showered praise on the CDA's extensive sanitation drive, with citizens expressing satisfaction over the prompt removal of animal remains and the city's overall cleanliness, he mentioned.

The CDA's swift and efficient management during the festive days has earned widespread commendation, he concluded.

## Govt launches Green Sukuk

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government has successfully launched its first Green Sukuk, a Shariah-compliant bond designed to fund environmentally friendly projects across the country. The Rs 30 billion inaugural issuance, conducted through the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), marks a major step in aligning Pakistan's financial markets with global green financing standards.

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) spearheaded this landmark initiative, which will direct investments toward renewable energy, clean transportation, and climate-resilient infrastructure, according to 2024-25 Economic Survey report.

Unlike conventional bonds, the Green Sukuk ensures all funded projects meet strict environmental and social criteria, making it a pioneering instrument in Pakistan's financial sector. The Sustainable Investment Framework, approved by the federal cabinet, ensures transparency and compliance with global green financing principles.

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) will list and promote the Sukuk, broadening its appeal to ethical investors, Islamic banks, and international funds. Proceeds will exclusively finance projects that reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy efficiency, or support social development. Pakistan, highly vulnerable to climate change, has been seeking innovative ways to fund its transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Green Sukuk not only deepens Pakistan's financial markets but also attracts a new wave of environmentally conscious investors.

## Govt providing relief to poor people through different programs: Kiyani

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister for Railways Bilal Azhar Kiyani on Monday said that the government is providing relief to poor people through different programs.

A large number of poor families are getting some amount through Benazir

Income Support Programs launched by the government for helping poor segment of society, he said while talking to a private television channel.

In reply to a question about relief for people in upcoming budget, he said all-out efforts are being made to facilitate the

common man in the next budget.

He said the government had taken measures to extend relief to people in the power and petroleum sectors. The focus has also been given to improve economy and lifestyle of the poor people of this country, he added.

## 3 drown in Rawal Dam despite swimming ban

ISLAMABAD (APP): Three young men lost their lives after jumping into Rawal Dam, ignoring an official ban on swimming in the area.

The incident has raised concerns over enforcement of restrictions, especially during the Eid holidays.

According to the spokesman of Islamabad district administration, swimming in Rawal Dam is strictly prohibited under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

The administration said the restriction has been in place to prevent such incidents, and the public has been repeatedly informed about it — especially in the days leading up to Eid.

Despite multiple warnings and previous arrests

for violating the ban, three young men entered the dam to swim. Rescue teams were later called to the site after reports emerged of people drowning.

The district administration confirmed that one of the young men was recovered dead from the dam. The other two were found in critical condition but died shortly after being pulled out.

Officials said an inquiry is underway to determine how the incident occurred and whether any negligence was involved.

The administration said those responsible will be identified once the investigation is complete.

In a statement, the district administration appealed to residents to

avoid swimming in Rawal Dam and to follow the restrictions for their safety. It added that public cooperation is essential to prevent such tragedies in the future.

The administration also said that it had made announcements and conducted awareness campaigns before Eid to inform citizens about the risks and the swimming ban.

However, incidents like today's show that many continue to ignore the warnings.

Rawal Dam, which supplies water to Islamabad and Rawalpindi, is also a popular spot for recreation. But authorities say its depth, water currents, and lack of proper safety measures make swimming extremely dangerous.



RAWALPINDI: Butchers attempt to bring down a camel to sacrifice on the religious ritual of Eid-ul-Adha prayers. —INP Photo

## HEC awards 18,000 scholarships to boost HR development

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has reinforced its commitment to human resource development by allocating Rs 8.34 billion for 17 scholarship projects in the current fiscal year. The initiative aims to strengthen the country's academic and research capacity by supporting students and faculty through both local and foreign scholarships in emerging disciplines.

According to the Economic Survey 2024-25 released on Monday, approximately "18,500 scholarships" are being awarded under these projects, out of which 14,000 for students at local universities and 4,500 for top-ranked foreign institutions. These scholarships target the enhancement of skills and academic capabilities among students and faculty, especially in public sector universities.

For the fiscal year 2025, around 600 foreign scholarships have already been awarded. Additionally, 147 scholars have successfully returned after completing their PhD and research programs abroad. Over 1,000 indigenous scholarships have been granted, primarily benefiting students from underrepresented regions, including FATA, Balochistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan. In a significant step towards regional cooperation, HEC has also awarded 700 scholarships to students from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. Furthermore, under the Interim Placement of Fresh PhDs (IPFP) program, 150 newly qualified PhDs have been trained and placed at public sector universities across Pakistan.

In addition to scholarship programs, HEC has made substantial strides in institutional development and data analytics. A business intelligence platform has been deployed to analyze key performance indicators (KPIs) for 152 higher education institutions (HEIs). This platform supports a newly developed ranking model based on multiple parameters.

HEC has also finalized 85% of its Higher Education Statistics (HES) data for FY 2023 and completed a five-year employability survey, gathering data from over 160 HEIs. The commission has contributed vital information for Pakistan's Economic Survey 2023, UNESCO templates, and the Medium-Term Performance-Based Budget (2025-2027).

Moreover, in the ongoing efforts to streamline academic records, 2,683 PhD applications were approved for inclusion in the PhD Country Directory (PCD) as of March 25, 2025.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of family members visiting picnic point Daman e Koh on the 3rd day of Eid-ul-Adha celebrations. —APP Photo

## Pakistan Post generated PPO commission of Rs 2.57 million under CNIC renewal project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Post has played a vital role in the economic and social development of the country by providing reliable postal services. It is actively modernizing operations, introducing new services and expanding its digital presence, while continuing to serve millions of people through extensive network of 9,984 post offices across various categories.

According to the Economic Survey launched on Monday, as of March 2025, Pakistan post under the NADRA-Pakistan Post CNIC renewal project, 34,291 transactions were completed across 89 active locations, generating a PPO

commission of Rs 2.57 million under recent initiatives.

Pakistan Post has recently taken important initiatives to provide the most efficient postal services to the people of Pakistan. It has launched its own Mobile App, which offers access to postal service tariffs, postal codes, post office locator, complaint registration, track and trace, and pickup facilities.

Generates significant revenue through international parcel services, allowing parcels up to 30 kg and serving 204 global destinations as a key component of postal operations, it added.

Pakistan Post ensured deliv-

ery of packets and documents within the same day in 29 urban centers for items booked before noon, with plans to expand the service to additional cities.

Complied with international data requirements under the U.S. STOP Act 2018 and EU's ICS2 by upgrading domestic and international IT infrastructure, including the latest version of the International Postal System (IPS), integration with airline software for shipment visibility, and enabling AR flags in CARDIT messages—contributing to Pakistan Post's improvement from Level 5 to Level 6 in the 2024 21PD Postal Ranking.

Maintains traditional letter post service under the Universal Service Obligation (USO), offering both ordinary and registered international letter mail for items up to 2 kg, currently available for 24 international destinations.

The EMS (Express Mail Service), a premium international postal service for fast delivery of documents and merchandise, with global last-mile coverage; currently available through Pakistan Post for 36 international destinations.

Through EMS-Plus, Pakistan Post collaborates with international delivery partners to provide fast and reliable service to 238

destinations worldwide, offering competitive rates, track and trace, and delivery within 2 to 5 days.

Under the EDCF-funded project for automation of Pakistan Post Offices, supported by Exim Bank of Korea, significant progress was made in FY 2025. Following the consultancy agreement with Moon Engineering JV, signed on 27th August 2024 and effective from 5th September 2024, the Economic Affairs Division allocated US\$ 8.2 million (40 percent of the total project cost) for the fiscal year.

During three technical missions (October, December 2024,

and January 2025), Moon Engineering JV successfully submitted the Inception Report, conducted site surveys, finalized the basic design, and prepared draft bidding documents, marking major preparatory milestones toward the modernization and digitization of Pakistan Post's infrastructure nationwide.

In 2022, Pakistan Post achieved the 55th position out of 162 countries in the Postal Ranking Index issued by the Universal Postal Union (UPU). International Ranking of Postal Sector is based on four pillars, i.e. Reliability, Reach, Relevance and Resilience.



### Uzbekistan delivers aid

TASHKENT (Amu TV): Uzbekistan has delivered humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, with 183 tons of food supplies arriving in Balkh, Uzbek state media reported Monday. The aid convoy crossed into Afghanistan via the Hairatan border town and was transported from the city of Termez in Uzbekistan's Surkhandarya region. The shipment included essential food items such as flour, rice, sugar, pasta, vegetable oil, red beans, mung beans, ready-made meals, and sweets.

## The Frontier Post

# AFGHANISTAN

Zil Hajj 13, 1446 — Tuesday, June 10, 2025

### 6,000 families deported

KABUL (Amu TV): Iran and Pakistan have expelled more than 6,000 migrant families in the past ten days. Between May 30 and June 8, at least 6,325 Afghan families were deported from the two neighboring countries, including 5,507 from Iran and 823 from Pakistan, through both forced and so-called voluntary returns. According to the latest available report from the refugee ministry, 775 families were expelled in a single day — 715 from Iran and 60 from Pakistan.

## 119 schools in Khost lack buildings

KHOST (TOLONews): The Khost Department of Education reported that out of 372 public schools in the province, 119 schools do not have buildings.

According to officials from the Khost Department of Education, the Islamic Emirate is working to secure funding to construct buildings for these schools. Kherogul Khairkhwah, the deputy director of the Khost Department of Education, said "All the schools under the Khost Department of Education number 372, of which 119 lack buildings. However, the Islamic Emirate is striving to secure funding to build shelters for these schools."

Students at the Central Khabisat High School in the Sabari and Yaqubi district of Khost are studying next to a cemetery. Bakhtullah, one of the students, said that when a funeral is held at the cemetery, students leave due to the disruption.

Bakhtullah told a TOLONews reporter: "Students come and go with difficulty. This place is not suitable for education. When a funeral takes place at the cemetery, the school's order is disrupted, causing students to return to their homes."

Other students from this school call on the authorities to take practical steps toward constructing stan-

dard school buildings.

Mohammad Yousuf, another student in Khost, said: "Compared to other provinces, the weather in Khost is very hot. This environment is not suitable for education. In this heat and these conditions, students are suffering greatly."

Belal Maftoon, another student in the province, said: "Our request is that a building be constructed for us. Building a school would be very beneficial for our studies."

According to information from the Khost Department of Education, around 300,000 students are currently receiving education in the province.

## Art exhibit attracts visitors in Kandahar

K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): An art exhibition at the Directorate of Information and Culture building in Kandahar has attracted the attention of a large number of domestic and foreign visitors.

According to officials, dozens of various pieces of art are displayed in this exhibition, and both domestic and foreign visitors consider the exhibited artwork valuable.

Many of the pieces on display depict civilization and history.

Alp Arslan, a tourist from Turkey who visited the exhibition, praised the skill of Kandahar's artists. The tourist said: "I am very interested in the exhibition. I have never seen this before. It is my first time in Kandahar and Afghanistan and I want to learn about how Afghan art."

In addition to foreign tourists, dozens of domestic tourists and students visit the exhibition daily.

Mohammad Zahir Mubarez, a resident of Kandahar, told TOLONews: "This exhibition has many fascinating historical, cultural, and artistic works for us to see."

Ahmad Shah, a student in Kandahar, said about the event: "I have come here to learn about our historical sites through the art of artists, and I encourage other students and university students to visit as well."

Meanwhile, the Directorate of Information and Culture of Kandahar said that the exhibition has attracted a large number of domestic and foreign visitors.

Abdul Jalil, the exhibition manager of the Directorate of Information and Culture of Kandahar, said: "Besides domestic and foreign tourists, students and visitors from different provinces also come to this exhibition, and recently the number of tourists has increased."

Niyaz Mohammad Nisar, a writer, told TOLONews: "Art is a reflection of the soul of a society, showing how strong their imagination and vision are. Therefore, this exhibition presents a good image of literary works and intellectual creativity."

Officials from the Directorate of Information and Culture of Kandahar also said that a fine arts group is working to further enrich Kandahar's art exhibition.

## Türkiye launches wind power project in Herat

KABUL (Ariana News): A major step toward renewable energy development was taken in Afghanistan as Turkish construction firm 77 Insaat broke ground on a 200-megawatt wind power project in Herat province—the first Turkish-led initiative of its kind in the country.

The initial phase of the project, valued at \$65 million, will generate 43.2 megawatts of electricity.

Once completed, the full project is expected to significantly boost Afghanistan's clean energy capacity and reduce its reliance on imported electricity.

A foundation-laying ceremony was held in Kabul, attended by key figures from Afghanistan's interim government, including Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and several cabinet ministers.

Türkiye's Consul General in Herat, Sinan İlhan, and Chairman of 77 Insaat, Süleyman Cıvı, were also present, underscoring the diplomatic and economic significance of the project.

Speaking at the event,



Emre Unal, Türkiye's Commercial Counselor in Kabul, noted that Turkish companies have invested nearly \$7 billion in Afghanistan across infrastructure, construction, and other critical sectors.

He said Turkish firms are committed to supporting both Afghanistan's immediate development needs and its long-term economic resilience.

"Projects developed by our companies are not only

vital for today but are laying the groundwork for Afghanistan's future," Unal told Anadolu Agency.

He emphasized that Turkish products and engineering services are trusted in Afghanistan, giving Türkiye a competitive edge in expanding trade and investment.

Unal also highlighted several advantages for foreign investors in Afghanistan, including low startup costs, customs duty

exemptions, and a young, cost-effective labor force.

Türkiye is looking to deepen its collaboration with Afghanistan, especially in sectors such as renewable energy, mining, health-care, agriculture, and livestock. Unal confirmed that Türkiye's Ministry of Trade is actively working to increase bilateral economic cooperation, particularly as Afghanistan seeks to unlock its untapped natural resource potential.

### Kabul market blaze:

## Vendors suffer losses, seek support



KABUL (Pajhwok): A fire broke out on Sunday in a second-hand goods market in Kabul, reducing numerous shops to ashes. Despite the market's closure for Eid holidays, vendors suffered heavy losses and are urging the government for support.

According to local residents, the fire erupted around 9:00 a.m. in a used-goods market located in the 5th police district of Kabul city. The market was closed at the time due to the Eid al-Adha holidays.

Qari Mohammad Ashraf Mutaqi, head of the 5th police district, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the fire—whose cause remains unknown—was fully contained by around 1:00 p.m. He said approximately 70 shops were located in the market, most of which were destroyed.

Mutaqi added that 350,000 afghanis in cash, belonging to one shopkeeper, was recovered by firefighters and security per-

sonnel and returned to the owner, although his shop was completely burned.

The shopkeeper, Pacha Khan, expressed relief at the recovery of his money, despite losing all of his merchandise in the blaze. He thanked the security forces for their efforts.

Shah Wali, the owner of the market, praised the timely arrival of the fire department:

"Had the firefighters not arrived on time, it's likely the entire Company area would have caught fire. Many shops were destroyed, though some vendors managed to salvage their goods," he said.

Wali noted that the exact cause of the fire is still under investigation, but the building's caretaker suggested it may have resulted from an electrical short circuit.

Niazullah, a curtain seller, said the fire began around 8:45 a.m. while the market was still closed.

He said the market sold items such as curtains, bedding, clothes, shoes, and other household goods.

"All my inventory was destroyed. Nothing was left," he said, calling on the Islamic Emirate to support those affected.

Mohammad Nasim, a shoe seller, said:

"I had bought all my merchandise on credit. Unfortunately, it was all destroyed by the fire."

He also urged the government for financial assistance.

Abdul Sattar, another shopkeeper, reported that two of his shops were completely destroyed.

While he acknowledged the fire brigade arrived promptly, he confirmed that most of the shops were still damaged beyond recovery.

According to several vendors, the market housed over 100 shops in total.

Pajhwok made efforts to contact officials for comment but was unsuccessful.

## Nuristan sees rise in domestic tourism during Eidul Azha

NURISTAN (TOLONews): With the arrival of Eid al-Adha, the number of domestic tourists in Nuristan province has increased.

These days, the city of Parun, the center of Nuristan, and other areas of the province are hosting domestic tourists for recreation.

Habib Rahman, a tourist, said: "We arrived here with complete confidence and in a secure environment. We

never believed in our lives that we would reach this place."

Fazel Akbari, another tourist, stated: "We have come from Kabul to the beautiful region of Nuristan, especially the Parun area, which is surrounded by high mountains, natural beauty, fresh air, and flowing springs. Coming here and enjoying it transports us to another state of being."

Several other tourists have called for more facilities to be provided for tourism in Nuristan province.

Abdul Hakim Haidari, a tourist, said: "We hope that the construction work on the extended road between Kunar and Nuristan will be expedited."

Abdul Khaliq, another tourist, added: "We, the people of Herat, often travel to Iran for recreation and spend

money there; however, we should spend these expenses within our own country. Our security has improved, and we must maintain it so that security spreads throughout the country."

Local officials in Nuristan also say that thousands of tourists have visited the province since the first day of Eid al-Adha. They also urge tourists to pay serious attention to en-

vironmental conservation.

Faridun Samim, spokesperson for the governor of Nuristan, said: "Our security forces have taken complete security measures for them. Sometimes we have mobile patrols; our officials visit those areas and meet with tourists, and thanks to God, so far we have not had any incidents that would cause concern among the people."

## Food instead of joy: Kabul's children, youth seek work on Eid days

KABUL (TOLONews): On the second day of Eid al-Adha, some Kabul residents who came to the streets in search of work complained about their difficult economic conditions.

They called on the caretaker government officials to create job opportunities and support needy families with practical actions.

Hamid and Samirgul are two brothers who, on the second day of Eid al-Adha, wait with handcarts on the streets of Kabul, hoping to find work to support their family.

The brothers said that poverty and unemployment have robbed them of the joy of Eid.

Hamid stated: "I am 16 years old. Today is the second day of Eid, and I have come to work. Others go home to their families and

fathers, but we come to work. Poverty is hard; we two brothers are laborers. My father is old and stays at home. Since early morning, we have earned 100 Afghanis. Poverty is very hard."

His brother, Samirgul, added: "We have been here since morning, but there is no work. We ask the Islamic Emirate to create jobs for us."

Other workers, who are the sole breadwinners for their families, also call on the caretaker government to create job opportunities and support needy families.

Chaman, a resident of Kabul, stated: "We have come here for labor to find a morsel of bread for the children. I will go back home empty-handed again."

Amruddin, another

Kabul resident, said: "With 30 afghanis, what can we buy? Bread, oil, or pay the house rent? Authorities should create jobs for us. We came here out of necessity."

Following the cut in US aid and a reduction in assistance from relief organizations in Afghanistan, complaints about the worsening poverty and unemployment in the country have been increasing daily.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Program (WFP) have consistently warned about the reduction in humanitarian aid and the worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, stating that if humanitarian assistance is not continued, the crisis, especially regarding hunger and malnutrition, could

turn into a full-blown catastrophe.

Previously, OCHA reported that about 22.9 million people (nearly half of Afghanistan's population) would need humanitarian aid for survival in 2025. 3.5 million children under five and 1.1 million women require urgent nutritional treatment. Due to budget shortages, 298 nutrition centers, 420 health centers, and 13 health projects have been closed, negatively impacting access to essential services.

Climate crises, including reduced rainfall and droughts, have also worsened humanitarian needs, turning the situation into an emergency.

The World Food Program has also reported that about 9.5 million people will require urgent food

assistance between May and October 2025, with 1.6 million in an emergency situation and 7.93 million in a crisis situation. One in five people in Afghanistan needs urgent food assistance, and without international support, up to 15 million people could face severe hunger. Women, children, female-headed households, internally displaced persons, and returnee migrants are among the most vulnerable to food insecurity. A 40% reduction in the humanitarian response budget threatens recent achievements and increases the risk of hunger.

Abdul Rahman Habib, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, says: "The purpose of humanitarian aid is to assist the affected people



and vulnerable areas and should be conducted according to international laws and principles. We call on donor organizations

and countries not to use humanitarian aid for political purposes."

Reports indicate that rising unemployment, house-

hold debts, and the recent downsizing of government offices have further destabilized the country's economic situation.



# Israeli forces seize Gaza aid boat carrying Greta Thunberg

JERUSALEM/ASHDOD (Reuters): Israeli naval forces boarded and seized a charity vessel that had tried to break a naval blockade of the war-torn Gaza Strip on Monday and the boat with its crew of 12, including activist Greta Thunberg, is now heading to a port in Israel.

The British-flagged yacht, Madleen, which is operated by the pro-Palestinian Freedom Flotilla Coalition, was aiming to deliver a symbolic amount of aid to Gaza later on Monday and raise international awareness of the humanitarian crisis there. However, the boat was boarded during the night before it could reach shore, the FFC said on its Telegram account. The Israeli Foreign Ministry later confirmed that it was under Israeli control. "The 'selfie yacht' of the 'celebrities' is safely making its way to the shores of Israel. The passengers are expected to return to their home countries," the ministry wrote on X.

All passengers were safe and unharmed, the ministry later added. "They were provided with sandwiches and water. The show is over." Among the 12-strong crew are Swedish climate campaigner

Thunberg and Rima Hassan, a French member of the European Parliament. "The crew of the Freedom Flotilla was arrested by the Israeli army in international waters around 2 am," Hassan posted on X. A photograph showed the crew seated on the boat, all wearing life jackets, with their hands in the air. The yacht is carrying a small shipment of humanitarian aid, including rice and baby formula. The Foreign Ministry said it would be taken to Gaza. "The tiny amount of aid that was on the yacht and not consumed by the 'celebrities' will be transferred to Gaza through real humanitarian channels," it wrote.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered the military on Sunday to prevent the Madleen from reaching Gaza, calling the mission a propaganda effort in support of Hamas. Katz said he had instructed that upon the boat's arrival at Ashdod port, the activists will be shown videos of atrocities committed during the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel, which triggered the Gaza war.

Hamas condemned the seizure of the boat as "state terrorism" and said it salutes its activists. Israel imposed

a naval blockade on the coastal enclave after Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007 to stop weapons from reaching the militant group, which is designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel and the West.

The blockade has remained in place through multiple conflicts, including the current war, which began when Hamas-led militants rampaged through southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing more than 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages, by Israeli tallies. Israel's retaliatory offensive against Hamas has since killed more than 54,000 Palestinians, according to health officials in Hamas-run Gaza and left its more than 2 million population largely displaced and at risk of famine, according to the United Nations.

The United Nations' special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, has supported the FFC operation and on Sunday, urged other boats to challenge the Gaza blockade. "Madleen's journey may have ended, but the mission isn't over. Every Mediterranean port must send boats with aid & solidarity to Gaza," she wrote on X.



**D I KHAN:** Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur offering Eidul Azha prayer at his native village.

## Saif says Eid cleanliness drive ends

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information, stated that during the Eidul Azha cleanliness campaign, a total of 24,939 tons of animal waste and garbage were promptly and properly disposed of across the province. On average, 693 tons of waste were disposed of in each district, with a total of 10,779 personnel participating in the campaign.

Barrister Saif added that a total of 1,289 complaints were received, all of which were addressed promptly and effectively. The large-scale cleanliness operation was completed at a remarkably low cost. A total of PKR 78.5 million was spent on the campaign, averaging PKR 2.5 million per district, while in some districts, the cost was negligible. Barrister Saif paid tribute to all staff involved in the campaign and conveyed appreciation on behalf of the Chief Minister to all relevant departments.

## Israel strikes Syria

DAMASCUS: The Israeli army has again bombed Syria, claiming it killed a Hamas member during an air strike in the south of the country, in the latest in its series of attacks on Syria in the wake of former President Bashar al-Assad's ouster last December. In a statement on Telegram, the Israeli army said it had struck the alleged Hamas member in the Mazraat Beit Jin area.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that one person was killed and two others were wounded in the Israeli attack targeting a vehicle in the town near the United Nations-patrolled buffer zone. Hamas has not yet commented on the death of the alleged member. The observatory says Israel has carried out 61 attacks – 51 by air and 10 by ground – in Syria so far this year.

Two rockets launched from Syria targeted Israel earlier this week, a first since the fall of al-Assad. Two groups claimed responsibility for the attack. The first group, named the "Martyr Mohammed Deif Brigades", is a little-known group named after the Hamas military commander who was killed last year. A second little-known group, the "Islamic Resistance Front in Syria", called for action against Israel from southern Syria a few months ago.

Israel struck southern Syria shortly afterwards, with Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz saying that he was holding Syria "directly responsible". Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani condemned Israel's attacks and called them "coordinated provocations aimed at undermining Syria's progress and stability". — Aljazeera

# US, China begin key trade talks in London

LONDON (AFP): China and the United States began a new round of trade talks in London on Monday, Beijing's state media reported, as the world's two biggest economies seek to shore up a shaky truce after bruising tit-for-tat tariffs.

The two sides are meeting in the historic Lancaster House, run by the UK Foreign Office, following a first round of talks in Geneva last month. Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng was again heading the team in London. Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported the start of the talks.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer are leading the US delegation, President Donald Trump said on Friday. "The meeting should go very well," Trump said on his Truth Social platform. His press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, told Fox News on Sunday: "We want China and the United States to continue moving forward with the agreement that was struck in Geneva."

"The meeting should go very well," Trump said on his Truth Social platform. His press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, told Fox News on Sunday: "We want China and the United States to continue moving forward with the agreement that was struck in Geneva." While the UK government reiterated that it was not involved in the discussions, a spokesperson said: "We are a nation that champions free trade." UK authorities "have always been clear that a trade war is in nobody's interests, so we welcome these talks", the spokesperson added.

The talks in London come just a few days after Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping finally held their first publicly announced telephone talks since the Republican returned to the White House. Trump said Thursday's call reached a "very positive conclusion". Xi was quoted by Xinhua as saying, "Correcting the course of the big ship of Sino-US relations requires us to steer well and set the direction."

Tensions between the two nations have soared, with Trump accusing Beijing of violating a tariff de-escalation deal reached in Geneva in mid-May. "We need China to comply with their side of the deal. And so that's what the trade team will

be discussing tomorrow," Leavitt said on Sunday. A key issue will be Beijing's shipments of rare earths — crucial to a range of goods, including electric vehicle batteries and which have been a bone of contention for some time.

"Rare earth shipments from China to the US have slowed since President Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs in April," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB. "The US wants these shipments to be reinstated, while China wants the US to rethink immigration curbs on students, restrictions on access to advanced technology, including microchips and to make it easier for Chinese tech providers to access US consumers," she added.

In April, Trump introduced sweeping worldwide tariffs that targeted China most heavily. At one point, Washington hit Beijing with additional levies of 145 per cent on its goods, triggering a tit-for-tat escalation as China's countermeasures on US goods reached 125pc.

In Switzerland, after two days of talks, the two sides agreed to slash their staggeringly high tariffs for 90 days. But differences have persisted, including over China's restrictions on exporting rare earth minerals. The impact was reflected in the latest official export data released Monday in Beijing. Exports to the United States fell 12.7pc in May from the previous month, with China shipping \$28.8 billion worth of goods. This was down from \$33bn in April, according to Beijing's General Administration of Customs.

Throughout its talks with Washington, China has also launched discussions with other trading partners — including Japan and South Korea — to try to build a united front to counter Trump's tariffs. On Thursday, Beijing and Canada agreed to regularise their channels of communication after strained ties. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Chinese Premier Li Qiang also discussed trade and the fentanyl crisis, Ottawa said. Beijing has also proposed establishing a "green channel" to ease exports of rare earths to the European Union, and fast-tracking approval of some export licenses. China is expected to host a summit with the EU in July, marking 50 years since Beijing and Brussels established diplomatic ties.

# NATO chief calls for hike in missile defense

LONDON (AP): NATO members need to increase their air and missile defenses by 400% to counter the threat from Russia, the head of the military alliance plans to say.

Secretary-General Mark Rutte will say during a visit to London that NATO must take a "quantum leap in our collective defense" to face growing instability and threats, according to extracts released by NATO before Rutte's speech. Rutte is due to meet U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer at 10 Downing St. ahead of a NATO summit in the Netherlands where the 32-nation alliance is likely to commit to a big hike in military spending.

Like other NATO members, the U.K. has been reassessing its defense spending since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Starmer has pledged to increase British defense spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product by 2027

and to 3% by 2034. Rutte has proposed a target of 3.5% of economic output on military spending and another 1.5% on "defense-related expenditure" such as roads, bridges, airfields and sea ports. He said last week he is confident the alliance will agree to the target at its summit in The Hague on June 24-25.

At the moment, 22 of the 32 member countries meet or exceed NATO's current 2% target. The new target would meet a demand by President Donald Trump that member states spend 5% of gross domestic product on defense. Trump has long questioned the value of NATO and complained that the US provides security to European countries that don't contribute enough.

Rutte plans to say in a speech at the Chatham House think tank in London that NATO needs thousands more armored vehicles and millions more artillery shells, as well as a 400% increase in air and missile defense.

"We see in Ukraine how Russia delivers terror from above, so we will strengthen the shield that protects our skies," he plans to say.

"Wishful thinking will not keep us safe. We cannot dream away the danger. Hope is not a strategy. So NATO has to become a stronger, fairer and more lethal alliance." European NATO members, led by the U.K. and France, have scrambled to coordinate their defense posture as Trump transforms American foreign policy, seemingly sidelining Europe as he looks to end the war in Ukraine. Last week the U.K. government said it would build new nuclear-powered attack submarines, prepare its army to fight a war in Europe and become "a battle-ready, armor-clad nation." The plans represent the most sweeping changes to British defenses since the collapse of the Soviet Union more than three decades ago.

General Directorate of Passports confirmed its readiness to finalize departure procedures at the Kingdom's international air, land, and sea ports, supported by modern security systems and trained personnel.

Minister of Transport and Logistic Services Saleh Al-Jasser also inspected King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah to assess its readiness for pilgrim departures. He reviewed procedures for receiving and dispatching pilgrims, including departure hall operations, service performance, and overall efficiency, aiming to ensure a smooth travel experience that meets international standards. — Arab News

## King Abdullah II urges global ocean action at UN conference

LONDON: King Abdullah II delivered Jordan's national address at the third United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice on Monday, underlining the urgent need for global action to protect oceans and marine life, the Jordan News Agency reported.

The week-long conference, co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, has brought together hundreds of international leaders, officials, and experts to address the pressing environmental challenges facing the world's seas. In his remarks, King Abdullah described oceans as "a vital shared resource, sustaining billions of lives," but warned that they are increasingly threatened by climate change, pollution, overexploitation, and biodiversity loss.

"This is a critical moment in time for action," the king added, stressing the need for international collaboration to preserve marine ecosystems. King Abdullah highlighted Jordan's embrace of science as a tool for transformation, noting that the Gulf of Aqaba's coral reefs show exceptional resilience to extreme temperatures. This unique feature, he said, positions Jordan as a global hub for marine research that could help save coral reefs worldwide.

To advance this vision, he announced the launch of two key initiatives: Aqaba Blue Ventures and the Global Center for Ocean Regeneration. These projects will provide platforms to test new technologies that can be scaled up for global application, he added. On the sidelines of the conference, King Abdullah held a bilateral meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, during which he affirmed Jordan's readiness to strengthen cooperation with France across various sectors, JNA reported.

The leaders stressed the importance of maintaining coordination on regional issues and called for immediate international efforts to reinstate a ceasefire in Gaza and facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid. The king warned of the dangerous consequences of continued escalation in the West Bank and Jerusalem, reiterating that granting Palestinians their full legitimate rights remained the only path to lasting regional stability.

He also commended France's role in promoting peace in the Middle East, particularly through its upcoming international conference in New York from June 17-20, organized in partnership with Saudi Arabia. The meeting was attended by Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and Jordan's ambassador to France Lina Al-Hadid. Also on Monday, King Abdullah held additional high-level meetings with Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides, Prince Albert II of Monaco, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The talks were part of the king's broader diplomatic efforts to mobilize international support for the rights of the Palestinian people. During the discussions, King Abdullah again stressed that a two-state solution was the only viable route to regional peace and highlighted the importance of the forthcoming New York conference. — Arab News

# Russia fires record 479 drones at Ukraine overnight

MOSCOW (AFP): Russia fired a record 479 drones at Ukraine in an overnight aerial barrage, Kyiv's air force said on Monday, the latest massive attack as Moscow rejects calls for a ceasefire. The attack caused damage in several Ukrainian regions, though there were no reports of people killed or mass casualties.

"Enemy air strikes were recorded in 10 spots," the Ukrainian air force said. The mayor of the western city of Rivne, Oleksandr Tretyak, called it "the largest attack" on the region since the start of the war. Russia has escalated its attacks across Ukraine in recent weeks, which Kyiv says demonstrate that Moscow has no intention of halting its three-year-long invasion and is not serious about peace talks.

The barrages have raised concerns about the capacity of Ukraine's stretched air defence systems, but the air force said that it shot down or intercepted 460 of the drones, as well as 19 out of 20 missiles fired by Russia overnight. Ukraine also said it had launched its own overnight strike on an electronics factory that makes

parts for Russian drones, with local Russian officials saying the facility had to temporarily suspend production after the attack.

Russia attacked the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv with drones, missiles and guided bombs, killing at least four people and injuring more than 60, including a baby, local officials said. One of Ukraine's largest cities, Kharkiv is located just a few dozen kilometres from the Russian border and has been under constant Russian shelling during more than three years of war.

"Kharkiv is currently experiencing the most powerful attack since the start of the full-scale war," Terekhov said on the Telegram messenger early on Saturday. Dozens of explosions were heard in the city through the night and Russian troops were striking simultaneously with missiles, drones, and guided aerial bombs, he said.

Multi-storey and private residential buildings, educational and infrastructure facilities were attacked, Terekhov noted. Kharkiv governor Oleh Syniehubov said that one of the city's

civilian industrial facilities was attacked by 40 drones, one missile and four bombs, causing a fire, adding there may still be people under the rubble.

In the evening, Russian aircraft once again attacked Kharkiv with guided bombs, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called "another brutal murder". "It was a brutal blow to the city in broad daylight, and in fact, they have been attacking our city of Kharkiv for the entire day," Zelenskiy said in his evening statement.

"Last night, there was a massive drone strike on Kharkiv, and now there are aerial bombs. Dozens of people have been injured in the past 24 hours," he said. The Ukrainian military said Russia launched 206 drones, 2 ballistic and 7 other missiles against Ukraine overnight. It said its air defence units shot down 87 drones while another 80 drones were lost — in reference to the Ukrainian military using electronic warfare to redirect them — or they were drone simulators that did not carry warheads. Ten locations were hit, the military said.

# Iran says to submit own N-proposal to US soon

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran said on Monday it will soon present a counter-proposal on a nuclear deal with the United States, after it had described Washington's offer as containing "ambiguities". Tehran and Washington have held five rounds of talks since April to thrash out a new nuclear accord to replace the deal with major powers that US President Donald Trump abandoned during his first term in 2018.

The longtime foes have been locked in a diplomatic standoff over Iran's uranium enrichment, with Tehran defending it as a "non-negotiable" right and Washington describing it as a "red line". On May 31, after the fifth round talks, Iran said it had received "elements" of a US proposal, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi saying later the text contained "ambiguities".

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei criticised the US proposal as "lacking elements" reflective of the previous rounds of negotiations, without providing further details. "We will soon submit our own proposed plan to the other side through (mediator) Oman once it is finalised," Baqaei told a weekly press briefing.

"It is a proposal that is

reasonable, logical, and balanced, and we strongly recommend that the American side value this opportunity." Iran's parliament speaker has said the US proposal failed to include the lifting of sanctions — a key demand for Tehran, which has been reeling under their weight for years.

Trump, who has revived his "maximum pressure" campaign of sanctions on Iran since taking office in January, has repeatedly said it will not be allowed any uranium enrichment under a potential deal. On Wednesday, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the US offer was "100 per cent against" notions of independence and self-reliance.

He insisted that uranium enrichment was "key" to Iran's nuclear programme and that the US "cannot have a say" on the issue. Iran currently enriches uranium to 60pc, far above the 3.67-pc limit set in the 2015 deal and close though still short of the 90pc needed for a nuclear warhead. Western countries, including the United States, have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire atomic weapons, while Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes.

The United Nations

nuclear watchdog will convene a Board of Governors meeting from June 9-13 in Vienna to discuss Iran's nuclear activities. The meeting comes after the International Atomic Energy Agency released a report criticising "less than satisfactory" cooperation from Tehran, particularly in explaining past cases of nuclear material found at undeclared sites.

Iran has criticised the IAEA report as unbalanced, saying it relied on "forged documents" provided by its arch foe Israel. Britain, France and Germany, the three European countries who were party to the 2015 deal, are currently weighing whether to trigger the sanctions "snapback" mechanism in the accord.

The mechanism would reinstate UN sanctions in response to Iranian non-compliance — an option that expires in October. On Friday, Araghchi warned European powers against backing a draft resolution at the IAEA accusing Tehran of non-compliance, calling it a "strategic mistake". On Monday, Baqaei said Iran has "prepared and formulated a series of steps and measures" if the resolution passed. "Without a doubt, the response to confrontation will not be more cooperation," he added.

# Thousands of pilgrims continue spiritual journey to Madinah

MADINAH: As pilgrims bid farewell to Makkah on Monday after completing Hajj — the fifth pillar of Islam — many departed for Madinah with cherished memories. Hajj authorities in Madinah have begun implementing their operational plans for the second season, expecting thousands of pilgrims in the coming days.

The Special Forces for Hajj and Umrah Security have completed preparations to receive the pilgrims, as part of a comprehensive plan to ensure their safe and smooth arrival, according to the Saudi Press Agency. The field plan focuses on regulating pilgrim movement, facilitating entry and exit from Madinah, maintaining

traffic flow, and reducing congestion. Preparations include increased security presence on major routes, providing assistance and guidance, and ensuring emergency teams are ready to respond to health cases and other situations. Government and voluntary bodies have raised readiness levels to support reception centers, entry points, and historical sites, while enhancing efforts in transport, guidance, hospitality, and healthcare through an integrated, 24/7 system.

These efforts reflect the leadership's commitment to serving pilgrims and ensuring their safety during their journey between the holy sites and Madinah, the SPA reported.

Meanwhile, 2,443 pilgrims from 100 countries, hosted under the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' Guests Program for Hajj and Umrah, also traveled to Madinah after completing Hajj.

During their stay, they will pray at the Prophet's Mosque, visit Quba Mosque, and explore significant historical landmarks. The pilgrims expressed gratitude for the services provided by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance, which met their needs and facilitated smooth movement between sites.

They shared their joy at completing the Hajj rituals, including standing at Mount Arafat, staying in Muzdalifah,

the days of Tashreeq in Mina, stoning the Jamarat, and concluding with the farewell Tawaf. A coordinated program is in place to transfer pilgrims from their accommodations to Madinah airport, overseen by the Hajj and Visit Committee and relevant authorities to ensure timely flight departures.

Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport recorded a successful pre-Hajj phase, receiving pilgrims smoothly and efficiently. During the arrival period, the airport handled 719,400 pilgrims — 49 per cent of all air-arriving pilgrims this Hajj season — via 1,910 flights from 196 cities in 53 countries. The