

First post-Hajj flight arrives  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The first post-Hajj 2025 flight carrying 307 Pakistani pilgrims landed at Islamabad International Airport on Wednesday. As per details, PIA flight PK-732 departed from King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah at 8:50 PM local time and arrived in Islamabad at 3:50 AM, according to Secretary Ministry of Religious Affairs Dr. Syed Ata Ur Rehman.

PTI flays federal budget  
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Sheikh Waqas Akram has criticised the federal budget 2022-26, calling it “useless for farmers” and warning of a deepening crisis in the agricultural sector. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, he said farmers are unable to afford basic inputs like fuel and tractors, with tractor prices now exceeding Rs5 million.



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# Additional customs duties on 4,000 tariff lines slashed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major step toward structural reform, the federal government has eliminated additional customs duties on 4,000, out of 7,000 total tariff lines, and reduced duties on a further 2,700, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb announced on Wednesday.

Speaking at the post-budget press briefing, Aurangzeb described the tariff rationalisation as a “major and important step” in aligning Pakistan’s trade and industrial policy with global standards. The initiative, he said, marks the beginning of a phased plan to transition towards a simplified tariff regime, ultimately targeting more than 4 percent reduction in tariff regime in Pakistan.

“Overall, there are 7,000 tariff lines. Additional customs duty has been removed on 4,000 lines, and reduced customs duty on 2,700 tariff lines,” the finance minister explained. “Of these, around 2,000 tariff lines are directly linked to raw materials and intermediary goods used by exporters,” Aurangzeb emphasised that the reduction in input costs for exporters would help improve competitiveness in international markets — a critical requirement as the country seeks to boost its export base and narrow trade deficit.

“This is a structural reform that hasn’t been undertaken in the past 30 years,” he said. “From a reform perspective, this is a huge step, and we’re committed to taking it forward gradually.” The government’s broader goal, according to Aurangzeb, is to reshape Pakistan’s tariff architecture in a way that supports industrial growth and integrates the economy more deeply into global supply chains. The minister said tariff reforms were more than a fiscal



measure — they mark a fundamental shift in Pakistan’s economic model, aimed at dismantling long-standing protectionist regime and laying foundation for sustainable export-led growth. “This is not just about reducing duties — it’s about transforming the overall macroeconomic framework,” the minister stated adding this sets the direction of travel.

The reforms are designed to gradually replace import substitution with export promotion, a pivot the government considers essential for addressing Pakistan’s recurring balance of payments crises and dollar liquidity pressures. “If we want to structurally reposition the country toward export-led growth, we need to change very DNA of the economy,” Aurangzeb said. “That’s how we avoid falling into the same cycle of dollar shortages every time we try to grow.”

The minister, touched on broader fiscal measures aimed at ensuring equity and sustainability, particularly for salaried individuals and mid-sized businesses. He noted that the government has offered as much relief as possible to the salaried class within constraints of available fiscal space.

“Different slabs, including at the highest levels, have been carefully considered. From both, my perspective and the Prime Minister’s, we provided as much relief as the fiscal space allows.” He also pointed to the phased reduction of the super tax on mid-sized corporations as part of the

government’s commitment to improving the business climate. “Even if it’s just a 0.5% reduction, it sends an important signal to the market,” he added.

Aurangzeb said the government announced a series of targeted reforms in the construction and agriculture sectors, aimed at reducing transaction costs, supporting affordable housing, and ensuring credit access for small farmers. Addressing recent concerns around construction-related taxes, the minister clarified that while overall tax liability has not been reduced, the government restructured system to lower transaction costs, particularly for buyers.

In a bid to promote home-ownership, the government is also prioritizing access to mortgage financing. “As important as the fiscal side is, access to credit is equally critical,” the minister said. He revealed that, in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan, the government is preparing to launch a new housing finance scheme to enable individuals to build homes through accessible credit.

On the agriculture front, Aurangzeb described the sector as a critical for economic growth. He clarified that additional taxes on fertilizer and pesticide were to be implemented last June, however government negotiated with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and got it delayed it till this year. The minister said strengthened enforcement mechanisms have helped the federal government generate over Rs400 billion in additional revenues this fiscal year. He noted that while international stakeholders had previously doubted Pakistan’s ability to implement tax laws effectively, the government has now demonstrated that meaningful enforcement is possible.

(Continued on Back Page)

## Fire breaks out on slopes of Margalla Hills

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A fire broke out on the slopes of the Margalla Hills on Wednesday, prompting immediate action by the Islamabad district administration. The assistant commissioner concerned reached the spot to monitor the situation. Firefighting teams launched an operation to control the blaze, which had started in a forested section of the hills.

According to a spokesperson of the district administration, over 50 firefighters were actively involved in the operation. The official expressed confidence that the fire would be brought under control soon. The cause of the fire had not been confirmed at the time of reporting. The Margalla Hills, which attract visitors year-round for hiking and picnicking, often face fire incidents during dry weather. Authorities believe many of these fires are linked to human activities, particularly careless disposal of burning material or illegal bonfires.

The incident has occurred just days after Eidul Azha, when families often head to the hills and green belts for barbecues and picnics. In light of the fire and rising temperatures, the district administration has reinforced restrictions already in place to prevent such gatherings in sensitive forest areas. The spokesperson said that Section 144 has been imposed, banning barbecues and bonfires in all green belts and across the Margalla Hills National Park. Officials have clarified that no fire-related activity is allowed in these areas under the current orders.

A notification had issued by the Additional Deputy Commissioner General stated that strict legal action will be taken against anyone found violating these restrictions. Law enforcement agencies have been instructed to ensure full implementation of the ban during and after the Eid holidays.

## FO rejects Indian minister’s irresponsible remarks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday categorically rejected the irresponsible remarks of the Indian External Affairs Minister made during different media engagements in Brussels, advising him to refrain from concocting misleading narratives to justify their recent aggressive actions.

“The discourse of top diplomats should aim to promote peace and harmony, rather than producing bellicose punchlines. The tone and tenor of a Foreign Minister should be commensurate with his dignified status,” the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement.

For the last several

years, India had been engaged in a malicious campaign to mislead the international community through a fictitious narrative of victimhood. “However, India’s continued anti-Pakistan diatribe cannot hide its sponsorship of terrorism beyond its borders, nor can it cover up the state-sanctioned oppression in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Instead of pointing fingers at others, India should introspect on its own involvement in terrorism, subversion and targeted assassinations,” it was added.

The spokesperson further stressed that India must also desist from concocting misleading narratives to justify its recent aggressive

actions. “The narrative emerging from India betrays sheer frustration, following an unsuccessful military adventure against Pakistan. The Indian leaders would be well-advised to improve the standard of their discourse and discard their obsession with Pakistan. The history will judge not by who shouted the loudest — but by who acted the wisest,” the spokesperson further added. Pakistan believed in peaceful coexistence, dialogue and diplomacy. However, it stands resolute in its intent and ability to safeguard its sovereignty against any aggression, as exemplified by its robust response to India’s reckless strikes, last month, it was asserted.

## Centcom chief hails Pakistan as key counterterrorism partner

WASHINGTON: US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Michael Erik Kurilla has praised Pakistan as a significant partner in the global fight against terrorism.

Addressing the US Senate Armed Services Committee, General Kurilla highlighted Pakistan’s proactive and constructive role in counterterrorism efforts, noting that the global community acknowledges Pakistan’s contribution. He emphasized that ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) is currently among the most active global terrorist organizations, and Pakistan has emerged as an exceptional counterterrorism partner. Kurilla credited Pakistan’s close intelligence cooperation with helping neutralise and apprehend dozens of ISIS-K operatives, including at least five top leaders.

One major success cited was the capture and handover of Jaafar, the mastermind behind the Abbey Gate bombing, which was made possible through intelligence sharing with Pakistani authorities. General Kurilla noted that Pakistan’s Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, personally informed US officials of the arrest shortly

after it happened.

He further stated that Pakistan continues to conduct effective operations against ISIS-K with limited but strategic intelligence exchanges. The group, according to Kurilla, remains active along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and Pakistan’s involvement is proving vital in the global counterterrorism landscape. General Kurilla revealed that since the beginning of 2024, over 1,000 terrorist attacks have taken place in Pakistan’s western regions, resulting in approximately 700 deaths—including security personnel and civilians—and 2,500 injuries.

US confirms Trump’s readiness to mediate on Kashmir conflict: The United States has officially acknowledged President Donald Trump’s readiness to mediate the longstanding Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, following a recent ceasefire.

This development marks a significant diplomatic move by the US, aimed at addressing and potentially resolving this protracted conflict. During a press briefing held in Washington, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce

emphasized President Trump’s commitment to resolving generational differences between nations. Bruce highlighted that every action taken by the US leader is aimed at bridging divides and fostering peace. The announcement comes after a Pakistani parliamentary delegation, headed by Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, engaged in discussions with senior State Department officials, including Under Secretary for Political Affairs Allison Hooker. These talks primarily centered on strengthening Pak-US bilateral relations, with a particular focus on enhancing counterterrorism cooperation.

The confirmation of Trump’s willingness to mediate in the Kashmir issue could potentially pave the way for renewed dialogue and negotiations between the two South Asian neighbors, offering a glimmer of hope for peace in the region. The US administration’s proactive approach in addressing the Kashmir conflict underscores its broader strategy of fostering international stability and resolving long-standing disputes through diplomatic engagement. — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of MNAs from PML-Q, led by Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Chaudhry Salik Hussain called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Imran, Bushra’s appeals adjourned

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday adjourned the applications for suspension of the sentence of the founder of PTI and his wife Bushra Bibi, convicted in the 190 million pound case and their release on bail.

The cause list of the case was canceled due to Justice Muhammad Asif, a member of the division bench that heard the case in the Islamabad High Court, being on leave. The next hearing will be held on June 26.

A two-member division bench of the IHC, consisting of Acting Chief Justice Sardar Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif, was to hear the applications for suspension of sentence of the founder of PTI and Bushra Bibi in the 190 million pound case, but due to the fact that the member of the bench, Justice Muhammad Asif, was on leave, the petitions could not be heard.

PTI founder Aleema Khan, along with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and the PTI leadership met the Acting Chief Justice’s secretary regarding scheduling the next date.

## Punjab govt will present budget on 13th

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has announced that the provincial government will present a budget for the upcoming fiscal year on June 13.

She promised that the budget would be progressive, people-friendly, and tax-free. In a statement issued on Wednesday, she said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had given clear directives to broaden the province’s tax net without imposing any new taxes on the public.

Azma highlighted that several flagship initiatives of the Punjab government — including the ‘Suthra Punjab’ campaign, infrastructure development, and the construction of new hospitals — will be key features of the budget. She added that basic facilities will be ensured in all public schools across the province. Citing a recent report by ‘The Economist’, she noted that 98 per cent of schools in Punjab are in satisfactory condition. She assured that the welfare-oriented vision of Chief Minister Maryam will be clearly reflected in the budget.

## PM satisfied over surge in remittances

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed satisfaction over increase in remittances during May 2025 which was 13.7 per cent more than the previous fiscal year.

In a statement here, the prime minister said the country had received some US\$ 34.9 billion in remittances during the current fiscal year, which was 28.8 per cent higher than the outgoing financial year. “US\$ 3.7 billion was received in remittances during May 2025, which is 13.7% more than May last year. The increase in remittances is evidence of the growing confidence of overseas Pakistanis in the economic policies of the government,” PM Shehbaz said.

He added that the government’s economic measures and people-friendly budget for the next fiscal year were a harbinger of a bright future for the country. The prime minister paid tribute to the government’s economic team.

**PML-Q delegation supports PM’s economic initiatives:** A delegation of Pakistan Muslim League-Q called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and expressed full support for all the initiatives taken by him for the country’s economic development and public welfare. The delegation comprising

## Shehbaz to undertake UAE official visit today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is scheduled to undertake an official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday, along with a high-level delegation. The visit reflects the deep-rooted fraternal ties between Pakistan and the UAE, which are marked by mutual trust, shared values, and close cooperation across multiple sectors, according to a Foreign Office press release. A high-level delegation, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, federal ministers, and other senior officers will accompany the prime minister.

During the visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz will hold high-level meetings with the UAE leadership, including a bilateral meeting with the President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. A wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest and concern will be discussed during the high-level interactions. According to the Foreign Office, the prime minister’s visit will serve to further strengthen the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and the UAE, deepen economic ties, and foster multifaceted collaboration. It is also a manifestation of the shared commitment of Pakistan and the UAE to bolstering the mutually beneficial strategic partnership, enhancing cooperation in existing areas of mutual interest, and exploring new avenues for further strengthening the bilateral cordial relations.

Members of the National Assembly Chaudhry Hussain Elahi, Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry and Ms. Farukh Khan and led by Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain called on the prime minister, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The MNAs praised the prime minister and his team for presenting the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026 in the National

Assembly. The delegation said that both the military and political leadership were working tirelessly for the national development and the welfare of the people.

They also lauded the prime minister’s exemplary leadership during the recent tensions with India and his efforts to elevate the country’s prestige at the global stage. Matters related to the respective constituencies were also discussed during the meeting.

## Bilawal slams India’s fake propaganda

LONDON (APP): Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Chairman and head of high-level parliamentary delegation Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, on Wednesday said India’s narrative was based on ‘lies and propaganda,’ while Pakistan’s stance was rooted in ‘truth and peace.’ He criticized India for using terrorism as a foreign policy tool and pointed out that Indian agencies had been targeting Sikh activists around the world.

Speaking at a press conference along with delegation members, Bilawal said US President Trump’s multiple offers of mediation reflected his desire to establish peace between Pakistan and India. However, he regretted that Indian government seemed to be sabotaging such efforts. He welcomed the US State Department’s recent statement, highlighting former President Donald Trump’s willingness to mediate through dialogue. Bilawal

tenure. “Pakistan has always sought peace through dialogue and diplomacy,” Bilawal said, emphasising that resolving all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir dispute, must come through peaceful negotiations. He stressed that lasting peace between Pakistan and India was in the interest of international community.

Bilawal asserted that India had repeatedly failed to produce credible evidence to support its terrorism allegations against Pakistan. “Despite our continuous demands, India has not been able to prove any of its claims,” he said. He said “India knows well that Pakistan has no links with terrorism. Its efforts to malign us will fail, and we will continue to pursue peace in the region.”

He further said that Pakistan sought peaceful solutions to all disputes — Kashmir, and water issues — through dialogue. Bilawal

said: “Even President Trump acknowledged that dialogue on Kashmir is essential. If the U.S. must push India to the negotiating table, it should, because peace is in the world’s best interest.”

Bilawal also condemned India’s reported campaign against Sikh communities abroad and its involvement in terrorism within Pakistan. “We call on India to stop sponsoring terrorism beyond its borders,” he added. He warned that India’s threats to cut off water supplies to Pakistan were a violation of UN Charter.

Commenting on Pakistan’s recent security achievements, Bilawal said: “The recent conflict has shown that even as a smaller nation, Pakistan has the strength to defend itself on all fronts.” He said that elevation of Asim Munir to the rank of Field Marshal was a recognition of his leadership and Pakistan’s military success in recent standoff with India.

## Saif concerned over hike in taxes on petrol and electricity

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has strongly reacted to the recently presented federal budget, stating that the federal government has deceived the salaried class under the guise of providing relief. The salary increase is far too little compared to the rate of inflation adding this budget is a

nightmare for the poor segments of society.

He expressed serious concern over the hike in taxes on petrol and electricity, warning that such measures would trigger a new wave of inflation. “When petrol prices rise, the cost of all essential commodities follows,” he noted. He also criticized the imposition of taxes on alternative energy sources such as solar panels, stating that these too have now become unaffordable for the common

man. Dr. Saif said this budget does not represent the interests of the common people, but instead reflects the priorities of the Sharif family’s business empire. “It would have been more appropriate to present this budget in Jati Umra or the Mayfair apartments in London,” he remarked. He added that the inflation-hit public was given no relief in the federal budget. On the contrary, new taxes have been introduced which will lead to further price hikes.





## CM Maryam launches first virtual blood bank centre

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's first Virtual Blood Bank Centre has been established in Punjab, marking a significant milestone in digital healthcare innovation. Citizens in urgent need of blood can now access the Virtual Blood Bank Centre by calling the Emergency Helpline 15. By pressing option 4, callers are immediately connected to the Virtual Blood Bank, where a dedicated Safe City officer collects essential information, including the patient's location and required blood group. The system then initiates a conference call connecting the patient's family with

registered blood donors in the vicinity. In this innovative model, police officers stationed at local police stations are also actively participating as blood donors. The process of registering as a blood donor has been made simple and accessible. Individuals can register through Helpline 15, the official Punjab Safe City website, or at Police Khidmat Counters located in government hospitals across the province. Currently, around 2,500 people contact the Virtual Blood Bank Centre daily. Arrangements have been put in place to fulfill the urgent blood requirements of approximately 250 patients per day. To date, over 25,000 donors have

registered with the Virtual Blood Bank, including 10,000 police personnel and 15,000 citizens. The service operates 24/7 and has already benefited more than 14,000 patients across Punjab. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has called on the public, particularly the youth, to actively support this noble cause. She emphasized that every drop of blood is vital during emergencies and can become a beacon of hope for someone in need. "This initiative marks the beginning of a new era of digitization in Punjab and reflects our commitment to elevating public service delivery to unprecedented standards," the CM said.

## PA speaker meets US Chargé d'Affaires, CG

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan met United States Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker and Consul General Kristin Hawkins at the Punjab Assembly on Wednesday. He warmly welcomed the guests and termed their visit to the Assembly a positive step toward strengthening institutional ties. Speaker Malik Ahmad appreciated Natalie Baker's constructive and dynamic role in Pakistan, stating that Pakistan-US relations are based on mutual trust and a valued strategic partnership. He stated that the United States' proactive and constructive role in ensuring

peace in South Asia is of utmost importance. The meeting included detailed discussions on Pakistan-US relations, regional peace, climate change, food security, educational collaboration, and cooperation in other vital sectors. The speaker expressed a desire to further deepen ties between Punjab and the US state of California, noting that the Pakistani-American community continues to serve as a robust bridge between the two nations. He further remarked that Pakistan views the US as a key global partner in addressing climate change, development, and food security, and wishes to expand

this strategic cooperation even further. Natalie Baker affirmed that the United States aims to further strengthen diplomatic engagement with Pakistan and will continue to support democratic institutions and parliamentary exchanges. Kristin Hawkins expressed her intent to enhance collaboration in the fields of education and social development. The meeting was also attended by Member Provincial Assembly Iftikhar Chachar, Secretary General of the Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Amer Habib, Principal Secretary to the Speaker Imad Hussain Bhalli, and Malik Taimoor Ahmad Khan.

## DC chairs meeting on Muharram arrangements

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Lahore Syed Musa Raza, chairing a meeting at his office on Wednesday, reviewed the arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram, particularly preparations for processions and Majalis on Ashura. Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) Chief Officer Shahid Abbas Kathia, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters) Muhammad Jafar Chaudhry, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance) Mudassar Nawaz, and organisers of Muharram events participated in the meeting. The organisers promised full cooperation with the district administration and highlighted the importance of transparency in the allocation of the bud-

et and efficient administrative measures. They also appreciated the proactive initiatives of DC Musa Raza in ensuring smooth arrangements. MCL Chief Officer Shahid Abbas Kathia assured the organizers that they would be provided with all necessary administrative facilities. The DC expressed confidence that the arrangements for Muharram would be completed in an exemplary manner. He added that cleanliness and lighting arrangements at Imambargahs would be ensured across the city. He directed the assistant commissioners to supervise administrative preparations in their respective tehsils and instructed organisers to submit lists of their pre-Muharram requirements to

facilitate timely coordination and support. Meanwhile, the district administration intensified its crackdown on rooftop travel on buses, imposing Rs. 40,000 fines over the past 24 hours. Acting on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Musa Raza, assistant commissioners and the RTA secretary conducted enforcement operations across the city. An awareness campaign is also underway to discourage this dangerous practice. The DC emphasized that protecting citizens' lives is a top priority and warned that strict action will continue without discrimination. Citizens have been urged to avoid rooftop travel, and transporters have been directed to meet their legal and social responsibilities.

## Asia's largest cancer hospital to offer world-class facilities: Salman

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has announced that world-class medical facilities will be provided to patients at the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research (NSICT&R), which is set to become Asia's largest cancer hospital. He made these remarks during his visit to the institute on Wednesday, where he reviewed the progress of the project. The minister stated that the first phase of the hospital will be completed and opened to the public within this year. Highlighting the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Khawaja Salman Rafique said the cancer institute is being developed to provide state-of-the-art treatment to patients, including those in critical condition. "Even level-four cancer patients will be treated at this hospital," he added.



LAHORE: A motorcyclist covers his face with a scarf to shield against the soaring summer temperatures in the Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

### Punjab to present people-friendly budget: Azma

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has announced that the provincial government will present a budget for the upcoming fiscal year on June 13. She promised that the budget would be progressive, people-friendly, and tax-free. In a statement issued on Wednesday, she said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had given clear directives to broaden the province's tax net without imposing any new taxes on the public. Azma highlighted that several flagship initiatives of the Punjab government — including the 'Suthra Punjab' campaign, infrastructure development, and the construction of new hospitals — will be key features of the budget. She added that basic facilities will be ensured in all public schools across the province.

### PU entry test roll number slips issued

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab University (PU) will conduct the entry test for undergraduate admissions on June 15, 2025. According to the university spokesperson, roll number slips for all registered candidates have been uploaded on the official website. Candidates are advised to visit [www.pu.edu.pk](http://www.pu.edu.pk) to download and print their roll number slips. Meanwhile, PU has awarded a PhD degree to Momal Akram daughter of Muhammad Akram in the subject of Chemistry. Her research thesis was titled "A Green Approach for the Removal of Textile Dyes from Simulated Wastewater", which was approved by the relevant academic authorities.

### South Police arrest 3 suspects

KARACHI (APP): Under the directives of SSP South, Mahzoor Ali, District South Police continues to carry out effective operations against criminal elements in the area. According to the spokesperson of District South Police on Wednesday, Aram Bagh Police Station made two significant arrests, resulting in the detention of three suspects. In first action, a suspect named Kashif was arrested while attempting to circulate counterfeit currency. Police recovered a fake Rs. 5,000 note (serial number GE3618395) from his possession, along with a stolen motorcycle bearing registration number KGM-3296. The motorcycle had been reported stolen from the jurisdiction of City Court Police Station.

### Major anti-narcotics raid launched in Faqeer Colony

KARACHI (APP): District West Police has launched a major combing and search operation against drug dealers in the Faqeer Colony area under the jurisdiction of Mominabad Police Station. The grand operation has been initiated on the directives of SSP West, Tariq Elahi Mastoi, specifically targeting drug traffickers and sellers operating in the region, according to a news release on Wednesday. The operation is being directly supervised by DSP Orangi Sub-Division, with active ground leadership provided by three SDPOs and eight SHOs from across District West. A special team formed by DIGP West Zone, Irfan Baloch, is also participating in the operation under the leadership of SP Investigation.

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LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi chairs important session at Railway Headquarter. —APP Photo

## Escalators to become operational at Railway Station: Abbasi

LAHORE (APP): Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi has announced that escalators at Lahore Railway Station will be made operational from June 25 to facilitate passengers. He made this announcement while chairing a meeting at the Pakistan Railways Headquarters on Wednesday which focused on reviewing the performance of the Civil Engineering Department. During the meeting, the minister expressed serious

concerns over inspection procedures and questioned the officials. He criticized the practice of conducting inspections on paper. Abbasi made it clear that if any life is lost due to negligence, he will personally become the complainant. Referring to the recent Khanewal bridge collapse, he warned, "Let the Khanewal inquiry be completed the result will ensure no one dares to be negligent again." He directed authorities

to conduct immediate emergency inspections of all passenger and railway bridges across the country. Additionally, the Additional General Manager (AGM) Infrastructure was instructed to focus on the capacity building of officers to improve performance and accountability. In a major step toward sustainability, the minister set a deadline of December 31 to shift 155 railway stations to solar energy.

## Air Ambulance Service transports 166 critical patients

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health and Emergency Services Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that the Air Ambulance Service has so far transported 166 seriously ill patients from remote areas to major health facilities for better treatment. He made these remarks

during his visit to the Emergency Services Headquarters on Wednesday. Secretary Emergency Services Dr. Rizwan Naseer briefed the minister on Rescue 1122's performance during Eid-ul-Adha and the department's ongoing development goals. Khawaja Salman

Rafique praised the efforts of the Rescue 1122 teams and said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the Motorway Ambulance Service and Air Ambulance Service stand out as historic and people-friendly initiatives of the current government.


## 33 new Judges sworn in at oath-taking ceremony


LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Judicial Academy on Wednesday hosted a dignified oath-taking ceremony for 33 newly appointed Civil Judges/Magistrates. The event took place at the Academy's auditorium, with the Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum, gracing the occasion as Chief Guest. She was accompanied by Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh, Member of the Administration Committee of the Lahore High Court.

The ceremony began with a welcome address by Justice (R) Sardar Ahmad Naehm, Director General of the Punjab Judicial Academy. He congratulated the appointees and underscored the judiciary's pivotal role in delivering justice and preserving the rule of law. He also reaffirmed the Academy's commitment to nurturing judicial officers through rigorous training grounded in ethical standards and integrity. The oath of office was formally administered by Amjad Iqbal Ranjha, Registrar of the Lahore High Court. Among the distinguished attendees were Anwar-ul-Haq, District & Sessions Judge (HR); Ali Zulqarnain Awan, Director General of the Directorate of District Judiciary; as well

as senior faculty members, trainers, and the families of the newly appointed judges. In her keynote address, Chief Justice Aalia Neelum extended heartfelt congratulations to the new judges and welcomed them into the judiciary's noble fold. She highlighted the immense responsibility vested in judges to uphold justice, maintain social equilibrium, and reinforce public trust in the legal system. "The judiciary is the

foremost guardian of constitutional rights and civil liberties," she said. "It is imperative that judges perform their duties with integrity, fearlessness, impartiality, and an unwavering commitment to the law." The ceremony concluded with a collective pledge from the newly appointed judges to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of justice and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of Pakistan's judicial framework.



**Zero Tolerance to Corruption**


اظہار دلچسپی کی طلبی کا اعلان

**(Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI))**

زپ لائن کی تنصیب، سوات چڑیا گھر، کابو خان وں شپ، ضلع سوات

زیر تنقید سوات چڑیا گھر کا نوجوان وں شپ، ضلع سوات میں زپ لائن کی تنصیب کے لیے اہل فہما کیپٹین اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے سرمایہ کاری کی فہما چڑیا گھر، آدریشن اور مشقی ڈال (BOT) کے تحت سرمایہ اظہار دلچسپی (EOIs) مطلوب ہیں۔ جو کہ مورخہ 15-07-2025 صبح 11:00 بجے تک بچے درج ذیل پدہ پر پیش کرانے ہو گئے۔ موصول شدہ EOIs کو اس دن صبح 11:30 بجے درخاست دہندگان پان کے کچا زمانہ وں کی موجودگی میں تکلی میں سامنے کھڑا جائے گا۔ تاخیر سے موصول ہونے والی درخواستیں قبول نہیں کیا جائے گی۔

نمبر شمار	EOI کی تفصیل	فہما کیپٹین اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے لیے سوات چڑیا گھر کا نوجوان وں شپ سے EOIs درخاست وصولی کی آخری تاریخ	EOI کو ملے کی تاریخ اور وقت	طریقہ کار
1۔	زپ لائن کی تنصیب	14-07-2025	15-07-2025 11:30AM	سرمایہ کاری کی فہما چڑیا گھر، آدریشن اور مشقی ڈال (BOT)

شرائط و ہدایات:

- سوات چڑیا گھر، کابو خان وں شپ میں زپ لائن کی تنصیب کے لیے دو ذمہ دار کیپٹین اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے جو تحقیق کوئی وں کے ساتھ فعال حیثیت سے رجسٹرڈ وں اور سرمایہ کاری کی فہما چڑیا گھر (BOT) ہاں پر کام کرنے کی اہلیت رکھتے ہوں۔
- EOI درخاست وں ذات کی دستیابی اور فہما ڈائریکٹر، سوات چڑیا گھر، کابو خان وں شپ، ضلع سوات سے مبلغ 500/- روپے (تقریباً دس ہزار روپے) کے حاصل کی جا سکتی ہیں۔
- EOI کی پیدہ کو ملے کی تاریخ سے 90 دن ہو گی۔
- وضاحت اور معلومات کے لیے ایک اہل ذمہ دار کیپٹین اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے لیے سوات چڑیا گھر، کابو خان وں شپ، ضلع سوات کے دفتر میں 03/07/2025 صبح 11:00 بجے متفقہ کیا جائے گا۔ تمام گنجی رکھنے والے افسر وں کو اس اجلاس میں شرکت کرنا ہو گی۔
- ثابت شدہ کیپٹین اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے ساتھ طرہ کار کے تحت تفصیلی تکنیکی تجاویز (RFP) طرے کے بعد عموماً کیا جائے گی۔
- یہ تمام عمل غیر بختی نوعیت کے دیوکر منفرد کیپٹین اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے (KPPRA) قواعد و ضوابط اور خود سرمایہ کاری کی پالیسی کے مطابق مکمل کیا جائے گا۔
- سوات چڑیا گھر EOIs کی پدہ کی پزل کے سلسلے میں ہولودہندگان کی طرف سے اٹھائے گئے کسی بھی قسم کے اعتراضات کا ذمہ دار نہ ہو گی۔
- سوات چڑیا گھر کی اٹھیکڑ اور وں کے غیر بختی نوعیت، حکومت غیر بختی نوعیت EOIs کو کسی بھی وقت مسترد یا منسوخ کرنے کا اختیار حاصل ہو گی۔
- مزید شرائط EOIs درخاست وں دستیاب ہو گی۔

پرائیویٹ ڈائریکٹر

سوات چڑیا گھر کا نوجوان وں شپ، ضلع سوات مورخہ: 0946-613262





**PESHAWAR:** Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chairing a high-level review meeting to assess the progress of the good governance roadmap for the Public Health Engineering (PHE), Energy and Power, Social Welfare, and Higher Education departments.

## Attempt to malign Commissioner on social media fails

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a deliberate and misleading campaign, KP Digital, a Facebook-based channel, made a failed attempt to malign the character of Peshawar Division Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud by uploading five posts within a few hours, misrepresenting government initiatives and attempting to mislead the public.

One of the posts falsely claimed that the drug-free Peshawar campaign, supervised by the Commissioner, was marred by corruption. However, no evidence, data, or specifics regarding the alleged corruption were provided. Contrary to these claims, official data confirms that over 3,800 drug addicts were successfully rehabilitated during three phases of the campaign, earning both national and international recognition.

Currently, only 300 to 400 drug-dependent individuals remain on the streets of Peshawar. They are scheduled to be taken into custody and transferred to rehabilitation centers in the upcoming fourth phase, potentially making Peshawar the first drug-free city in Pakistan. Importantly, no funds from the government have been utilized yet for this ongoing fourth phase; the allocated money remains securely with the Social Welfare Department.

The channel also targeted the Peshawar Uplift

Program Phase II, particularly the Hayatabad jogging and cycling track project. It falsely claimed that a 6-kilometer track cost PKR 7 billion and was nothing more than a fence. In reality, the project cost only PKR 370 million and includes modern resting areas, open gyms, gazebos, restrooms, and other recreational facilities. Separate lanes for jogging and cycling have been built, making it the first project of its kind in the province.

Furthermore, baseless accusations were made regarding the presence of one million undocumented immigrants in Peshawar, holding the Commissioner and the Peshawar Development Authority responsible. However, no credible evidence was presented to support these claims.

On the contrary, law enforcement agencies continue to conduct daily search operations and are actively deporting undocumented foreigners. Another post tried to discredit the efforts made during Eid-ul-Adha by alleging that top officials leave the city unattended during the festival.

This claim was proven false as Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud was present in Peshawar during Eid, and extensive cleanliness efforts were successfully carried out, with thousands of tons of animal waste removed promptly. These efforts were widely appreciated by the public.

Additionally, the program featured a controversial guest who had previously threatened regional authorities for not reopening a private bus terminal that had been sealed due to overcharging, poor facilities, and outdated vehicles. It is alleged that this guest had personal ties with the terminal's owners.

The Commissioner's office has decided to pursue legal action against the Facebook channel and the guest involved in the defamatory campaign. Responding to the controversy, Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud publicly declared his openness to scrutiny, inviting the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Anti-Corruption Department, and other relevant bodies to audit all projects under his supervision, including the Drug-Free Peshawar campaign and the Peshawar Uplift Program.

He emphasized that the campaign was launched solely for the welfare of humanity and with the cooperation of the provincial government.

He vowed to continue using all legal, media, and institutional platforms to counter misinformation and serve the people of Peshawar with transparency and dedication.

In a strong statement, the Commissioner challenged his accusers to come forward and provide concrete evidence for their claims, promising that the truth would ultimately prevail.

## Aftab Alam Khan Afridi Assigned Additional Portfolio of Finance

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has assigned the additional charge of portfolio of Finance to Aftab Alam Khan Afridi. He will hold this portfolio in addition to his existing portfolio as Minister for Law, Parliamentary Affairs, and Human Rights.

According to a notification issued by the Administration Department here on Wednesday, the assignment has been made in exercise of the powers conferred under Sub-Rule (4) of Rule-3 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government Rules of Business, 1985. The additional charge will be effective immediately and remain in force until further orders.

## Speaker chairs consultative meeting on Proposed Budget 2025

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A key consultative meeting on the proposed Budget 2025 was held today at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Secretariat under the chairmanship of Speaker KP Assembly, Mr. Babar Saleem Swati. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Finance, Mr. Muzammil Aslam, Secretary Finance, Members of the Provincial Assembly, and other senior officials.

The primary objective of the meeting was to incorporate valuable suggestions from all stakeholders to ensure the upcoming provincial budget is people-centric, transparent, and development-oriented.

Speaker Babar Saleem Swati emphasized that the budget should reflect financial discipline, public welfare, and development priorities. He appreciated the inclusion of Assembly Members' input in the budget-making process, stating that such consultations strengthen democratic norms.

Special Assistant Muzammil Aslam stressed the importance of transparency and inclusive planning in budget formulation, reaffirming the provincial government's commitment to crafting a budget that aligns with ground realities and public expectations.

## Farewell ceremony held

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A graceful farewell ceremony was held today at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Secretariat in honor of Mr. Kifayatullah Afridi on the occasion of his retirement as Secretary of the Assembly. Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Mr. Babar Saleem Swati, addressed the ceremony and presented a commemorative shield to the outgoing Secretary in recognition of his dedicated services.

## PHE, Higher Education, Energy and Social Welfare Deptt Chief Secretary chairs review meeting on good governance roadmap

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a high-level review meeting to assess the progress of the good governance roadmap for the Public Health Engineering (PHE), Energy and Power, Social Welfare, and Higher Education departments. The meeting was attended by relevant secretaries and senior officials from the concerned departments.

The PHE Department shared its initiatives focused on improving service delivery through technology and sustainability. Key measures include the digitization of water supply and sanitation infrastructure, the transition to green and climate-resilient systems such as the solarization of water supply schemes, and pilot projects for rainwater harvesting in Abbottabad, Mansehra, and Orakzai, as

well as groundwater recharge in Kohat, Hangu, and Haripur. The department has also developed a Behavior Change Communication strategy and is formulating provincial drinking water and sanitation policies. Additionally, 4,247 water quality tests have been conducted across 11 fixed and 19 mobile water testing laboratories.

The Energy and Power Department presented a comprehensive roadmap to accelerate progress on priority hydel projects, including the 300 MW Balakot, 69 MW Lavi, and 84 MW Matiltan schemes. Reforms in the Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) are also underway to enhance project delivery and attract investment.

The department is working to expand off-grid and community-based energy access, ensure the maintenance of over 300 com-

pleted micro-hydel projects, and roll out subsidized solar home systems for 130,000 households. Plans are also in place to install solar systems in 40,000 government facilities and to strengthen grid integration.

The Social Welfare Department highlighted its people-centric initiatives such as interest-free loans under the Ehsaas Rozgar Programme and monthly stipends to 9,000 orphans through the Roshan Mostakbil Card. The department has established 10 Zamung Kor facilities in different districts.

A senior citizens' home is being set up in Peshawar, while 10 existing Dar-ul-Amans are being strengthened and five new ones are being established. Services to gender-based violence survivors are being enhanced through the Bolo Helpline.

Furthermore, 15,000 widows are receiving monthly stipends via the

Sahara Card, and a Braille academy is being established at the University of Peshawar. The department is also spearheading several empowerment initiatives for marginalized groups.

The Higher Education Department outlined its action plan focused on upgrading colleges, introducing market-driven academic programs, and launching STEM certification for teachers. Other major steps include digitizing the admissions process, initiating internship programs for students, establishing career development centers in 50% of universities, outsourcing select colleges, and strengthening research and development across higher education institutions.

The Chief Secretary urged all departments to ensure effective implementation of the good governance roadmap for the benefit of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Carbon Tax on petroleum to fuel more inflation: Muazmmil

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzammil Aslam, reacting to the federal budget, stated that a joke has been made with the salaried class in the name of relief.

For those earning an annual salary of 1.2 million rupees, the monthly relief is only 2,000 rupees. For those earning 1.8 million annually, the relief is merely around 4,000 rupees per month, and for those earning 3 million annually, the relief is only 18,000 rupees.

Advisor Finance said the country's middle class is devastated due to inflation and taxes. He questioned: if inflation has

decreased, then how has poverty increased?

He stated that according to the World Bank, 45% of Pakistanis have fallen below the poverty line. Muzammil Aslam added that a carbon tax has been imposed in the budget to raise petroleum product prices, which will further escalate inflation.

He further said that to eliminate circular debt in the electricity sector, a surcharge will be imposed on electricity tariffs.

Muzammil Aslam described the 18% tax on solar imports as an injustice to the poor. The finance advisor noted that tax on profits from banks and mutual funds has been increased by 15% to 20%.

Muzammil Aslam said the government claims the economy has improved,

yet the development budget in this year's budget is only 1,000 billion rupees — whereas last year, when the economy was supposedly worse, a 1,400 billion rupees development budget was presented.

He also stated that no development project for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been included in the PSDP (Public Sector Development Programme), and from the 1,000 billion rupees development fund, only 540 million rupees have been allocated for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Muzammil Aslam concluded by saying the budget contains nothing for the devastated agriculture and industrial sectors, and an 18% tax has been imposed across the board on online shopping.

## AD&SJ grant pre arrest bail to ex DG Shaukat Ali

### Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Peshawar, Liaqat Ali, has granted pre-arrest bail to former Director General, Shaukat Ali, in a corruption case and restrained the Anti-Corruption Department from arresting him. The judge also sought a response from the Anti-Corruption Department.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that his client, a former DG, was facing politically motivated cases and inquiries due to his refusal to support the drug mafia.

The cases against Shaukat Ali are allegedly related to a 13-year-old case where two other doctors were accused of receiving double salaries. Shaukat Ali's lawyer claimed that his client was not involved in the alleged corruption and that the Anti-Corruption Department had already closed the inquiry.

The lawyer argued that Shaukat Ali was being targeted for upholding merit in his work and refusing to yield to the drug mafia's pressure. He claimed that local politicians, including MPAs, were involved in the alleged conspiracy against Shaukat Ali.

The Peshawar High Court had already issued stay orders against Shaukat Ali's arrest and harassment in two separate petitions. The lawyer argued that the recent FIRs were filed to undermine the court's orders and to tarnish Shaukat Ali's reputation on social media.

The court granted pre-arrest bail to Shaukat Ali and sought a response from the Anti-Corruption Department.

The court observed that Shaukat Ali was willing to face the trial and that his arrest was not justified, given his status as a peaceful citizen and senior government officer.

## Tribal people welcome Federal Budget 2025-26

PESHAWAR (APP): The tribal people and prominent politicians of erstwhile Fata here Wednesday welcomed Federal Budget 2025-26 and termed it as per reflections and aspirations of tribesmen.

They welcomed mega projects for erstwhile Fata besides increasing increase in defense budget.

Engr Shaukat Ullah, former Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Bajaur district termed the budget pro poor and people friendly.

He said maximum relief

provided to all segments of the society in the budget.

Former member national assembly from Khyber tribal district, Shah Gul Afridi termed increase in pensions and salaries of the Government employees was positive steps.

He also welcomed reduction in the percentage of tax slabs from 5 percent to 2.5 percent, saying the reduction in the tax slabs percentage is a good step of the federal government in the budget.

Hamza Khan, PMLN leader said that 10 percent increase in the salary and

reduction in tax slabs will bring positive results in lives of employees.

He said that it will definitely help the employees manage their meals and other expenditures.

He thanked Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif for 10 percent increase in the salaries of Govt employees. The experts hailed increase in allocation of agriculture, PSDP, BISP and dams projects in the budget. They said speedy release and disbursement of the budget allocation will expedite economic development.

## Affectees of Regi Model Town demand handing over plots' possessions

PESHAWAR (APP): The affectees of the Regi Model Town here demanded handing over possession of their plots for construction of houses. The affected residents from Zones 1, 2, and 5 have urged KP Govt to instruct Peshawar Development Authority to handover possession of their residential plots on priority basis. Speaking to the media here, Siraj-ul-Haq Yousafzai, president of the Regi Model Town affectees, criticized the authorities for ignoring their problems. He warned of staging protest demonstrations if their grievances were not addressed.

## Federal Budget to further fuel inflation, Says Toru

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru, on Tuesday rejected the federal budget 2025-26, saying that it would further exacerbate inflation across the country.

Speaking to the media in Peshawar, the provincial minister lamented that a major chunk of the federal government's budget would be consumed by debt servicing, which he termed a reflection of the federal government "serious economic mismanagement."

He further remarked that "in a country where a Form-47-made government is imposed and there is no political stability, economic stability cannot be expected either."

Toru criticised the federal government's allocation of approximately Rs1,000 billion for development projects, calling it a "significant decline" from the Rs1,500 billion development budget of the previous year. He termed it a "blow to the government's own claims of economic revival."

Calling the allocation of only Rs550 million for development in a terrorism-affected province like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa "shameful," the minister said it was an insult to the sacrifices of the people of KP who laid down their lives for peace. "This is nothing short of an attempt to alienate them from the federation," he added.

In contrast, Zahir Shah noted that the KP government had set a target of repaying Rs150 billion in debt through this year's annual budget, which he described as a "positive and responsible initiative" that indicates the province is avoiding further borrowing.

The KP food minister also criticised the federal government's energy policies, particularly the imposition of an 18% tax on solar panels. "This is not only unjust towards the poor and middle-income people, but it also discourages alternative energy adoption," he stated.

He warned that taxes on petrol and electricity would add further pressure on inflation. "The flawed policies of the federal government and Punjab have already driven farmers to the brink of starvation. The lack of relief in the budget will worsen their plight, directly affecting the production of essential commodities like wheat, rice, and sugar which will lead to a surge in prices," he added.

Toru alleged that the centre continues to treat KP unfairly. "Even the electricity that KP generates is not being supplied back to the province this is blatant injustice."





## In brief

### Glasses give away to 94 eye patients F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Al-Shifa Eye Trust, Islamabad with support of Frontier Corp (FC), North distributed eye glasses to 94 eye patients in Landi Kotal last day. It is to be mentioned here that last month in a free eye camp, set up in the Government Primary School, Landi Kotal, the doctors had prescribed glasses to eye patients. As many as 94 patients received spectacles in a gathering held in the state-run school the previous day. On behalf of the eye trust, 176 wing commander Col Bilal Liaqat granted glasses to the deserving patients. Residents of the Landi Kotal appreciated the wellbeing activity of the Al-Shifa Eye Trust and the forces and thanked them for granting them the facility.

### Special literary sitting held F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Abasin Adbi Tolana (AAT) Kohat has arranged a special Literary sitting in honor of the renowned Pakhto poet Niaz Ali Talib, living abroad at Nari Kuk Billitang area on the eve of Eid-ul-Adha, which was presided over by Pashto Poet Rahim Khan Majrooh, while famous critic Khalid Pakhtun was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Ghulam Sher Afridi performed the duties of comparing, while Maulana Abdul Halim Al-Hakimi formally started the ceremony with the recitation of the Holy Quran. The Guest of Honor, Niaz Ali Talib, thanked the guests for coming from far away despite the hot weather and said that this love and affection of the people will continue to give him encouragement abroad. On this occasion, the current literary situation of Kohat was also discussed and after thorough deliberations, all the participants unanimously decided to distance themselves from the newly formed literary organization Pukhtana Adabi Malgari (PAM) and quit its WhatsApp Group. This crucial decision was taken because no literary organization of Kohat was taken into confidence or consulted while forming the PAM. So the Abasin Adabi Tolana Kohat and Kohat Adabi Jirga decided to dissociate themselves from the PAM. Speaking on this occasion, President of the sitting, Rahim Khan Majrooh said that decisions are sustainable and long-lasting in which the opinions of all friends are included. He said that Niaz Ali Talib is an old and experienced writer and he has a name and place in Pashto literature.

### Mass marriage ceremony held F.P. Report

KOHAT: The provincial government on Wednesday arranged a mass marriage ceremony for 22 underprivileged couples here. The initiative, carried out under the directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, was organized by the Zakat Department Kohat. District Khatib Mufti Shafiullah solemnized the Nikah of all 22 couples. Each couple received a cheque of Rs. 200,000 and a bouquet from the Government of KP with a total of Rs 4.4 million disbursed during the event. This was the first-ever officially organized mass marriage event in Kohat's history and was widely praised as a successful and compassionate initiative. Speaking on the occasion, MNA Shehryar Afridi and other guests congratulated the newlyweds and emphasized that government funds had been meaningfully utilized to fulfill a significant Islamic obligation.

## Climate change advocacy

# PRCS, local press club join hands

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A coordination meeting between the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Timergara Press Club to strengthen collaboration on climate change advocacy and adaptation was held at the press club here on Wednesday.

The session, was led by Mr. Ayaz Ali, Assistant Director for Climate Advocacy and Coordination for Resilient Actions (CACRA Phase-III). The CACRA Phase-III programme, supported by the German Red Cross, aims to enhance community resilience to climate change. Mr. Ayaz briefed journalists on the growing environmental challenges in Lower and Upper Dir, including deforestation, plastic pollution, poor hygiene practices, and inadequate waste management.

He highlighted the role of PRCS as an auxiliary to the government and stressed the importance of grassroots action under the Provincial Climate Change Policy (PCCP) and its 2022 Action Plan. The policy outlines 129 mitigation and 172 adaptation measures covering key sectors such as water, agriculture, disaster risk reduction, and health systems. Mr. Ayaz called for multi-sectoral cooperation to address climate threats and ensure sustainable development. Concluding the meeting, Press Club representatives pledged full media support for PRCS initiatives on climate awareness and environmental conservation in the region.

**Delayed work on irrigation channel in Dir frustrates farmers and dwellers:** The prolonged closure of the Balambat Irrigation Channel since 2022 has triggered mounting concern among farmers and residents in Lower Dir, as the vital waterway remains under reconstruction for a third consecutive year.

Initially built during the MMA government at a cost of Rs757.5 million, the 76-kilometre canal was designed to irrigate approximately 11,363 acres of farmland across several areas including Khall, Koto, Balambat, Manogi, Khaima, Khazana and Makhai. The channel has played a key role in boosting agriculture in the region. However, its continued suspension has rendered vast tracts of farmland barren,

dried up springs and wells, and forced residents to rely on water tankers for domestic use.

Taking notice of public complaints, deputy commissioner Mohammad Arif Khan, along with irrigation officials, visited the canal in August last year to inspect ongoing repair and extension work at Khall, Akhagram, and Sacha Bela. He directed the department to speed up the construction process by deploying more equipment and manpower.

Farmers took a sigh of relief in March this year when water was temporarily released into some parts of the canal for the first time in three years. According to Shahid Ali Khan, executive engineer of the irrigation department, progress was delayed due to flood-induced blockages near Akhagram head. He assured that the final phase of the project would soon be completed, allowing water from the Panjkora River to flow fully through the system, enhancing irrigation facilities for thousands of farmers.

Local frustration over the government's inaction has been steadily growing. During a recent visit to the canal site in Manogi, former Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq warned that if the channel was not restored immediately, the party would mobilize local farmers and their families for protest demonstrations. He accused the PTI-led provincial government of neglecting essential development projects and failing to complete even ongoing schemes in the district.

An official from the Lower Dir irrigation department told that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government approved Rs730 million in 2022 for the canal's reconstruction, and extension. The project aims to extend the canal by an additional 10 kilometres, eventually irrigating 17,000 acres of land across Khall, Odigram, Balambat, Hajiabad, Khazana, and Munda.

Officials believe the expanded network will significantly boost fruit, vegetable, and grain production in the region once fully operational. The affected farmers have been demanding early completion and restoration of the channel, threatening to take to streets if the channel was not restored this summer.

## Kundi condoles with family of late Abbas Afridi

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited Azim Bagh, Kohat on Wednesday to offer condolences to the family of late former Senator Abbas Afridi.

During the visit, he met with the father of the deceased, former Senator Shamim Afridi, along with other bereaved family members.

Accompanying the Governor were Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Secretary General Nayyar Hussain Bukhari and PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial

General Secretary Shuja Khanzada. Governor Kundi and the PPP leadership expressed deep sorrow and sympathy over the tragic death of Abbas Afridi, describing it as an irreparable loss.

They offered feteha (prayers) for the departed soul, praying for his forgiveness and elevation of ranks in Jannat. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that the incident was extremely tragic. He remembered Abbas Afridi as a wise statesman who genuinely cared for the people of his region.

"His contributions to national and regional poli-

tics will always be remembered," Governor Kundi said. Later, the Governor also visited the residence of the late Javed Iqbal Afridi, PPP's District Information Secretary, who also passed away in the same tragic incident.

At his home in Ghulam Banda, Kohat, Governor Kundi offered condolences to the grieving family and prayed for the departed soul. He extended heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved families and prayed for their strength and patience during this difficult time. "We stand with the families of the deceased in their grief," the Governor said.



HYDERABAD: People enjoy bath in canal during hot weather.

## Commandant Scouts holds jirga with tribal elders

F.P. Report

WANA: In a significant move aimed at strengthening civil-military cooperation and promoting lasting peace in the region, the Commandant of South Waziristan Scouts held a high-level meeting with tribal elders of the Suleman Khel tribe in Wana.

The meeting focused on a range of pressing issues concerning the local populace. Discussions covered regional security, the status of ongoing and proposed development initiatives, educational opportunities for youth, and the mechanisms for addressing community grievances. Both sides engaged in an open and constructive dialogue aimed at finding sustain-

able solutions to longstanding challenges.

Tribal elders, representing the influential Suleman Khel tribe, lauded the efforts and sacrifices of the security forces in maintaining peace and stability in the region. They expressed heartfelt appreciation for the commitment and bravery demonstrated by the armed forces, particularly in the face of militancy and unrest that once plagued the area.

The elders pledged their unwavering support to the security apparatus, assuring full cooperation in all efforts to uphold peace and further the socio-economic upliftment of South Waziristan. They emphasized the importance of continued collaboration

between the government and local communities for the betterment of the region.

In his address, the Commandant praised the spirit of the tribal people, acknowledging their vital role in the evolving peace landscape. He reaffirmed the commitment of the security forces to working hand-in-hand with the local population to transform South Waziristan into a hub of development, prosperity, and harmony.

"Peace and development go hand in hand," the Commandant stated. "With the support of the people, we are confident that South Waziristan can emerge as a model of resilience and progress."



DI KHAN: KP Minister Sajjad Barakwal interacting with officials during his visit to Agriculture office.

## Police arrests two drug peddlers

F.P. Report

JAMSHORO: Police from various police stations of Jamshoro district carried out an operation near Union Council Mural and seized lakhs of rupees. A Land Cruiser vehicle and a 125cc motorcycle were seized and two people were arrested, while a case was registered against four people, including the accomplices, at the police station.

According to details, a police team led by DSP Kotri raided a warehouse in Union Council Mural in Kohistan area of Jamshoro district and seized more than 700 cartons of stolen betel nuts used in drug trafficking. Two accused, Muharram Hamrani and Saleem Hassanani, were arrested and a case has been registered at Thana Bola Khan police station under the Narcotics Act along with the seized drugs and vehicle. Drug smugglers Ali Jan Pathan and Saleem Pathan have also been named in the case filed.

The drugs seized by the police is said to be in lakhs of rupees. When contacted by the media, the SHO of the police station said that the accused named in the case will be arrested soon and brought to justice, while action against drug dealers has been intensified in the district.

## Salesman looted

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Unknown motorcycle-borne armed men robbed Shahid Ali Sheikh, a salesman of a private biscuit company, of Rs 3 lakh in cash, mobile phone and motorcycle, they fled after firing at him near the Allahabad Police Station on Airport Road in Larkana city.

On information, the police reached the spot, found out the details and are conducting raids to arrest the accused through CCTV footages, after that the salesman of the affected company reached the Press Club and protesting saying that he is an employee of a private biscuit company.

The complainant claimed that on his return from work, unknown motorcycle-borne armed men looted lakhs of rupees from me and fled. He strongly demanded from the IG Sindh Police, DIGP and SSP Larkana to take legal action against the criminals and do justice to me because I am a poor employee. I have nothing to deposit with the company at this time, otherwise I will commit suicide.

**Elderly man protest against harassment by influential people:** An elderly man, resident of Badshah Colony Neodero city of Larkana district, along with his family, protested in front of the Press Club against the influential people who allegedly tortured a donkey.

Protesting on the occasion, 70-year-old elderly man Gul Hassan Chhawan, along with his family, said that on Eid, we were busy praying when influential people of village Narija, Masood Narejo and Ahmed Narejo, attacked our house and tortured the speechless animals, due to which the legs of some animals were also broken.

## Resources to be utilize for public welfare

F.P. Report

KARAK: Minister for Agriculture Major (R) Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal has said that as per the directions of the Chief Minister public resources will be spent only on the welfare of the people and solving their problems. He expressed these views while addressing a public gathering held at Hujra Malik Muhi Khan in Union Council Shnawa Gudi khel District Karak.

Elders of the area and party workers presented regional issues before the Minister on this occasion. Barakwal on this occasion said that strenuous efforts are being made to overcome the problem of

clean drinking water in the area so that the door of politics on drinking water can be closed forever. He added, in order to meet the water requirement for drinking and irrigation in the area, construction of Baroch Dam and Uplift Canal are underway. Barakwal further said that Party Head Imran Khan's vision of justice will be implemented by eliminating the traditions of political affiliation and personal likes and dislikes in all sectors.

Similarly, solarization of PHED drinking water schemes and installation of agricultural tube wells will also be done in the area. Chairman Malik Muhi Khan, Zahid Bahramkhel,

Younus Malang, Arif Nawaz Khattak, Malik Nawab Ali Khan, Shamim Khan and other party workers were also present on the occasion.

Later, the Agriculture Minister, while addressing a public gathering at Malikabad Square (Shobanda), said that special attention is being paid to all regional issues including drinking water, irrigation, communication, education, health and other sectors. Well-known social figure Nawab Khattak presented the regional, collective and individual issues of the area before the Minister on behalf of local elders, which were assured to resolve it on priority basis.

## JI slams PM's praise for Trump

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North chief and former senior minister Inayatullah Khan strongly condemned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for calling former U.S. President Donald Trump a peace builder, terming the statement a blatant example of "mental slavery."

Speaking as the chief guest at an Eid Milan party in Maidan on Wednesday, Inayatullah Khan criticized Trump's record, describing him as a symbol of oppression who supported Israeli atrocities in Gaza. He said Trump's actions surpassed even the brutality of historic figures like Genghis Khan. He reaffirmed Jamaat-e-Islami's continued support for the Palestinian cause.

The event, widely attended by community members and party workers, also featured speeches by JI district chief Maulana

Asadullah Khan, tehsil emir Haji Saeed Gul, and JI Youth Lower Dir President Atique-ur-Rehman. Inayatullah Khan also launched a scathing critique of the federal government's economic performance. He said the country was heavily burdened by debt while the recent federal budget failed to offer relief to common citizens. Questioning how a family could survive on Rs 30,000 per month, he criticized the significant pay raises for parliamentary heads, especially the 600% increase in salaries for the Senate Chairman and National Assembly Speaker, compared to the modest hike for government employees that required IMF approval.

On provincial matters, he accused the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government of failing to restore peace and drive development in the region. He expressed deep concern over the withdrawal of Rs. 42 billion worth of development proj-

ects from Malakand Division and delays in key projects, including the Engineering University in Upper Dir, Gopalm Irrigation Scheme in Lower Dir, and the long-stalled classes at Timergara Medical College.

He also condemned the ongoing suspension of the Balambat Irrigation Channel, which has left thousands of acres of farmland barren, terming it a major injustice to local farmers. Highlighting JI's commitment to youth development, Inayatullah shared progress on the "Bano Qabil" program, which is training thousands of youths in modern skills. He also announced a major youth gathering to be held in August at Grassy Ground, Swat. Calling on the younger generation to rise for truth and justice, he said, "This is the time for our youth to stand up — not just for themselves, but for the country's future."

## Three killed, 20 injured in road accident

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: A passenger bus crashed into a tree near Boharwala, close to Jalalpur Bhattian in Hafizabad district, while trying to avoid a donkey cart. As a result three people died on-the-spot and more than 20 others were injured.

According to official source, the bus, bearing number LET-95, was travelling from Rajanpur to Sialkot when the accident happened. The impact was severe, especially for the passengers sitting on the roof of the bus. The deceased were identified as Munir son of Manzoor, a resident of Jampur, Zahoar also from Jampur and one unidentified person.

Rescue teams arrived quickly at the scene. Sixteen of the injured were taken to the Rural Health Centre in Jalalpur Bhattian and the Trauma Center in Hafizabad. Others were given first aid by Rescue-1122 at the site. Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad, Abdul Razzaq, visited the accident site and later the Trauma Center to inquire about the injured. He expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives. He was accompanied by Assistant

Commissioner Pindi Bhattian, Jawad Hussain Malik, and CEO Health, Dr. Muhammad Atiq Chaudhry.

The Deputy Commissioner assured that all injured passengers would receive free and proper medical treatment. He also directed the administration to provide food and other essential facilities to the affected passengers.

**Eid Clean-Up drive earns praise under CM Clean Punjab vision:** The District Administration's sweeping cleanliness campaign during Eid-ul-Adha received strong praise from political and administrative leaders in a joint press conference held in Hafizabad on Monday. Officials lauded the efforts carried out under Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's Clean Punjab Vision, which aimed to ensure swift removal of animal waste and maintain hygiene across the region.

Addressing the media, CM Coordinator Saira Afzal Tarar, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq, MPA Aoun Jahangir Bhatti, and senior PML-N leader Haider Abbas Bhatti commended the district's sanitation workforce and their round-

the-clock operations, particularly amid scorching temperatures.

"This Eid, we saw the practical realization of the Suthra Punjab Program, which reflects the vision of CM Maryam Nawaz," said Saira Tarar, adding that she personally visited multiple localities to inspect the arrangements. "Our sanitation workers are the real heroes of this success," she emphasized, while also appreciating citizens for cooperating with waste disposal protocols.

The press conference was also attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Hamed Nasir Goraya, Assistant Commissioner Salman Akbar, CEO Municipal Committee Ikramullah Sindhu, District Manager of the Waste Management Company Ahsan Shiraz, and several local PML-N representatives.

Sharing key figures, DC Abdul Razzaq said over 70,000 waste bags were distributed throughout the district to facilitate proper disposal of sacrificial waste. A workforce of more than 1,400 sanitation workers was deployed, supported by over 450 machines.





## Seven dead as Colombia hit with wave of bombings

BOGOTA (AFP): Colombia was rocked by a string of 24 coordinated bomb and gun attacks that killed at least seven people across the country's southwest, deepening a security crisis roiling the Andean nation.

Attackers struck targets in Cali -- the country's third-largest city -- and several nearby towns, hitting police posts, municipal buildings and civilian targets. National Police chief Carlos Fernando Triana said assailants -- suspected to be a local guerrilla group -- had attacked using car bombs, motorcycle bombs, rifle fire and a suspected drone.

"There are two police officers dead, and a number of members of the public are also dead," he said. Police later put the toll at seven dead and 28 more injured. In Cali and the towns of Villa Rica, Guachinte and Corinto, AFP journalists witnessed the tangled wreckage of vehicle bombs surrounded by scorched debris and damaged buildings.

The attacks came days after a brazen attempted assassination of a presidential candidate in Bogota that has put the country on edge. Many Colombians are now fearful of a return

to the violence of the 1980s and 1990s, when cartel attacks, guerrilla violence and political assassinations were commonplace. Interior Minister Armando Benedetti said the government had received unverified "proof" of possible guerrilla involvement in the attack on Senator Miguel Uribe.

In the town of Corinto, resident Luz Amparo was at home when the blast gutted her bakery. "We thought it was an earthquake," she told AFP. "My husband said 'no, they are shooting.'" Her phone began to ring off the hook and she went to check on her store. As she rounded the corner, the neighbors began to look in her direction. Police and experts blamed the attacks on a dissident faction of the once-powerful FARC guerrilla group. Security expert Elizabeth Dickinson of the International Crisis Group said the attacks were likely the work of a group known as the Central General Staff (EMC). "This is a particularly well-coordinated offensive. It really demonstrates the capacity that the group has built" she told AFP.

"And I think very alarmingly it demonstrates their ability to conduct operations in the metropolitan area of Cali." Efforts by

President Gustavo Petro to reach a peace deal with the EMC and other armed groups have repeatedly failed. Dickinson said the group may be trying to stop an ongoing military operation that is reported to have injured or killed the group's veteran leader, known as "Ivan Mordisco." "They are trying to raise the cost of that military initiative for the government," said Dickinson. In a statement, the EMC warned the public to stay away from military and police installations, but stopped short of claiming responsibility. The attacks come three days after conservative senator Uribe, 39, was shot twice in the head at close range by an alleged hitman while campaigning in the capital.

A 15-year-old suspect pleaded "not guilty" to carrying out the attempted assassination. The government believes he was a hired gun. That attack has stunned Colombians, prompted speculation about who was responsible and raised questions about the president's response. Petro has taken to social media to speculate that the hit was ordered by an international "mafia" and to claim that Uribe's security detail was suspiciously reduced the day he was shot.

## Two BTS members discharged from SK mly

YEONCHEON, South Korea (Reuters): K-pop group BTS members Jimin and Jungkook were discharged from the South Korean military, the fifth and sixth to complete the country's mandatory service amid expectations of the band's comeback from a hiatus.

The seven-member group put their global music career on hold in 2022 to begin their service starting with Jin in December that year, each serving duties of varying lengths as long as 18 months. Members RM and V were discharged and the last to wrap up his service will be Suga on June 21. Fans from around the world have flown to South Korea to welcome the return of the stars this week.

## N Ireland town hit by second night of unrest

BELFAST (AFP): Violence flared for a second night in a Northern Irish town after "racially motivated" attacks sparked by the arrest of two teenagers accused of attempting to rape a young girl. Hundreds of protesters, many of them masked, took to the streets of Ballymena, throwing petrol bombs, bottles and masonry as police responded with water cannon, an AFP journalist said.

There was a heavy police presence in one area of the town, some 30 miles (48 kilometres) northwest of Belfast, as the protesters set fire to a car and barricades. Police also fired plastic baton rounds to disperse the crowds, an AFP journalist saw. Later as night fell, crowds began to disperse in Ballymena although smaller groups still milled around the town centre. And local media reported that protesters were also blocking roads in Belfast.

The unrest first erupted after a vigil in a neighbourhood where an alleged serious sexual assault happened. "This violence was clearly racially motivated and targeted at our minority ethnic community and police," Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson said. He told a press conference: "It was racist thugery, pure and simply, and any attempt to justify it or explain it as something else is misplaced." Tensions in the town, which has a large migrant population, remained high throughout the day, as residents described the scenes as "terrifying" and told AFP those involved were targeting "foreigners".

Two teenage boys, charged by police with the attempted rape of a teenage girl, had appeared in court, where they asked for a Romanian interpreter, local media reports said. The trouble began when masked people "broke away from the vigil and began to build barricades, stockpiling missiles and attacking properties", police said. Houses and businesses were attacked, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) said, adding it was investigating "hate attacks". Security forces also came under "sustained attack" with petrol bombs, fireworks and bricks thrown by rioters, injuring 15 officers including some who required hospital treatment, according to the force.

One 29-year-old man was arrested and charged with riotous behaviour, disorderly behaviour, attempted criminal damage and resisting police. Four houses were damaged by fire, and windows and doors of homes and businesses smashed. Cornelia Albu, 52, a Romanian migrant and mother-of-two who lives opposite a house targeted in the attacks, said her family had been "very scared".

"Last night it was crazy because too many people came here and tried to put the house on fire," Albu, who works in a factory, told AFP. She said she would now have to move, but was worried she would not find another place to live because she was Romanian. A 22-year-old woman who lives next door to a burnt-out house in the same Clonavon neighbourhood said the night had been "terrifying".



WEST BANK: An Israeli soldier taking part in an Israeli raid in Nablus.

## US intel chief denounces ‘warmongers’ after Hiroshima visit

HIROSHIMA (AFP): US intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard warned after a trip to Hiroshima that "warmongers" were pushing the world to the brink of nuclear war, in an extraordinary, if veiled, pitch for diplomacy.

Gabbard did not specify her concerns, but Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly brandished the specter of nuclear war as he cautions Europe and the United States against support for Ukraine. Gabbard, a former congresswoman who has faced criticism in the past for her views on Russia, posted a video of grisly footage from the world's first nuclear attack and of her staring reflectively at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

On August 6, 1945, the United States obliterated Hiroshima, killing 140,000 in the explosion and by the end of the year from the uranium bomb's effects. Three days later, a US plane dropped a plutonium bomb on Nagasaki, leaving around 74,000 people dead by the end of the year. Japan surrendered on August 15.

"This one bomb that caused so much destruction in Hiroshima was tiny compared to today's nuclear bombs," Gabbard said. "A single

nuclear weapon today could kill millions in just minutes." "As we stand here today closer to the brink of nuclear annihilation than ever before, political elites and warmongers are carelessly fomenting fear and tensions between nuclear powers," she said. "Perhaps it's because they are confident that they will have access to nuclear shelters for themselves and for their families that regular people won't have access to."

Taking a tone more customary for a politician or activist than the director of national intelligence, Gabbard said: "So it's up to us, the people, to speak up and demand an end to this madness." Japanese media reports said the comments were "extremely rare" for an incumbent US government official, and at odds with Washington's past justification of the bombings. Yoshimasa Hayashi, Japan's top government spokesman, declined to comment directly on Gabbard's video. But he said an "accurate understanding" of the destruction and suffering caused by atomic bombs would "serve as the basis for various efforts toward nuclear disarmament". "It's important for Japan to continue its realistic,

pragmatic efforts with the United States to realise a nuclear-free world, based on the belief that the carnage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki must not be repeated," Hayashi said.

Gabbard's remarks come as aides to President Donald Trump voice growing frustration with Putin, who has refused US-led, Ukraine-backed calls for a temporary ceasefire. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, whom Gabbard criticized before the two entered Trump's cabinet, has warned that the United States could walk away from diplomacy over the Ukraine conflict if there are no positive signs. Gabbard, a former Democrat, faced a heated confirmation hearing but ultimately prevailed after Democrats and some Republicans questioned her past statements, including some supportive of Russian positions. She has said that the European Union and Washington should have listened to Russian security concerns about Ukraine joining NATO. Gabbard's visit to Hiroshima comes ahead of the 80th anniversary of the world's only atomic bombings. The United States has never apologized for the attacks.

## ‘Violence puts Myanmar on path to self-destruction’

UNITED NATIONS (AP):

Myanmar is on "a path to self-destruction" if violence in the conflict-wracked Southeast Asian nation doesn't end, the UN envoy warned. Julie Bishop told the UN General Assembly said that "alarmingly" the violence didn't end after a powerful earthquake in late March devastated parts of the capital, Naypyitaw, and the country's second-largest city, Mandalay, killing more than 3,000 people and injuring thousands more.

Ceasefires announced by some parties have largely not been observed, "embedding a crisis within a crisis," and people in Myanmar must now deal with the raging conflict and the earthquake's devastation, said Bishop, a former foreign minister of Australia. "A zero-sum approach persists on all sides," she said. "Armed clashes remain a barrier to meeting humanitarian needs. The flow of weapons into the country is fueling the expectations that a mili-

tary solution is possible."

A widespread armed struggle against military rule in Myanmar began in February 2021 after generals seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 6,600 civilians are estimated to have been killed by security forces, according to figures compiled by nongovernmental organizations. The military takeover triggered intensified fighting with long-established armed militias organized by Myanmar's ethnic minority groups in its border regions, which have struggled for decades for more autonomy. It also led to the formation of pro-democracy militias that support a national unity government established by elected lawmakers barred from taking their seats after the army takeover.

More than 22,000 political prisoners are still in detention, Bishop said, including Suu Kyi, who turns 80 on June 19, and the ousted president, Win

Myint. The UN envoy said she detected "some openness to political dialogue with some regional support, but there is not yet broader agreement on how to move forward." In meetings with the country's leaders, Bishop said she encouraged them to reconsider their strategy, which has left the country more divided. She also warned against elections, planned for December or January, saying they risk fueling greater resistance and instability unless there is an end to the violence and they can be held in an inclusive and transparent way.

Bishop said she has been coordinating further action with Othman Hashim, the special envoy for Myanmar from the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations, known as ASEAN, and they agreed to visit Myanmar together. The UN envoy said she had a meeting online with representatives of the Rohingya minority from Myanmar and Bangladesh.

She said the situation for the Rohingya in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state remains dire, with up to 80% of civilians living in poverty and caught in crossfire between the government's military forces and the Arakan Army, the well-armed military wing of the Rakhine ethnic minority, and "subject to forced recruitment and other abuses."

More than 700,000 Muslim Rohingya fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar starting in late August 2017 when Myanmar's military launched a "clearance operation." Members of the ethnic group face discrimination and are denied citizenship and other rights in the Buddhist-majority nation. Bishop said there's hope that a high-level conference on the Rohingya and other minorities called for by the UN General Assembly on Sept. 30 will put a spotlight on the urgency of finding "durable solutions" to their plight.

## Poland’s Tusk seeks fresh start after presidential election blow

WARSAW (Reuters): A vote of confidence in Poland's government will take place, as Prime Minister Donald Tusk seeks to regain the initiative for his ruling pro-European coalition after it was shaken by a presidential election defeat.

Rafal Trzaskowski from Tusk's Civic Coalition was defeated by nationalist Karol Nawrocki in the June 1 ballot, unleashing recriminations from smaller partners in government and casting doubt over the administration's future when a hostile president wields the power of veto. While the ruling alliance's majority means it is almost certain to win vote, a SW Research poll for Rzeczpospolita daily showed that around a third of Poles thought Tusk's government would not survive until the end of its term in 2027.

Tusk will present his government's plan of action to parliament. A debate will then take place before the vote is held in the afternoon. Analysts say that many voters are disillusioned with the government's failure to deliver on promises including lib-

eralising abortion laws, reforming the judiciary and raising the tax-free limit. President Andrzej Duda, an ally of the nationalist Law and Justice party, known as PiS, that backed Nawrocki, has stymied elements of the government's programme that aim to roll back PiS reforms that the European Union said undermined judicial independence.

The government had hoped for a Trzaskowski victory that would give it the freedom to fully implement its agenda. Critics say that since it took office in December 2023, Tusk's government has done too little to implement change, with initiatives put on hold in the ultimately futile hope that a sympathetic president would be elected. It was against this background, and with voices in smaller coalition parties and normally sympathetic media outlets raising questions about his leadership, that Tusk called the vote of confidence. "This vote of confidence is not an attempt to continue everything we have been doing because we

know well after this year and a half that some things can be done better, faster and this vote of confidence should be a new beginning," he told a government meeting. "I would like you to know that for the entire... coalition, this is to be a day of new momentum and I am convinced that you will live up to this task."

After the vote of confidence, Tusk has said there will be a government reshuffle, which is likely to be in July. Meanwhile, members of the administration say that their coalition agreement will also need to be renegotiated, a process that could lead to conflict. PiS has relished the situation. Party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski proposed that a "technical government" made up of experts should be put in place immediately to restore calm. Former justice minister Zbigniew Ziobro, the architect of the judicial reforms Tusk's government has sought to overhaul, was more direct. "The lost presidential election is the end of Donald Tusk," he told reporters. "His fate is already sealed."



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# Pragmatism sees vision turning to reality

**A** defining trait of Sino-African cooperation is it is result-oriented with the aim of improving African people's well-being and enhancing African countries' endogenous development capabilities.

That is clearly manifested in the convening of the Ministerial Meeting of Coordinators on the Implementation of the Follow-up Actions of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Changsha, Hunan province, from Tuesday to Thursday — attended by representatives of the 54 African members of the FOCAC — as well as the Fourth China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo from Thursday to Sunday in the same city.

At the FOCAC summit held in Beijing in September, President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech in which he put forward six proposals and 10 partnership initiatives for jointly advancing modernization and building an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era.

Following the summit, the two sides have been working closely together to actively implement these proposals and initiatives and they have made important progress and achieved many early harvests.

The ongoing Changsha meeting is conducive to enhancing the coordination between China and African countries with a focus on further implementing the six proposals and 10 partnership initiatives put forward by President Xi, so that people in China and Africa will benefit more from the outcomes of the 2024 FOCAC summit.

Implementing the proposals and initiatives, which cover a wide range of fields from trade, health and agriculture to industry chains, connectivity, green development and common security, entails timely communication, efficient coordination and close cooperation of government departments at different levels, enterprises, social organizations, institutions and media organizations. The Changsha meeting serves to provide such a platform for these stakeholders from both sides to energize their endeavors in different fields to transform the proposals and initiatives into blueprints, projects, actions and tangible benefits.

As the world has entered a new period of turbulence and change in recent years, relevant parties should strengthen their efforts to appropriately manage all types of risks and challenges and effectively address the impact of geopolitical conflicts while advancing high-quality Sino-African cooperation.

It is therefore necessary for the two sides to properly handle the relationship between strengthening participating countries' sense of fulfillment and also ensuring the benefits for China by taking concrete measures to safeguard China's overseas interests, as President Xi urged at a symposium on the development of the Belt and Road Initiative in Beijing in December.

China-Africa cooperation, which should be open, green and clean, needs to direct more attention from quantity, scale and investment to quality, innovation and sustainability under the principle of "planning together, building together, and benefiting together" and with the goal of pursuing high-standard, people-centered sustainable collaboration.

Focusing on enhancing connectivity, relevant efforts should be made to continuously create new space for win-win development at a higher level and with greater resilience and sustainability, by means of improved planning, coordination and management mechanisms.

Under these principles, as Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in his separate meetings with some African counterparts attending the Changsha meeting, China is willing to continue to share new development opportunities with African countries, and help African countries achieve modernization.

The two sides should further strengthen the alignment of their development strategies, and upgrade mutually beneficial cooperation, so that the African countries can expedite their industrialization process and deliver more benefits to their peoples.

Thanks to nearly 70 years of tireless efforts from both sides, the China-Africa relationship is now at its best in history. Unlike some major countries that treat their aid to Africa as a condescending gift strangled to certain demands in other fields, Sino-African cooperation is not only based on equality, mutual respect and win-win results but also unconditional.

China is committed to working with African countries to uphold multilateralism and the basic norms governing international relations, as well as the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries. As the meeting in Changsha shows, China and Africa are working together to inject more dynamism into their bilateral cooperation and in doing so they are sending a strong message of solidarity and collaboration among members of the Global South.

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# The politics of budget in Pakistan

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

**E**ACH year, as June draws near in Pakistan, the air within the corridors of Parliament begins to thicken with anticipation. The federal budget - a crucial document that reflects the government's priorities, aspirations, and challenges - is presented before the National Assembly during this month. Constitutionally enshrined and regulated by procedural rules, the budget is laid out before the people's representatives who are expected to dissect its contents, critique its projections, and, ultimately, give it their assent. This annual exercise is not merely a financial ritual; it is the theatre of democracy where the fiscal vision of the nation is unveiled and contested.

From the time of Pakistan's independence in 1947 until now, more than seventy federal budgets have been presented, with varying styles, strategies, and outcomes. From the modest initial budgets of the post-Partition years to the more elaborate and technocratic fiscal outlines of recent times, each has been both a mirror and a map - a reflection of its era's economic realities and a roadmap for national policy.

The task of presenting the federal budget has historically rested with the Finance Minister, though on a few occasions it has been carried by the Prime Minister or an acting minister. From Ghulam Muhammad, the first Finance Minister of Pakistan, who presented the country's first budget in the Sind Assembly Chamber, Karachi chaired by Deputy President Mr. Tamizuddin Khan on February 28, 1948, to the recent presentations by the finance heads of elected governments and inter-

im administrations alike, the legacy is rich and telling. With the return of parliamentary democracy in 1985, budget sessions became more regular, structured, and open to greater legislative engagement. These debates have since served as a barometer of parliamentary performance and political maturity.

A comparative study of the budget sessions from 1985 to the present reveals a mixed record. On paper, the rules permit members to discuss all aspects of the budget, including its macroeconomic assumptions, taxation proposals, development allocations, and sectoral priorities.

In practice, however, the content of budget speeches and debates often strays far from these core fiscal matters. While the budget is meant to be a national financial document warranting informed scrutiny, many members use the opportunity to raise local issues, express grievances against administrative excesses, or engage in political posturing.

According to the crystal-clear ruling given by the Deputy Speaker Dr. Ashraf Khatoon Abbasi during general discussion on budget in 17 June 1975 that "Any matter may be discussed by members during general discussions on the Budget". Detailed research into the proceedings of the National Assembly from 1985 onwards indicates that, on average, less than 40 percent of the parliamentary debate during budget sessions has been directly focused on the budget itself.

The remaining 60 percent often veers into discussions on political rivalries, law and order, governance failures, regional complaints, and

historical reckonings. This imbalance, while at times reflective of the political pressures of the moment, undermines the technical scrutiny that the budget deserves. In years of political stability, the proportion of budget-focused speeches tends to increase slightly, while in times of political upheaval or transitions, the debates become more rhetorical and less policy-oriented.

The budget sessions of 1988, 1993, 1999, 2008, and 2018 were particularly overshadowed by political transitions, caretaker arrangements, or abrupt changes in government, resulting in more perfunctory or highly politicized budget debates. Conversely, some sessions - such as those in 2002, 2013, and 2021 - witnessed more structured and issue-based discussions, particularly when parliamentary committees and opposition parties engaged with budget documents in greater detail.

The role of leadership, too, has been significant. Speakers who ensured strict observance of the rules of debate, and the finance ministers who remained present to respond to queries, helped maintain the focus on fiscal content. On the other hand, where leadership allowed the dilution of discipline, the quality of debate suffered. Moreover, the absence of technical support and budget analysis tools for most parliamentarians has further limited their ability to meaningfully engage with the figures and forecasts embedded in budget documents.

Despite these limitations, the budget debate remains one of the most significant events on Pakistan's legislative calendar. It is the time when

the opposition has the opportunity to challenge the government's claims with facts and alternative visions, and when treasury members are expected to defend the government's performance.

It is also the most public moment for Parliament to communicate with citizens on matters of taxation, subsidies, public investment, and economic reform. In this sense, even when discussions deviate, they carry a broader democratic utility, albeit at the cost of technical depth.

As Pakistan confronts rising fiscal deficits, growing public debt, and the pressures of structural reform demanded by global financial institutions, the need for a more informed and focused budget debate becomes ever more urgent. Parliamentarians must be equipped and encouraged to treat the budget not merely as a political document but as a financial charter that impacts every citizen.

The trend of political theatre must give way to financial literacy, scrutiny, and accountability. Only then can the National Assembly truly fulfill its constitutional role as the guardian of the public purse.

In reviewing the trajectory from 1985 to the present, one sees a Parliament in gradual evolution - marked by frequent diversions yet capable, at moments, of rising to its fiscal responsibilities.

The budget session, if reclaimed as a time of serious deliberation, can serve as a forum for economic consensus and national direction. The challenge lies not in the rules, which already provide ample space for debate, but in the will and preparation of those who stand to speak in the name of the people.

# Building a just and inclusive Syria from within

**T**HE recent withdrawal of hundreds of American troops from Syria — estimated at 500 personnel and accompanied by the closure or handover of multiple bases to the Syrian Democratic Forces — marks more than just a tactical shift in US foreign policy. It may, if seized wisely, signal the dawn of a new opportunity for Syrians to redefine their nation's future through unity, reconciliation and inclusivity.

This move, characterized by US officials as "safe, deliberate and conditions-based," reflects a major recalibration following the fall of the Assad regime. For years, Syria has been trapped in a brutal vortex of conflict, foreign intervention and sectarian fragmentation. Now, as international military footprints shrink, the onus is increasingly on Syrians themselves to shape the road ahead.

The handover of military sites — such as Mission Support Site Euphrates — to the SDF is emblematic of a transition from foreign-led stabilization to local

governance. Hani Hazaimeh empowers Syrians, from Qamishli to Deraa. A meaningful path forward could include the development of a new federal model for Syria — one that devolves authority to regional entities while safeguarding national unity. Such an arrangement would not only address longstanding grievances but also prevent the return of autocracy under new guises.

As Syria emerges from dictatorship and war, there must be a concerted effort to pursue transitional justice rather than retribution. Mechanisms should be put in place to acknowledge the atrocities of the past, support victims and hold perpetrators accountable through fair legal processes. Only through truth and justice can real reconciliation take root.

The country's young generation — many of whom have only known war — must be given a leading role in rebuilding Syria. Education, entrepreneurship and civic participation should be national priorities. Civil society organizations, long stifled

or co-opted, need space to grow independently and help rebuild trust between citizens and their institutions.

International actors can and should play a supportive role, not as overseers but as partners in reconstruction and capacity-building. Any engagement must be conditional on the inclusion of marginalized voices and the advancement of human rights.

The withdrawal of US forces should not be seen as abandonment, but as an inflection point. The real question is not what foreign powers will do next, but what Syrians will do now.

The chance to build a new Syria — one that is inclusive, accountable and representative — is within reach. It will not be easy. But with courage, dialogue and vision, the Syrian people can reclaim their future — not through force, but through unity.

History has shown that peace imposed from the outside rarely endures. But peace built from within can transform nations. Now is the time for Syrians to choose the path of transformation.

# Fishing cat: Pakistan's Indus delta losing its lone surviving predator

Aamir Latif

**P**AKISTAN has long been struggling with the gradual disappearance of its rare wildlife species due to a lethal mix of environmental and human-induced factors, including habitat destruction, dwindling water resources, pollution, and poaching.

Among these vanishing species is the endangered Indus fishing cat, found mostly in the Indus River Delta and surrounding buffer areas, where its numbers have dropped dramatically over recent decades.

Habitat loss, food scarcity, hunting, and growing human populations have significantly impacted this rare feline, which plays a vital role in maintaining the balance of aquatic ecosystems, according to experts.

"The past two decades have appeared to be disastrous for this environment-friendly animal, mainly because of the destruction of wetlands and killings by local people," Saeed-ul-Islam, a senior Pakistani wildlife expert, told Anadolu.

Although official surveys have yet to determine precise figures, Islam explained that conservative estimates suggest the cat's population in Pakistan has declined by more than 50% in the last two decades alone.

Globally, the fishing cat population has declined approximately 30% since 2010, and the animal has been listed as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List since 2016.

In addition to decreasing water levels, deteriorating water quality has exacerbated the plight of these animals.

"Deterioration of water quality due to untreated water flowing directly into water bodies, and the use of pesticides and chemical

occurred in Jaffarabad and Jhal Magsi districts in the southwestern Balochistan province.

Challenges in determining exact numbers

Shaikh acknowledged the difficulty in determining the exact population numbers due to a lack of comprehensive surveys by either government agencies or wildlife groups.

"We cannot give any specific number about its population in Pakistan. But one thing is sure — its number has reduced due to shrinking wetlands and water bodies," he said.

"That's why it is hard to fix its current status, but it can safely be described as 'almost endangered,' considering the given circumstances."

Shaikh acknowledged that, although the IFCP has made "a little difference" in increasing the fishing cat's numbers, "it's a long way to go."

Kamal Palari, a community worker involved with IFCP conservation efforts in Sindh's Thatta district, noted a significant reduction in hunting incidents involving the fishing cat in recent years.

"Locals, especially farmers, would kill them because they falsely believed this cat was a threat to their livestock and crops," Palari told Anadolu.

However, he said awareness campaigns launched by IFCP and increased community involvement have led to a noticeable decrease in such cases.

Shaikh also clarified that the fishing cat "very rarely" attacks goats and has no capacity to threaten livestock herds significantly.

Balancing aquatic ecosystems

Mumtaz Soomro, a deputy director at the Sindh Wildlife Department, believes that strict wildlife protection laws enacted in 2020 —

**Globally, the fishing cat population has declined approximately 30% since 2010, and the animal has been listed as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List since 2016. In addition to decreasing water levels, deteriorating water quality has exacerbated the plight of these animals. "Deterioration of water quality due to untreated water flowing directly into water bodies, and the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, are also taking a toll on conservation efforts," Islam noted. Wildlife specialists consider the fishing cat the last surviving major predator of the Indus flood plains following the near extinction of others such as gharials, tigers, and leopards from the region. "We have this last predator in the Indus flood plains that greatly contributes to keeping aquatic animal populations healthy," said Zareef Ahmed Shaikh, head of the Indus Fishing Cat Project (IFCP). The IFCP, launched in 2021, forms part of the global Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance initiative, which seeks to protect and preserve this rare species. The project engages local communities, governmental authorities, and wildlife organizations to support conservation efforts.**

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Region's last surviving predator

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Before 2020, the status of the Indus fishing cat on Pakistan's IUCN country list remained uncertain, suggesting the species was nearing extinction, according to Shaikh.

"It was us (IFCP) who told the world that this animal not only still exists in Pakistan but that its distribution range has extended to the riverine areas of Sindh and Balochistan provinces through the canal network," Shaikh asserted.

In addition to the Indus delta, recent sightings have

imposing heavy fines and sentences for hunting rare species — have further helped reduce killings of fishing cats.

Soomro said the department has worked with local communities and wildlife groups on awareness campaigns to protect the cat, which he emphasized is "very important for keeping marine life healthy."

"We have already almost lost leopards, tigers, and other predators because of human-induced factors. We cannot afford to lose this last predator," he said.

In addition to shrinking wetlands, Islam cited overfishing by local communities as another critical reason for food shortages affecting the fishing cat.

He also stressed the fishing cat's vital role in maintaining the ecological balance within the Indus delta. "The fishing cat is a species of low-lying wetlands and can survive not only on fish but also on supplementary foods like crabs, rodents, and birds. The cat catches only lazy animals and fish, helping maintain the health of the remaining aquatic life," Islam explained.

Shaikh echoed these views, underscoring the fishing cat's role in protecting populations of rodents and turtles. "They control the population of small animals, so the ecosystem remains in balance," he concluded.

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# Trump is hyping a case to use American troops on domestic soil

**POSING as a wartime leader, President Donald Trump is building a political case to use American troops not in a foreign conflict, but at home, to bolster his mass deportation sweeps.**

But California Gov. Gavin Newsom, the Democrat who heads the state leading resistance to a president with a taste for unchecked power, says a long-feared moment of peril is at hand for US democracy.

In an emerging campaign with stark constitutional implications, Trump is conjuring a narrative of invasion and insurrection. He's exaggerating disorder in the relatively contained unrest, looting and protests in Los Angeles. And he's implying that, to keep the country safe, he's ready to deploy soldiers across the country.

Trump repeatedly and falsely claimed on Tuesday that if he'd failed to dispatch the National Guard and US Marines to Los Angeles, it would be "burning to the ground." The president also warned that he was looking beyond Los Angeles, as other cities, and states – especially those run by Democrats – brace for expanded sweeps against undocumented migrants and protests that could follow.

"You know, if we didn't attack this one very strongly, you'd have them all over the country," Trump said in the Oval Office. "But I can inform the rest of the country that when they do it, if they do it, they are going to be met with equal or greater force that we met right here."

Then, in a highly politicized speech to troops at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, later Tuesday, the president portrayed entire neighborhoods of Los Angeles as locked in the grip of an occupying force of "transnational gangs and criminal networks."

"We will liberate Los Angeles," Trump said, as if he was referring to a city seized by a hostile foreign army. "We will use every asset at our disposal to quell the violence and restore law and order right away. We're not going to wait seven days and eight days and wait for a governor that's never going to call and watch cities burn."

A day earlier, Trump had suggested that Los Angeles is just the start, saying at the White House, "We are going to have troops everywhere."

In another development

Tuesday that appeared to reveal the administration's intentions, the Department of Homeland Security confirmed that Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem previously asked Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to direct troops in Los Angeles to arrest protesters. The San Francisco Chronicle reported that Noem made the request – which would likely violate the law if ever carried out – in a weekend memo. DHS later clarified that Noem wrote the memo before she and Hegseth met with Trump.

Newsom responded to Trump's increasing pressure with a broadcast to California's citizens on Tuesday evening.

"Democracy is under assault before our eyes, this moment we have feared has arrived," said a Democrat who is seen as a potential 2028 presidential candidate. Trump is "taking a wrecking ball, a wrecking ball to our Founding Fathers' historic project – three co-equal branches of independent government. There are no longer any checks and balances."

The president's trip to Fort Bragg celebrated the 250th anniversary of US Army, and in calmer times would draw little notice.

But his aggressive use of his authority as commander in chief has revived fears about his authoritarian streak.

Trump's speech – at times indistinguishable from a campaign event – was jarring given that the military is supposed to be a nonpartisan force. The optics were of a commander in chief rallying troops for a mission on his behalf.

Fort Bragg has been such a backdrop before. Twenty years ago, President George W. Bush used it for a national televised address to try to win back the public as it began to turn against the war in Iraq. The current administration's handling of the situation in Los Angeles is also lending a foreboding tone to another event marking the Army's 250th birthday – a huge military parade in Washington this weekend. The spectacular just happens to be taking place on the 79th birthday of a president who loves basking in strongman imagery and the martial glow of soldiers and weaponry.

Trump set the tone with a dark warning in the Oval Office. "If there is any protest that wants to come out, they will be met with very big force," he told reporters. "I haven't heard

Stephen Collinson

about a protest. But you know, this is people who hate our country," he said of citizens potentially exercising their constitutional right to peaceful dissent. "But they will be met with very great force."

He amped up the authoritarian mood music as he headed home from Fort Bragg, portraying Los Angeles as a city at war – an illusion that would make the deployment of active troops seem more apt.

"I just want to see peace. If there's peace, we get out. If there's even a

.....  
**The protests have included scenes of agitators throwing projectiles at police, some looting and burning of cars, and other kinds of unrest, which state and local leaders have condemned – even while insisting the situation is nowhere near bad enough to merit troop deployments. But from the start, the administration has worked to leverage the anti-ICE protests for political gain. Trump suddenly announced on Saturday night that he'd send National Guard troops over the objections of Newsom – the first time a president has taken such action in decades. The reservists were followed by 700 active-duty Marines. Trump's dystopian evocation of Los Angeles as a city hostage to "paid insurrectionists" and "animals" is potentially laying the rhetorical groundwork for any future use of the Insurrection Act to allow domestic troops to make arrests and act in a law enforcement capacity.**  
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chance of no peace, we stay there until there's peace."

This is more than typical Trumpian hyperbole. There's a long tradition of autocratic-style leaders creating or exaggerating public-order incidents to justify the use of the military.

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enforcement capacity.

His strategy, which is gathering in intensity each day, is reminiscent of his claims that he won the 2020 election. This seemed absurd at first. But Trump's demagoguery whipped up a true uprising against the federal government and democracy at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. Millions of voters later bought into his narrative of a stolen election, which sparked the greatest political comeback in history in 2024.

It's easy to imagine the president cementing false impressions about the situation in California.

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Still, Trump is prone to exaggeration and threats that are not always carried out. And his administration is yet to use troops on the streets of Los Angeles to directly confront protesters. They are mostly protecting several federal buildings – one reason Democrats balked Tuesday when the Defense Department revealed that the operation is costing \$134 million.

And the administration may have off-ramps at hand. Sources told CNN this week that officials were looking for alternative options to the Insurrection Act to bolster protection for federal agents working on immigration enforcement.

But Trump now has a long record of choreographing his intentions in public, and he often ignores advice to act with restraint.

It would be logical for him to try to co-opt the military to further his personal and political goals. After all, he's reshaped the entire US government and the powers of the executive to that role after returning to power.

Los Angeles may not be an isolated crisis.

"I think we're an experiment, because if you can do this to the nation's second-largest city, maybe the administration is hoping that this will be a signal to

everybody everywhere to fear them," Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said Tuesday.

California's two Democratic senators, Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla, wrote to Hegseth and Secretary of the Navy John Phelan to warn that the deployments were an extreme and inappropriate step.

"A decision to deploy active-duty military personnel within the United States should only be undertaken during the most extreme circumstances, and these are not them," they wrote. "That this deployment was made over the objections of state authorities is all the more unjustifiable."

Sen. Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, drew a distinction between Marines and the National Guard. "Active-duty forces are generally not to be involved in domestic law enforcement operations," Collins said.

Yet it's clear the administration has maneuvered Democrats into the familiar political weak spot they've often occupied since Trump burst into presidential politics and used immigration as a stepping-stone to power.

And many of his supporters will regard his tough-guy act as an appropriate dividend for their vote last November and are unlikely to fixate on whether he's acting legally and constitutionally.

"ICE agents need to be able to do their job," Hegseth said during a House of Representatives hearing Tuesday, channeling the views of MAGA world. "They're being attacked for doing their job, which is deporting illegal criminals. ... And President Trump believes in law and order."

Noem, meanwhile, told reporters that Trump was merely protecting everyday Americans.

"This president is standing up for the average American who wants to walk their child to school every day safely, run their small business and provide for their families. That's the action that he's taken," she told reporters in the Oval Office.

But as usual, the president landed on a particularly resonant image – one that called forth the somber possibility that he now perceives the homeland as a war zone: "The only flag that will wave triumphant over the streets of Los Angeles is the American flag, so help me God," he told the troops at Fort Bragg.

## Two-state solution summit should be bold and daring

**WHEN France and Saudi Arabia co-chair the International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Palestinian Question and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution in New York later this month, it might be the last opportunity for the international community to salvage a peace agreement along these lines. Beyond making a bold statement about its commitment to bringing this conflict to a peaceful end, it must send a message, in no uncertain terms, that it will not tolerate any attempts to block such a solution.**

The wording of the invitation to the willing participants reflects a determination to make this gathering count, by stating that "the conference is intended to serve as a point of no return, paving the way for ending the occupation and promoting a permanent settlement based on the two-state solution." But to be successful, it must be followed by courageous actions.

To begin with, France, the UK and other EU members that have not done so already should recognize Palestinian statehood. This would be a long overdue but necessary acknowledgement that recognizing Palestinian statehood is not conditional on the Palestinian leadership succumbing to any demand for concessions by Israel.

Such recognition will remove a crucial aspect of the asymmetry between the two protagonists in one of the longest-running conflicts in modern history. It will ensure that all who live in historical Palestine enjoy the same human, political and civil rights and are capable of fulfilling their national aspirations and individual potential, as was already envisaged in UN Resolution 181 of 1947, better known as the Partition Plan.

It is of immense significance that this conference will be co-chaired by Saudi-Arabia and France, representing a unique cooperation.

It brings together a leading regional force that, in 2002, initiated the most promising peace plan that could have put this conflict behind us, had it not been rejected by Israel, and a major European force that is also a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

This must have enough weight, together with the other high-level participants, to encourage the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to understand

Yossi Mekelberg

that it is high time for them to move forward along the route to a two-state solution deal.

There are many out there who are skeptical that the two-state solution is still possible and who suspect that such a conference is either a naive attempt or simply lip service to bringing about a peace that will never materialize. Both views are misplaced and unhelpful, not because a two-state solution is a panacea by itself, but because, among all possible alternatives, it is still the most viable answer, although it does need to be adjusted to reflect changing circumstances since the Oslo process collapsed. Most promising is a confederation model that is, in principle, a two-state solution in a one-state reality, which best reflects the current state of affairs.

The alternative to a two-state solution is to once more let the current situation drag on and risk even worse consequences than the world has witnessed over the last 20 months, for both peoples, with far-reaching implications for the region and beyond.

There are also three possible models of a one-state solution — and they are all either unattractive or unviable.

The ultrareligious-nationalists in Israel aspire to a single state in which the West Bank and Gaza are annexed by Israel and as many Palestinians as possible are "encouraged" to leave to ensure an absolute Jewish majority in historic Palestine, possibly resulting in another Nakba.

For Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the one-state solution is one in which there is no place for an Israeli state — and their brand of Islamism would hardly leave room for a tolerant state for either Israelis or Palestinians.

The third version of a one-state solution is one of equal rights for all its citizens, Israelis and Palestinians alike. Nevertheless, as much as this is, on the face of it, a commendable vision of both communities putting behind them many decades of conflict and bloodshed and finding a way to peacefully coexist under one system of governance and one constitution, sharing a sentiment of a common future and destiny, it is no more than pleasant fantasy. There is no modality for such a rapid transformation and past experiences, such as those of Yugoslavia, Cyprus and even Czechoslovakia, have ended in separation, sometimes accompanied by bloodshed.

In order for these ideas, which range between inevitable disaster and the utopian, to be prevented from taking hold of the Israeli-Palestinian discourse, the conference in New York must see itself as possibly a last-chance saloon for advancing the cause of the two-state solution. Hence, it must take concrete measures to initiate a peace process by setting a tight timeline and milestones on the way to establishing an independent Palestinian state along the approximate lines of the 1967 borders.

If such a framework is introduced — with incentives for both sides to adhere to it and severe consequences if they do not — there is a good chance for a new momentum toward peace to emerge out of this international gathering.

Moreover, if, by the time the delegates of the conference convene, a new ceasefire deal is not concluded, the first message from the conference must be a demand from the UN Security Council to pass a resolution to this effect. It must be one that will also see the release of the hostages and allow unlimited humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, as a first step toward the reconstruction of the Strip and the rehabilitation of the Palestinian people and their society, along a path toward a comprehensive peace agreement.

It is true that the main responsibility for resolving the conflict still rests with the two parties themselves. And it was a previous US secretary of state who said, following the collapse of his peace initiative in 2014, that "the United States cannot want peace more than the parties to the conflict." Much water has flowed down the Jordan river since then, but the sentiment is still correct.

Yet, collectively, the international community has the ability to use its levers of power to make both sides understand that it is in their interest to bring about peace — and, should either side deliberately derail the peace process, to make them accountable.

This French-Saudi initiative to convene a conference on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could not be timelier, despite and maybe because it is taking place at the lowest and most volatile and tragic point in relations between the two main antagonists.

This should serve as enough of an impetus not to fail again, as the price of failure, playing out on our screens every single day, is intolerable for those who live with it and unforgivable for those who do not stop it.

## East Africa's rulers saw what Gen Z can do – now they're striking first

Patrick Gathara

**LAST Friday, Albert Ojwang, a young blogger in the western Kenyan town of Migori, was arrested over a complaint by a senior police officer regarding a post on X and taken 350km (217 miles) away to the Central Police Station in the capital, Nairobi. By the next day, he was dead, with police claiming – incredibly – that he had committed suicide by banging his head against the cell walls. The truth, as confirmed by a post-mortem, is that he was beaten to death.**

This comes as no surprise to Kenyans who are depressingly familiar with police violence. But Ojwang's arrest and brutal murder were more than that. The incident is a chilling message to a troublesome generation as the country approaches what has become its protest season – "do not test us".

Not long before, Rose Njeri, another young Kenyan, was arrested. Her "crime"? Designing a digital tool to make it easier for the public to participate in hearings on the government's controversial 2025 Finance Bill. The irony is both cruel and stark: a government that routinely exhorts citizens to engage in "public participation" arrested a citizen for doing precise-

ly that efficiently and at scale.

These arrests are not isolated incidents. They are the latest flare-ups in a growing and deliberate crackdown on youth-led dissent. And they are a reminder that Kenya's increasingly paranoid ruling elite is still haunted by the spectre of last year's Gen Z protests – massive, spontaneous, decentralised demonstrations that erupted in response to the Finance Bill and its punishing economic proposals.

In fact, over the last decade, the annual publication of, and public debate over, the government revenue and tax proposals have become the main focal point of antigovernment protests, linked to widespread anger over the cost of living. Last year's protests, however, took a new turn, sidelining the country's politicians, giving voice to a new generation, and even forcing President William Ruto to veto his own bill and fire his cabinet.

That uprising was unlike any other in Kenya's recent history: leaderless, tech-savvy, angry, and hopeful. It drew energy from online platforms and informal networks, cutting across ethnic and class divisions. For weeks, young people took to the streets, demanding an end not

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ly tortured and raped by Tanzanian police. This points to the emergence of a regional authoritarian consensus. Fearing a coming together of popular movements in their individual nations inspired by the successes of Kenya's Gen Z movement, the Kenyan, Tanzanian, and Ugandan governments are forming their own informal alliance, sharing not just intelligence and resources, but political fears and tactics.

Their calculus is clear. Each is led by a regime facing economic turmoil, discredited democratic processes, and fragment-

ed opposition movements. Each sees youth-led mobilisation as the most potent threat to its hold on power. Each has, in recent years, responded-  
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ed to such mobilisation with brutality. And, crucially, each knows that the costs of repression are lower than ever.

For much of the post-Cold War era, authoritarian excesses in Africa were tempered by the fear of inciting Western disapproval. Rhetorical condemnation was not just embarrassing but carried real risks, not only of losing aid or feeling the weight of economic sanctions, but, perhaps more consequentially, a loss of popular legitimacy.

However, democratic decline and moral disarray in the West have dramatically altered that

equation.

Today, the West is shedding the false image of moral superiority which cloaked its domination of the globe. From arming and supporting a genocide in Gaza to the

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**In fact, over the last decade, the annual publication of, and public debate over, the government revenue and tax proposals have become the main focal point of antigovernment protests, linked to widespread anger over the cost of living. Last year's protests, however, took a new turn, sidelining the country's politicians, giving voice to a new generation, and even forcing President William Ruto to veto his own bill and fire his cabinet. That uprising was unlike any other in Kenya's recent history: leaderless, tech-savvy, angry, and hopeful. It drew energy from online platforms and informal networks, cutting across ethnic and class divisions. For weeks, young people took to the streets, demanding an end not just to a specific bill, but to a broader system of exclusion, corruption, and indifference. The state responded with force. Dozens were killed. Others disappeared. The violence did not break the spirit of protest, but it did send a message: this government is willing to use deadly force to silence dissent. And now, as the 2025 Finance Bill winds its way through the public consultation process, the early signs are that the cycle may repeat. The arrests of Ojwang and Njeri, even before protests have properly begun, suggest a strategy of preemptive suppression: neutralise the nodes of mobilisation before the network can activate. But this paranoia is not uniquely Kenyan. Just weeks ago, Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi and Ugandan journalist Agather Atuhaire were arrested while in Tanzania to attend the trial of opposition leader Tundu Lissu, and allegedly tortured and raped by Tanzanian police. This points to the emergence of a regional authoritarian consensus.**  
.....

brutal suppression of dissent on its own streets and the demonisation of immigrants and refugees, it turns out that the first world is just the third world in drag. Their words of condemnation for the atrocities and brutalities of others would now simply reek of dishonesty and hypocrisy.

Further, the same governments that once demanded good governance and civil rights now prioritise counterterrorism, migration control, and market access. They strike deals with autocrats, turn a blind eye to repression, and reframe their interests as "stabilis-

ty". Western support for civil society has withered. Funding has declined. Visibility has shrunk. The result is a shrinking civic space and a growing sense of impunity among East African elites.

From the vantage point of these governments, this moment presents both a threat and an opportunity. The threat is clear: protests could spiral into a full-scale political reckoning. The opportunity is darker: to act now, preemptively and brutally, while the world is not looking and the opposition is disorganised.

But it is also a moment of possibility for the movements these regimes are trying to suppress.

The 2024 Gen Z protests in Kenya marked a political awakening. They showed that it is possible to bypass traditional gatekeepers – political parties, NGOs, foreign donors – and mobilise around economic justice and dignity. They rejected the logic of ethnic patronage and elite negotiation.

And crucially, they exposed the hollowness of the old accusations that civic protest is always the work of "foreign puppets".

By framing civic activism as inherently un-African or externally manipulated, regimes

attempt to delegitimise protest and sow doubt. But today's youth activists are pushing back – not by seeking validation from the West, but by grounding their struggles in lived reality: the daily pain of high taxes, joblessness, debt, and corruption.

The current crackdown is evidence that these movements have rattled the powerful. But fear is not the same as victory. The lesson of the past years is that organised, principled dissent is possible, and effective. What comes next must be regional.

If authoritarianism is becoming a cross-border project, then so too must resistance. Kenya's civic actors must stand with Tanzanian and Ugandan activists.

Solidarity must be built not only through shared hashtags, but through shared strategy: legal defence networks, data collection on abuses, secure communication channels, joint campaigns.

Albert Ojwang's death, Rose Njeri's arrest, the violations against Boniface Mwangi and Agather Atuhaire – these are not aberrations. They are signals. Signals that the ruling classes of East Africa are preparing for a fight. The question is whether the rest of us are preparing to fight as well.





# Budget 2025-26 falls short of expectations: SCCI

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry announced the federal budget as traditional and controlled rather than balanced, stating that it falls short of the business community's expectations.

It added the presentation of a growth-oriented, progressive and business-friendly budget impossible under the current IMF-harsh conditions.

Fazal Moqem Khan, president of the chamber while giving his reaction on the recently presented federal budget here on Wednesday said the business community was expecting a pro-business budget for next fiscal year, but it isn't as per their expectations.

SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, former FPCCI president Ghazafar Bilour, former president Haji Muhammad Afzal, Riaz Arshad, Malik Niaz Ahmad, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, members of the executive committee Aftab Iqbal, Ashfaq Ahmad, Nadeem Rauf, Shams

Rahim, Adnan Nasir, Abdul Naseer, Sajjad Zaheer, former vice presidents Ejaz Khan Afridi, Javed Akhtar, traders leaders, Saddar Gul, Fazal e Wahid, Faiz Rasool, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan, representation of business community, industrialists and traders were present during the press conference.

Moqem Khan hoped that the government would revisit the proposals that had been sent by SCCI and incorporate them in the next fiscal budget.

He was of the view that some initiatives were anti-business that would bring further stagnation and hamper efforts for revival of business and industries in the country.

However, he said SCCI expected the budget would be pro-business and industries. No relief measures were proposed for revival of war-affected business and industries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Moqem remarked.

However, he took the stance that a business-friendly budget only be

made possible when the country would free under tight monitoring IMF-framework.

Fazal Moqem criticized the government over increasing the 100 percent levy on petroleum per litre, expressing fear that the move will prove detrimental for the economy.

Commenting on the budget, FPCCI former president Ghazafar Bilour said in the budget proposals, there was no mention and comparison of current GDP growth with previous fiscal year.

Ghazafar Bilour said that incentives were only announced for the elite class while poor masses were further burdened with direct and indirect taxes, and the government has continuously adopted policy to make poor people further poorest and rich more richest, which is highly condemnable.

FPCCI former president also strongly objected to the FBR new rules, allowing unprecedented authorities to tax-collectors under the unilateral initiatives.

He said SCCI strongly condemned the black laws of FBR, and asked the government to immediately revisit these all rules which would prove further destructive for businesses and industries.

The Finance Minister was told that huge foreign exchange reserves had come into Pakistan in the last year but he must also explain how many investments were shifted from the country, Ghazafar asked.

Haji Muhammad Afzal, who was also traders' leader and regional chairman of FPCCI said that the government took initiatives regarding small traders, which are unacceptable.

He made it clear that small traders will strongly protest against imposition of Point of Sale and other anti-traders initiatives and urged the government to reconsider initiatives and make them traders-friendly.

Haj Muhammad Afzal said SCCI had given proposals, which should be incorporated before the approval of the next fiscal budget.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan addressing a press conference.

## Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Four ships, Valence, Royal Galaxy, Global Oriole and Nordic Masa scheduled to load/offload Container, Rice, Steel Coil and Chemicals, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal-1, Multi-Purpose Terminal-2 and Engro Vopak Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Sea Ways Kolbers, Hanyu Freesia and Gas Emerald with Soya Bean Oil and Chemicals also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours

A total of ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Valence, Lebrethah and Asia Inspire left the port on Wednesday morning, while three more ships, Xin Lian Chang, Ncc Sama and Nordic Masa are expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 97,377 tonnes, comprising 74,073 tonnes imports cargo and 23,304 export cargo carried in 2,335 Containers (1,035 TEUs Imports & 1,300 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are seven ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them two ships, Chemroad Leo and Gas Emerland & five more ships, Meltemi, Xin Lian Chang, Hansa Africa, Zhong Hang Sheng and MSC Michigan VII carrying Palm oil, Chemicals, Mogas and Container are expected to take berths at LCT, EVTL, FOTCO and QICT respectively.

## PSX stays bullish, gains 2,328 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 2,328.24 points, showing positive change of 1.91 percent, closing at 124,352.68 points as compared to 122,024.44 points on the last trading day.

A total of 1,041,129,574 shares were traded during the day as compared to 592,952,761 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 46.707 billion against Rs 21.827 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 478 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 283 of them recorded gains and 157 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 38 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading

companies were Pervez Ahmed Company with 78,292,186 shares at Rs 2.00 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 55,140,713 shares at Rs 1.45 per share and Sui South Gas with 45,087,896 shares at Rs 41.14 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 117.58 per share closing at Rs9,830.52 whereas runner-up was Hoechst Pakistan Limited with Rs96.07 rise in its share price to close at Rs3,307.07.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 2,591.10 per share price, closing at Rs 23,319.88, whereas the runner-up Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs 246.16 decline in its per share price to Rs 2,215.49.

Gold prices up by

**Rs.600 to Rs.352,900 per tola:** The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.600 and was traded at Rs.352,900 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.352,300 on last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.514 to Rs.302,554 from Rs. 302,040 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs471 to Rs.277,351 from Rs. 276,880.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,745 and Rs.3,210 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market went up by \$6 to \$3,345 from \$3,339, whereas the prices of silver remain unchanged at \$35.87, the Association reported.

## Provision of quality deed to farmers govt top priority

ISLAMABAD (APP): The third meeting of the Board of Governors of the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA) was held on Wednesday with Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain in chair.

The minister emphasized transparency, quality, and institutional reforms in the seed sector and directed that timely provision of certified and high-quality seed to farmers must be ensured at all costs.

In his remarks, the Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain categorically rejected the proposal to reinstate fake seed companies, stating that any form of exploitation or deceit against farmers is unacceptable.

He reiterated the government's firm commitment to building a transparent, strong, and farmer-friendly seed system, with zero tolerance for compromise in this regard.

During the meeting, four new members of NSDRA were approved to further strengthen the governance of the authority. A structured and transparent service framework for new employees was also finalized, aimed at enhancing institutional efficiency and professional capacity.

The Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain placed special emphasis on the development and supply of high-quality cotton and oilseed varieties.

He stated that the country's agricultural output heavily depends on seed quality, and therefore, research, development, and collaboration with the private sector should be prioritized to improve seed standards.

Various stakeholders, including the Chairman of the Authority, Director

General Strategic Projects, and representatives from prominent seed companies, participated in the meeting. The participants presented several suggestions for the improvement of the seed sector, which were well received.

On the occasion, the Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain instructed all relevant institutions to ensure the implementation of effective policies through mutual coordination, keeping in view the national needs of farmers.

The minister reaffirmed that NSDRA will be developed into a modern, efficient, and transparent regulatory body that will play a key role in steering Pakistan toward agricultural self-sufficiency.

The government considers the welfare of farmers and the provision of quality seed as a vital pillar of national development.

## Federal budget disappoints nation, especially youth, says Ghulam Ali

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Former President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and ex-Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali, has strongly criticized the federal budget, calling it a major setback to national progress and deeply disappointing for the country's youth, who constitute over 65% of the population.

In a statement issued regarding the federal budget 2025-26, Haji Ghulam Ali said that instead of offering relief to the already burdened public grappling with inflation, unemployment, power outages, and overbilling, the government has opted to impose additional taxes, raising serious concerns about the direction of the country's development policies.

He condemned the imposition of 18% sales tax

on the import of solar panels, calling it a dishonest and anti-public move. "How can we impose taxes to protect local industry when our own manufacturing capabilities are not yet able to meet the demand? First strengthen the industry, then talk of protection," he said.

Haji Ghulam Ali emphasized that in the absence of public sector job creation, the government should have announced incentives for small industries and promoted self-employment schemes to provide skilled youth a viable path forward. "Where are the youth supposed to go?" he asked.

He noted that the budget offers no roadmap for job creation, skill development, or self-employment. "By cutting 40,000 government jobs and failing to create private sector opportunities, the government has pushed the youth into further despair," he added.

He also lamented that

the agricultural sector - considered the backbone of Pakistan's economy - was entirely neglected. No significant allocations were made for agricultural research, modern farming techniques, irrigation systems, quality seeds, or farmer support, which has driven the sector toward collapse despite Pakistan being an agricultural country.

Highlighting the tax on solar panel imports, he said that this step has made clean and affordable green energy inaccessible to the public, particularly at a time when electricity tariffs are skyrocketing and power outages are worsening. "The government should have subsidized solar panels for underprivileged areas or provided them at half the cost as promised by provincial governments, but instead, the sector has been burdened with taxes."

He also opposed the hike in petroleum levy, warning it will significantly impact

transport, food prices, and everyday life. "How will our children, who rely on a few hundred rupees' worth of petrol to get to school or college, survive under this crushing inflation?"

Haji Ghulam Ali demanded immediate withdrawal of the 18% sales tax on solar energy equipment and the petroleum levy hike. He urged the government to introduce self-employment schemes, vocational training programs for youth, and prioritize agriculture and agri-research in the national budget.

He concluded, "This is the only path to real national development. If the current approach continues, we will sink deeper into inflation, unemployment, and food insecurity. To revive our economy, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the government must announce exemptions from sales and income tax for small industrial estates."

## SECP registers 3,609 new companies

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered a historic high of 3,609 companies in May 2025, surpassing the previous record of 3,442 set in January 2025.

The capital raised amounted to over Rs. 2.7 billion, with approximately 99.9% of new company registrations now processed digitally, said a press release issued by the SECP on Wednesday.

This upward trend reflects growing investor confidence and the success of SECP's digital reforms, which aim to simplify business registration and promote entrepreneurship.

The SECP remains committed to enhancing the ease of doing business by strengthening its regulatory framework, improving transparency, and fostering an inclusive, investor-friendly corporate environment across Pakistan.

This surge has increased

the total number of registered companies in the country to over 255,000. Private Limited Companies accounted for 59% of total registrations, while single-member companies represented 37%.

The remaining 4% included public unlisted companies, not-for-profit organizations, guarantee-limited companies, and limited liability partnerships (LLPs). A closer look at sectoral growth reveals strong activity across multi-

ple industries.

The Information technology (IT) and e-commerce sectors saw the largest growth, adding 718 new companies. The trading sector followed with 506 new companies, while services recorded 447 new companies. Real estate development and construction registered 342 new companies, followed by tourism and transport with 237, food and beverages with 187, and education with 160.

## Pak Army's civil engagement drive

## Abdul Basit Alvi

The Pakistan Army's civil engagement initiative is comprehensive and targets a broad spectrum of society through various channels. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and other senior generals frequently hold direct, candid interactions that go beyond formalities. The Field Marshal, in particular, has met with Vice Chancellors, principals, and senior faculty members across universities nationwide, stressing the vital role of educators in character-building and promoting Pakistan's true narrative. He has famously acknowledged, "Whatever I am today is because of my parents and teachers," underscoring teachers as the nation's greatest asset.

These dialogues, known as "Hilal Talks," provide forums for exchanging views on national, regional, and international matters. In regions like Balochistan, senior military leaders-including the Field Marshal-participate in grand jirgas (traditional assemblies) with tribal elders to discuss security concerns, counter foreign-backed terrorism, and ensure local communities are engaged as partners in

peace-building. Such interactions highlight the Army's commitment to protecting both the people and their land while seeking community support to eliminate hostile threats.

Senior military officials regularly deliver keynote addresses at national seminars, think tanks, and public forums, articulating the military's stance on national security, economic stability, and regional affairs. These venues help disseminate the Army's strategic vision and its dedication to national progress. The direct involvement of the Field Marshal and other senior leaders lends substantial credibility and authority to these engagements, demonstrating the Army's sincere commitment to connecting with the public at the highest level, fostering trust and shared responsibility in national matters. These sessions also clarify complex issues directly from authoritative sources.

The Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) plays a central role as the official spokesperson and public relations head of the Pakistan Armed Forces. The DG ISPR's engagements with civilians-particularly youth and media-are

vital for shaping public perception and delivering timely, accurate information. The current DG ISPR, Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, frequently conducts interactive sessions with students and educators, especially following significant national security events. These meetings provide direct communication channels to dispel misinformation and reinforce confidence. For example, after successful operations against external aggression or internal terrorism, the DG ISPR personally engages with students, reaffirming the strength of the military and the resilience of the nation. He has fervently expressed that the Pakistan Army's strength is rooted in its people, referring to civilians as the "iron wall" and underscoring the importance of national unity. While not formal civil engagement, the DG ISPR's regular press briefings serve as a key platform to inform the public about military operations, security issues, and policy positions.

These sessions are intended to be clear and transparent, often featuring in-depth Q&A segments with journalists, whose coverage then reaches a wide civilian audience.

During and following Operation Marsoos, these sessions have played a crucial role in conveying an accurate and detailed account of the situation. The DG ISPR's office actively leverages social media platforms to share information, highlight positive stories, and engage in real-time dialogue, reaching millions of digitally connected young Pakistanis. The DG ISPR's frequent, direct engagement helps manage narratives, build trust, and provide timely updates on national security matters. These efforts ensure the military's perspective is communicated clearly, countering misinformation and presenting the leadership as approachable and accountable. Similarly, commanders of various corps and garrisons regularly conduct interaction sessions with civilians, ensuring that civil engagement extends beyond the top leadership to local communities, creating a consistent and widespread outreach.

In various cities across the country, senior military officials from the Pakistan Army visited key educational institutions, participating in special interactive sessions with teachers and students. These sessions

were organized by the Corps Commanders of Mangla, Multan, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Gujranwala, and Bahawalpur, with the goal of engaging the youth on issues related to law and order, ongoing development initiatives, and the Army's role in national affairs. During these visits, the Corps Commanders encouraged students to harness modern technology, expand their knowledge, and use social media positively. They emphasized the importance of playing a proactive and constructive role in shaping Pakistan's future. In Lahore, the Corps Commander referred to Operation Banyan Marsoos as a reflection of the nation's unity, discipline, and faith.

He viewed student-created artwork under the theme "Marka Haq" and stressed the significance of modern science and technology in light of the recent Pak-India conflict. Calling students the "conscience of the nation" and future builders of the country, the Corps Commander in Karachi affirmed that Pakistan would never compromise on its security, dignity, or sovereignty, emphasizing the crucial role of youth in securing a prosperous

future.

In Quetta, the Corps Commander held a dedicated session at the Quetta College of Medical Sciences and Nursing Institute, where he spoke about Balochistan's development and addressed students' concerns and questions with detailed responses. Meanwhile, in Gujranwala, the Corps Commander conveyed messages of national unity, patriotism, and civic responsibility. In Bahawalpur, the Corps Commander delivered a special address on "Marka Haq" and national cohesion, crediting the victory to the Pakistan Army's professionalism and the prayers of the nation. These events were attended by a large number of Vice Chancellors, Principals, Deans, faculty members, and students, who actively engaged in discussions with the military leadership on key national issues.

The Pakistan Army's broad civil engagement campaign has brought significant benefits to the nation. By actively involving diverse groups, the Army reinforces the concept that national security is a shared responsibility, fostering unity against internal and external threats and bolstering national

resilience. When military leaders openly address challenges and sacrifices, it resonates strongly with the public, deepening their commitment.

Regular, transparent communication helps dispel myths about the military and counters negative stereotypes. When citizens perceive military leaders as accessible, knowledgeable, and genuinely concerned for their welfare, trust in the institution grows-a vital factor for maintaining internal stability and securing public support for difficult decisions.

Engagement with youth and the creation of platforms for positive dialogue serve as important tools to shield vulnerable populations from extremist ideologies. By emphasizing civic duties, national identity, and the destructive impact of terrorism, the Army offers a powerful counter-narrative essential for lasting peace. Clear statements from the Field Marshal linking terrorism to foreign adversaries further help unify public opinion against these threats. Through these security briefings and dialogues, a well-informed civilian population-including political leaders-can make more effective policy decisions,

grounded in a realistic understanding of security dynamics and military capabilities.

The Pakistan Army's dedication to this initiative is clear and unwavering. By continuously engaging its senior leadership-especially the Field Marshal and DG ISPR-and broadening its community-level programs, the Army is playing a vital role in fostering a more informed, united, and resilient Pakistan. This strong commitment to bridging the gap between the military and the public reflects a deep understanding that true national strength rests not only on military power but on the enduring connection and shared purpose of its people. The gains from these ongoing interaction sessions go beyond immediate tactical advantages; they represent strategic investments in Pakistan's long-term future. The public widely appreciates the direct engagement of top military leaders, and combined with the successful defense of the country and the triumph of Operation Banyan Marsoos, these efforts have significantly deepened the love and respect for the Pakistan Army among the nation's citizens.





In brief

Babar gets NOC for playing BB

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) issued No Objection Certificates to various national cricketers to play Big Bash Cricket League and County Cricket. PCB issued NOC to Babar Azam for a period starting from December 14, 2025 to January 28, 2025. Fast-bowler Shaheen Afridi and batsman Mohammad Rizwan also obtained NOCs for the same period. PCB issued NOC to cricketer Kashif Ali to play for Kent County Cricket Club in England. Fast-bowler Mohammad Amir will play for Essex County. PCB issued NOC to Mohammad Amir to play county till July 18, 2025. Shan Masood will play for Leicestershire County till September 1, 2025. Hassan Ali got NOC to play for Warwickshire County till September 30, 2025. PCB issued NOC to fast-bowlers Mohammad Abbas and Khurram Shehzad to play county cricket till September 27, 2025. Cricketers Mohammad Nawaz will play for Guyana Super League and CPL and Khawaja Nafay will play for Global Super League. PCB issued NOC to both cricketers. Cricketer Mohammad Hasan Khan also obtained NOC to play for CPL and fast-bowler Haris Rauf was also NOC to play major league cricket.

WTA gives ranking protection for players

LONDON (AFP): Women tennis players who take time out of the game to freeze eggs or embryos will have their ranking protected, the WTA Tour announced on Wednesday. Players ranked from one to 750 in singles or doubles who spend at least 10 consecutive weeks out of competition for a "fertility protection procedure" are eligible. The ranking can be used to enter up to three tournaments but the policy does not apply to the premier 1000 events. The special ranking will be based on the 12-week average of a player's WTA ranking from eight weeks prior to the start of their out-of-competition period. Sloane Stephens, the 2017 US Open champion, told the BBC the rule will reduce the pressure on players to return to the court too quickly. Stephens said she had twice previously used the off-season to freeze her eggs. The 32-year-old said in the WTA statement that she was "incredibly proud of our sport in recognising the importance of fertility treatments for female athletes". "For any woman, the conversation of family life versus a career is nuanced and complex," she said. "The WTA has now created a safe space for players to explore options and to make the best decisions for themselves." The WTA said in a statement that the "Fertility Protection Special Entry Ranking Rule" would enhance the existing package of benefits to help players combine family life with tennis. WTA CEO Portia Archer said: "We understand that professional athletes can face a dilemma between focusing on their career and starting a family, and we are committed to supporting WTA players as they navigate and balance the choices associated with career and family." In March the WTA and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced the introduction of a maternity fund programme, giving players paid maternity leave for up to 12 months and access to grants for fertility treatments.



Aiden Markram inside-edged onto the stumps.

Australia fight back as 14 wickets fall in World Test final

LONDON (Agencies): Australia's bowlers fought back after they were bowled out for a modest total by South Africa as 14 wickets fell on an engrossing first day of the World Test Championship final. Proteas quick bowler Kagiso Rabada claimed five of them after he helped skittle Australia for 212 shortly after the tea interval.

Steve Smith and Beau Webster, who made 66 and 72 respectively, had rescued Australia from a parlous 67-4 with a 79-run stand for the fifth wicket.

But Australia's last five wickets went down for a paltry 18 runs as Rabada spearheaded South Africa's pace attack with discipline and skill. The fast bowler had come into the match with something of a cloud hanging over him having recently served a short ban for recreational drug use.

However, his haul here moved him past the legendary Allan Donald and up to fourth on South Africa's all-time Test wicket-takers list. Left the best part of the evening session to bat, and with Lord's bathed in sunshine, the South Africans wilted in the face of an Aussie barrage.

Left-arm quick Mitchell Starc charged in to remove openers Aiden Markram and Ryan Rickelton cheaply. Markram departed for a duck, undone by an inswinging yorker, while Rickelton tentatively edged to Usman Khawaja in the slips. Australia skipper Pat Cummins then bowled Wiaan Mulder through the gate before Josh Hazlewood snuck one past the defence of Tristan Stubbs.

Temba Bavuma and David Bedingham will resume on day two, unbeaten on three and eight respectively.

Rabada leads the way for Proteas

Under leaden skies in St John's Wood, South Africa exploited favourable bowling conditions after Bavuma had won the toss.

Their early penetration owed much to Rabada, who teased and tormented the left-handed Khawaja outside his off stump during a intriguing opening passage.

After 20 deliveries – 19 from Rabada – Khawaja was squared up by a rasping ball which angled in at him on a fourth-stump line. The Aussie opener had little choice but to play, and was snared by a sharp catch by

Bedingham at first slip.

Rabada had a second wicket three deliveries later when Cameron Green strayed across the line and, slightly off balance, attempted to work a full-ish ball into the leg side. Instead, it took a thick edge and flew to Aiden Markram in the cordon.

Rabada punched the air in triumph. Australia are the favourites here, but this was a baring of teeth – the Proteas are not going to roll over and have their tummies tickled. Who would open with Khawaja has been a source of national debate. Down Under. Nathan McSweeney, Travis Head, Sam Konstas and Smith have all been through the revolving door and it was Marnus Labuschagne thrust into the breach here.

After a rather fortuitous 56-ball 17 he was removed by Marco Jansen, who drew a think thin edge from Labuschagne into the gloves of wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne.

The imposing 6ft 8in Jansen's dismissal of Head owed a little more to fortune after the left-handed Aussie was strangled down the leg side with Verreynne taking the catch.

Pakistani pacers Haris and Abbas break into ICC top 20

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's pacers Haris Rauf and Abbas Afridi have made significant gains in the latest ICC Men's T20I bowling rankings following a dominant 3-0 series win over Bangladesh at home.

According to rankings, released on Wednesday, the pace duo jumped into the top 20 to share the 18th position, with 605 rating points each. Left-arm spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi, despite not featuring in the series, also moved up slightly and now sits at 35th with 552 points.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's T20I vice-captain Shadab Khan and leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed are now tied at 58th, each holding 476 points.

However, not all bowlers enjoyed upward movement. Naseem Shah and Sufiyan Muqeem slipped in the rankings, now placed 92nd and 95th with 407 and 406 points, respectively.

At the top of the ICC T20I bowling standings, New Zealand's Jacob Duffy has retained the No.1 spot, followed by England's Adil Rashid.

India's Varun Chakravarthy, who previously held second, has now moved to third. In the batting department, Pakistan's experienced duo Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan maintained their 12th and 13th positions.

Mohammad Haris also held on to the 30th spot.

However, emerging players saw some setbacks—Hasan Nawaz fell to 46th, while Saim Ayub is now ranked 62nd.

Fakhar Zaman moved down one position to 87th, and T20I captain Salman Ali Agha dropped two spots to 76th, currently holding 430 points.

Globally, Australia's Travis Head remains the top-ranked T20I batter.

India's Abhishek Sharma has climbed to second, pushing England's Phil Salt to fourth as another Indian youngster, Tilak Varma, rose to third.

PCB says national selection committee remains intact

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday confirmed that there will be no changes in the national selection committee, describing it as 'intact'.

The PCB spokesman in an official statement said that the board has only replaced the data analyst, who will have no voting right during team selection. According to the PCB, Hassan Cheema has been replaced by Usman

Hashmi as the data analyst to assist the selection committee.

The selection committee comprises Aqib Javed, Aleem Dar, Asad Shafiq, and Azhar Ali. It may be noted here that the selection committee operates without a designated head, with all four members holding equal decision-making power.

The spokesman said the selection committee is bound to discuss with head coach and captain of

respected formats before finalising the team.

The PCB made its announcement in response to recent media reports that indicated a major overhaul of the selection committee, which suggested the potential removal of former Test cricketers Azhar Ali and Asad Shafiq.

The reports had indicated their possible replacement with former captain Sarfaraz Ahmed and cricket analyst Sikandar Bakht.

Sammy reacts to Pooran's shock retirement: "Not surprised"

JAMAICA (Agencies): West Indies's T20 former captain and head coach Daren Sammy has broken his silence on Nicholas Pooran's sudden retirement from international cricket, stating that while the news may have shocked fans globally, it didn't come as a surprise to him.

Pooran, the 29-year-old wicketkeeper-batter and former white-ball captain of the West Indies, announced his retirement from international cricket just a day earlier, sending ripples through the global cricketing community.

In a statement on Wednesday, Sammy acknowledged the development with a calm demeanor. "I'm not surprised," he remarked, indicating that internal discussions or signals may have hinted at Pooran's waning commitment to the international setup.

The left-handed batter, who had become a vital part of the West Indies' limited-

ited-overs setup, shared the news through an emotional statement on his social media accounts on Monday, bringing the curtain down on an international career that spanned eight years.

"My instincts told me something like that would happen," Sammy said, following West Indies' defeat in the third T20I – their sixth consecutive overall on the tour. "Nicholas sent me a text message, and so did I."

I had a conversation with his agent as well... When we first spoke about the UK tour and the conversation I had with him, I did ask him, 'Are you unavailable for the UK tour only, or indefinitely?'

And from that response, I just knew I had to start preparing for the worst case," he added.

He emphasised the decision of Nicolas Pooran, citing that more players will follow due to the spread of T20 cricket around the

world.

"Surprised? No, I'm not surprised. 'I'm pretty sure more will follow in that mood, in that direction,'" he said.

"That's the way T20 cricket is now, and especially coming from the West Indies, with the challenges that we face trying to keep our players motivated to play for the crest, so I wouldn't be surprised."

You saw everybody talk about Heinrich Klaasen, Quinton de Kock, these guys who've retired. It's out of our control," Daren Sammy concluded.

Pooran's departure will leave a void in the West Indies' white-ball setup, especially as the team continues to rebuild under Sammy's guidance. With the ICC Champions Trophy and T20 World Cup cycles on the horizon, the West Indies Cricket Board will now have to reconsider its plans for leadership and middle-order stability in the limited-overs formats.

USGA says no driver worry despite Scheffler, McIlroy test failures

OAKMONT (AFP): The USGA has no concerns over rules compliance at this week's US Open despite Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy's drivers failing tests last month, CEO Mike Whan said Wednesday.

Scheffler and McIlroy's clubs were found non-compliant ahead of the PGA Championship at Quail Hollow. World number one Scheffler went on to win the title, but McIlroy finished tied for 47th and has been struggling to find a replacement. McIlroy was upset that news of his driver test leaked to the public but other results, like Scheffler's, did not.

"I can tell you as a rules body, if we had concern about this 'incredible' advantage, we would change the degree in which we test," said US Golf Association boss Whan.

"If we saw a trend that was alarming in terms of either how many or how far they were moving

beyond, we would change the way we approach it. But with what we're seeing... the juice wouldn't be worth the squeeze." The testing measures the time a ball spends on a driver club face and that typically grows with wear and use.

"In terms of what happened at the PGA Championship, it made us more committed to not wanting to have this be the topic of the town," Whan said. "When you talk about a rules violation or somebody who's playing with a hot driver, that gets so much more sensational than the reality."

There will be testing this week ahead of the 125th US Open at Oakmont, but it is the least of players' worries compared to the sloped, lightning-fast greens and thick rough on the iconic layout. The rough is already to the point where they are worrying about lost balls.

"We have plenty of spotters," USGA chief championships officer

John Bodenhamer said. "No guarantees we won't lose a golf ball or two, but we're going to do everything we possibly can not to do so."

This year's purse will be the same as last year's payout, the USGA announced, at \$21.5 million overall with \$4.3 million to the winner. Crowds of about 40,000 people a day are expected during the tournament.

Whan also said he met on Tuesday with golf stakeholders such as manufacturers about USGA ball rule changes to pull back distance, saying: "I'm encouraged by the collaborative nature of the discussions."

Whan, a member of the official world golf rankings board, said he was unaware of Saudi-backed LIV Golf submitting a new plan to have its events earn ranking points. "I know there has been dialogue with LIV about the concept of resubmitting," Whan said. "But I don't think that has happened."

Man City's Grealish and Chelsea quartet miss out on Club WC

LONDON (Agencies): Raheem Sterling, Joao Felix, Axel Disasi and Ben Chilwell have been left out of Chelsea's squad for the Fifa Club World Cup, while Jack Grealish has not been selected by Manchester City.

England forward Grealish was expected to miss out, with the 29-year-old having started just seven league games in 2024-25. City's 27-man squad also does not include former captain Kyle Walker, who spent the second half of last season on loan at AC Milan, but features England defender John Stones, who has not played since February with a thigh injury. Chelsea's 28-man group does not feature a quartet which cost them about £179m in transfer fees and all ended last season out on loan. The first edition of the expanded Club World Cup format begins in the United States on Sunday, 15 June (01:00 BST).

Sterling cost £50m when he arrived from Manchester City in 2022, but the 30-year-old England forward spent last season on loan with Arsenal, starting just 13 games and scoring once. Felix made a permanent move to Chelsea last summer for £45m and scored seven goals from 20 appearances before the Portugal forward, 25, ended the campaign on loan at AC Milan.

The Blues paid £38.5m to sign Axel Disasi from Monaco in 2023 and the 27-year-old France defender played 17 games last term before ending the season on loan with Aston Villa. Chilwell was a £45m signing in 2020 and, after just one Chelsea game last term, the England left-back, 28, spent the rest of the season with Crystal Palace, being an unused substitute in the Eagles' FA Cup final win over Manchester City.

Serbia goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic, 25, will not be travelling to the US either, after spending last season on loan with Strasbourg. Chelsea's Club World Cup squad Goalkeepers: Robert Sanchez, Filip Jorgensen, Mike Penders, Gaga Slonina.

Defenders: Marc Cucurella, Tosin Adarabioyo, Benoit Badiashile, Levi Colwill, Mamadou Sarr, Moises Caicedo, Trevoh Chalobah, Reece James, Malo Gusto, Aaron Anselmino, Josh Acheampong. Midfielders: Pedro Neto, Enzo Fernandez, Cole Palmer, Noni Madueke, Dario Essugo, Andrey Santos, Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, Romeo Lavia.

Forwards: Liam Delap, Nicolas Jackson, Christopher Nkunku, Tyrique George, Marc Guiu. Grealish's future is unclear as he

has struggled for regular playing time with Manchester City over the past two seasons. Pep Guardiola's side have also signed midfielders Tijjani Reijnders and Rayan Cherki this week, along with left-back Rayan Ait-Nouri and keeper Marcus Bettinelli, and all will travel to America.

Stones, 31, will return to action despite missing international duty with England over the weekend, and Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, 28, will continue his comeback from an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in September. Academy product James McAtee, 22, will remain at the European Under-21 Championship, where the attacking midfielder is England captain.

Man City's Club World Cup squad Goalkeepers: Ederson, Stefan Ortega, Marcus Bettinelli.

Defenders: Ruben Dias, John Stones, Nathan Ake, Rayan Ait-Nouri, Vitor Reis, Josko Gvardiol, Manuel Akanji, Abdulkodir Khusanov, Rico Lewis.

Midfielders: Tijjani Reijnders, Jeremy Doku, Nico Gonzalez, Rodri, Ilkay Gundogan, Bernardo Silva, Savinho, Matheus Nunes, Rayan Cherki, Phil Foden, Nico O'Reilly. Forwards: Omar Marmoush, Erling Haaland, Claudio Echeverri, Oscar Bobb.





## In brief

### IRSA releases 252,791 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 252,791 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 241,611 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1444.22 feet which was 42.22 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 131,300 cusecs and 150,700 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1164.10 feet, which was 114.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 36,137 cusecs and 27,917 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 182,708, 131,435, 103,553 and 43,610 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 25,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 18,823 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### Six members of gang nabbed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Aabpara and Kirpa police station teams arrested six wanted members of a notorious criminals gang involved in numerous criminal activities and recovered snatched valuables and weapons with ammunition from their possession. An official told APP on Wednesday that the arrested accused were involved in numerous criminal activities in various areas of the city. The accused were identified as Hassan Tariq, Hamad, Ibrahim, Arslan, Azam and Yousaf Khan. Cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq also directed officers for an effective crackdown against the accused involved in heinous criminal activities and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens.

### 18 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police teams from Kohsar, Ramna, Noon, Khanna and Kirpa police stations arrested 12 individuals involved in various criminal activities and recovered narcotics, liquor, and illegal weapons from their possession on Wednesday. A police spokesman told APP that the arrested accused were found with 1,032 grams of heroin, 220 grams of hashish, 135 grams of ice, 10 bottles of liquor, and six pistols along with ammunition. Separate cases have been registered against the suspects and further investigations are underway. He said that, in addition, six absconders were arrested during a special campaign launched for the apprehension of proclaimed offenders and fugitives from justice. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Police has intensified its crackdown on crime and criminal elements to ensure peace and security in the federal capital. He said that the Islamabad Police is fully committed to protecting the lives and property of the citizens, and no individual involved in unlawful activities will be spared.

# Naqvi for unified action among departments to improve public service delivery

ISLAMABAD (APP): An important meeting was held at the Ministry of Interior on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in which the heads of all attached departments of the Ministry participated. On the special directive of Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, a decision was made to enhance mutual cooperation among all subsidiary institutions of the Ministry of Interior.

The interior minister emphasized that mutual cooperation among all departments is extremely

important. He said that all institutions should make full use of each other's capabilities and bring ease to the lives of citizens. He stressed that the timely exchange of information and data was crucial. He further added that officers posted in foreign embassies under various departments can also provide assistance to other institutions of the Ministry. He underlined the importance of making full use of the human resources of all institutions, stating that improved coordination among departments would benefit both the govern-

ment and the public.

Mohsin Naqvi directed that only officers who fulfill merit criteria should be nominated for training courses so that their professional capacity can be enhanced. He instructed all departments to submit their recommendations in this regard. Based on these recommendations, the Federal Secretary Interior will prepare a comprehensive plan and present it to Interior Minister.

Minister of State for Interior Talla Chaudhry, Secretary Interior, Additional Secretaries Interior, and heads of



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi chairing a coordination-focused meeting of all departmental heads. —APP Photo

departments including NADRA, Anti-Narcotics Control, FIA, Frontier

Corps, Constabulary, National Police Academy, National Police Bureau,

Frontier Rangers, Passport and Immigration, National Cyber Crime

Investigation Agency, and Islamabad Police attended the meeting.

## PIMA concerned over 16% reduction in budget

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA) today voiced serious concerns regarding the substantial 16% reduction in the federal health development budget for the fiscal year 2025-26.

This cutback marks one of the lowest regional health budget allocations, with the nation spending less than 0.9% of its GDP on health, a figure starkly lower than both regional and global averages.

Prof. Atif Hafeez Siddiqui, the Central President of PIMA, pointed out that this critical decrease arrives amidst escalating health challenges, potentially hindering essential services including the construction and modernization of hos-

pitals and Basic Health Units (BHUs), as well as medical education, disease monitoring systems, and professional training. While expenditures for salaries and administration are on the rise, investments in crucial healthcare infrastructure and services are being neglected.

Prof. Siddiqui further elaborated on the dual health threats faced by the country, from non-communicable diseases like diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular issues to persistent infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, and HIV/AIDS. He stressed that the reduction in development funding is likely to compromise Pakistan's ability to respond effectively to these health crises and undermine the resilience of

its health systems.

In response to these dire circumstances, the PIMA President has called on the government to urgently revise and increase the health development budget. He emphasized the necessity to bolster healthcare infrastructure and ensure sustained improvements in health outcomes. Additionally, Prof. Siddiqui advocated for prioritizing disease control initiatives and strengthening the education and training of the health workforce to build a more sustainable and robust healthcare system.

The concerns raised by PIMA highlight a critical juncture for Pakistan's healthcare policy, with significant implications for the nation's health security and public well-being.

## Governor Kundi lauds Hungarian Envoy's role in strengthening ties

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday received outgoing Ambassador of Hungary to Pakistan, Bela Fazekas, during a farewell meeting.

The Governor welcomed the ambassador while giving a bouquet, and lauded his role in strengthening bilateral relations between Pakistan and Hungary during his tenure.

Governor Kundi highlighted Ambassador Fazekas efforts as instrumental in fostering mutual cooperation and deepening diplomatic ties between the two countries.

He commended the ambassador's dedication and goodwill toward Pakistan.

In response, Ambassador Fazekas expressed heartfelt gratitude for the affection and respect he received in Pakistan, calling the love of its people unforgettable.

He particularly lauded the traditional hospitality of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, noting it as a true reflection of the province's rich cultural heritage.

## ICT Police kick off summer camp 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police inaugurated the Summer Camp 2025 at Police Lines Headquarters on Wednesday.

An official told APP that Additional Inspector General (AIG) Logistics Abdul Haq Umrani formally inaugurated the summer camp, which aims to strengthen the concept of community policing through meaningful engagement with children. He said that children are the future of the nation, and such recreational and educational activities play a key role in their mental and physical development.

He said that the consistent organization of the summer camp every year reflects the growing public trust in the Islamabad Police. He said that professional coaches have been appointed to train participating children in sports like football and golf.

He said that the camp also includes activities such as swimming, horse riding, martial arts, gymnastics, archery, and obstacle courses. In addition to physical activities, children are educated on their own safety and security, first aid, and traffic rules.

He said these activities not only encourage healthy competition among children but also build self-confidence and discipline.

He said the summer camp helps children improve their physical and mental capabilities while offering them an opportunity to explore life beyond their home environment.

He said Islamabad Police has been organizing the summer camp annually since 2002. He said that children between the ages of 4 and 12 are eligible to participate in the police summer camp.

## Gilani approves summer internship Program 2025 for students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, has formally approved the launch of the Summer Internship Program 2025 in the Senate of Pakistan for 21 university students.

The program, beginning June 16, 2025, will run for eight weeks and will include selected students from the Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology (FAST), National University of Modern Languages (NUML) and the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST).

Part of the Senate's flagship Outreach Program, the initiative aims to provide young graduates in social

sciences and technology with firsthand exposure to the legislative and administrative workings of the Senate, particularly during the federal budget session.

Prior to commencement, the participants will undergo a two-day orientation at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS), focusing on the Constitution of Pakistan and the procedures of the Senate, its Secretariat, and Standing Committees.

This internship follows earlier successful cohorts, including 20 students from Quaid-i-Azam University, National Defence University, Bahria University and NUST (June–August 2022) and 18

students from seven Islamabad-based schools (July–August 2024).

Since assuming office in March 2024, the Chairman has actively advanced the inclusivity of the legislative process through an expanded unpaid internship program, which has so far engaged 426 students from various universities across the country.

As part of this inclusive vision, the Senate Secretariat also plans to launch a second-phase internship program tailored to A- and O-Level students in Islamabad, further widening access for Pakistan's youth to understand and contribute to democratic governance.

## Dr. Riina meets Minister Qaiser Sheikh to strengthen economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): The European Union's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka, called on Federal Minister for Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, in his office on Wednesday to discuss enhancing bilateral economic relations and fostering investment opportunities between the EU and Pakistan.

Ms. Ambreen Ifthikhar, Additional Secretary, Mr. Mahmood Tufail, DG and Mr. Irfanullah Marwat from BOI while Mr. Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation and Mr. Husnain Ifthikhar, Senior Trade Advisor from EU Delegation were also present in the meeting.

The Minister appreciated the EU's longstanding support to Pakistan's economic development and highlighted the Government's resolve on bringing macroeconomic stability and improving major economic indicators such as fiscal balance, stock exchange performance and investment climate.

Discussions were held on further strengthening the EU–Pakistan Economic & Business Relations and establishment of the EU–Pakistan Business Network, which engages over 400 EU companies operating across various sectors in Pakistan.

The EU delegation expressed interest in scaling up this platform and informed that key dates for upcoming Business forum/investment sessions will be announced in the near future after consultation with EU Headquarters.

Mr. Jerome Willems introduced the EU's 25 Champion Companies initiative—a program aimed at supporting 25 high-potential EU enterprises in Pakistan that align with sustainable development, innovation, and inclusivity.

A strategic dialogue was held around Pakistan's efforts to position itself as a leading market for global investment, in line with EU's broader goals. The Ambassador informed that EU's contribution to global external FDI flows is 40%, of the total global FDI and Pakistan can avail a lot from

this EU investment window through policy consistency and improved investment climate. The Minister welcomed the EU Green Deal and expressed strong interest in aligning Pakistan's export sectors with EU Green Zero targets. Ambassador Kionka stressed that Pakistan's alignment with green standards would make its exports more accessible to EU markets.

Additional Secretary, BOI, Ms. Ambreen Ifthikhar, highlighted the progress made in respect of Regulatory Reforms, Asaan Karobar Legislation and sought more regular engagement and partnership with EU in SMEs, Gender Lens Investments and Startups.

The Minister emphasized on how these reforms are directly contributing to an improved business climate in Pakistan and urged EU side to avail investment opportunities in SEZs in Pakistan. Ambassador Kionka praised these efforts and stressed that regulatory efficiency is a key determinant in EU investment decisions.

## KPK's natural beauty beckons 700,000 tourists: DG

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Habibullah Arif Wednesday

reported a significant influx of tourists during the 3-day Eid ul Azha break, with approximately 700,000 visitors flocking to popular destinations of KPK like Galyat, Swat and Chitral.

"We are thrilled to see such a massive response from tourists," said DG Arif while in an exclusive talk with a private news channel.

"KPK's breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage and warm hospitality have made it a top destination for tourists this year," he added.

He added that Galyat witnessed 177,000 tourists, Swat received 288,000 tourists, and Chitral and

Upper Dir collectively attracted 100,000 tourists during Eid.

When asked about the most popular tourist spots in KPK, DG Arif mentioned, "Galyat, Swat, Chitral, Naran-Kaghan and Malam Jabba were among the top attractions."

Tourists flocked to these destinations to experience the region's stunning natural beauty, adventure activities, and cultural richness," he mentioned.

He further added, "We are committed to promoting sustainable tourism in KPK and ensuring that our visitors have a memorable experience. We will continue to improve our infrastructure, services and facilities to cater to the growing number of tourists."

The DG expressed optimism about KPK's tourism

potential, saying, "With its unparalleled natural beauty, rich cultural heritage and warm hospitality, KPK has the potential to become a world-class tourist destination. We invite tourists from all over the world to experience the beauty of KPK."

Regarding tourist facilities, DG Arif said, Within our available resources, we are providing quality food to tourists. We are also working to establish a mechanism to control prices of food and hotels, ensuring that tourists have a comfortable and affordable stay in KPK.

"We are also identifying various hidden spots and arranging camping activities to promote adventure tourism and showcase the province's untouched beauty," he added.

## Meeting held to review dengue preventive campaign

RAWALPINDI (APP): A meeting was held to review dengue preventive campaign, with DC Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema in the chair.

The meeting was briefed that under indoor surveillance, 3,089,679 houses have been checked in Rawalpindi district since January 1, out of which dengue larvae were found in 13,250 houses. According to outdoor reports, 741,526 locations were inspected, with larvae detected at 3,067 sites. Regarding punitive actions to curb dengue spread in 2025, a total of 571 FIRs have been registered, 442 sites sealed, 1,848 fines issued, and penalties worth Rs. 1,084,000 imposed. Deputy Commissioner directed all institutions to work with teamwork and responsibility to make the anti-dengue campaign more effective. He stated that protecting public lives is the government's top priority, and all possible efforts will be made to control dengue.

He instructed the Health Department to further improve surveillance and punitive actions and accelerate awareness campaigns to educate the public.

He further directed that if larvae are found at any location, it must remain sealed for at least three days before being reopened.



ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the FBR Review Committee was held today under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. —APP Photo



One dead in traffic accident

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): One person was killed and six others were injured as a result of a traffic accident in northern Baghlan province, police said on Wednesday. In a statement, the police headquarters wrote the accident took place when a corolla-type vehicle veered off the road and overturned in Shar-e-Naw area of Pul-i-Khumri city on Tuesday. The injured were evacuated to the Baghlan provincial hospital for treatment, the statement added.

Youth visitors arrested

KABUL (Pajhwok): A group of youths has been arrested in Nuristan after arriving with weapons and engaging in aerial gunfire on Wednesday. A group of young men had traveled to Nuristan province on Tuesday with firearms. The individuals engaged in aerial firing and acts of public disorder, and were subsequently disarmed and arrested by the Department of Vice and Virtue and Complaints, in coordination with the provincial police headquarters.

Over 400 prisoners transferred from Iran

KABUL (TOLONews): Over the past year, more than 400 Afghan prisoners who had been sentenced to imprisonment in Iran have been transferred to Afghanistan in two separate rounds. The spokesperson for the Prison Affairs Administration stated that the transferred prisoners are receiving all necessary services, including the right to meet with their families. Mohammad Nasim Lalahand, spokesperson for the Prison Affairs Administration, told TOLONews: “408 individuals have been handed over. The Prison Affairs Administration has provided all necessary

facilities for them.” Meanwhile, Suhail Shaheen, the acting ambassador of the Islamic Emirate in Qatar, reported that thirteen Afghan citizens are currently imprisoned in Qatar. He also spoke of efforts to address the challenges faced by these detainees. The acting ambassador of the Islamic Emirate in Qatar told TOLONews: “There are a total of thirteen Afghan prisoners in Qatar. Last week, the consul of the Islamic Emirate and I, along with the head of prisoners’ affairs, visited the central prison of Qatar. We listened to their concerns and shared

them with the responsible authorities.” Military affairs expert Hadi Quraishi told TOLONews: “According to UN conventions and mutual agreements between Afghanistan and countries where Afghans are imprisoned, detainees should be transferred to Afghanistan and their cases handed over to Afghan authorities.” Previously, on April 17 of this year, the Prison Affairs Administration had reported that nearly 200 Afghan citizens, who had been sentenced in Iran to medium- and long-term prison terms, had been handed over to Afghanistan.

Afghan team meets Russia’s Minister

KAZAN (Ariana News): A delegation from the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Emirate met on Wednesday with Andrey Korneev, the Deputy Minister of Education of the Russian Federation, in Kazan city. In a statement issued by the Afghan education ministry Korneev expressed his country’s full readiness to cooperate in the field of education and training in Afghanistan. He said Russia wants to take practical steps to become one of the leading supporters of Afghanistan’s education system. According to the statement, the IEA delegation also visited the Museum of History and Culture of Kazan, the historic Kul Sharif Mosque, the Kaban Lake area, and the Kazan Kremlin Palace during their visit.

First group of Afghan pilgrims returns to Kabul

KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs has announced the first group of 346 pilgrims returned to Kabul from Saudi Arabia on Wednesday after performing the Hajj rituals. This year, around 30,000 Afghan pilgrims traveled to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj. According to a statement from the ministry, these returning pilgrims are from the provinces of Kabul and Laghman. The statement added that the process of bringing home the 30,000 Afghan pilgrims who went to Saudi Arabia for Hajj has now begun.



42 million afs fiber optic project launched in Herat



HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Practical work on a 45-kilometre fiber-optic project worth 42 million afghanis has been launched in western Herat province, an official said on Wednesday. Officials say the project was initiated in Karokh district and in the first phase, 45 kilometers would be completed. At the opening ceremony, Hafiz Khairullah Khairkhwa, Head of Telecommunications and

Information Technology, said totally the project valued 42 million afghanis, which would be paid by the Afghan Telecom telecommunications company. According to Khairkhwa, the project would be implemented under the direct supervision of Telecommunications Department. The fiber optic connection has started from Karokh district and its goal is to connect Herat provi-

nce through Badghis to the northern provinces of the country, which will pave the way for the completion of Afghanistan’s national fiber optic ring. The project would not only increase the scope of internet services, but would also prove an important step in strengthening communication infrastructure, reducing internet prices, and achieving the national goal of digitizing the country.

Afghanistan records surge in domestic tourism over Eid

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan witnessed a remarkable increase in domestic tourism during the Eid al-Adha holidays, as thousands of citizens traveled to scenic and cultural destinations across various provinces. According to the Paktia Provincial Media Office, more than 350,000 tourists visited the Spina Shaga recreational park in Zazi Aryob district during the Eid celebrations. The park, now considered one of the most popular leisure destinations in southeastern Afghanistan, has been contracted to a private company that has significantly enhanced the site’s infrastructure and services. The company reports

that the area has been equipped with over 2,000 tents, dedicated seating areas, 24-hour telecommunications and electricity, a reliable water supply system, two large hotels, as well as ice cream parlors, coffee shops, and a variety of restaurants. These developments played a key role in attracting large crowds during the holiday period. At the same time, the central province of Bamiyan hosted approximately 40,000 domestic and international visitors over the three days of Eid. According to the Directorate of Information and Culture in Bamiyan, about 4,000 tourists also toured the province’s historic and archaeological

sites, which continue to draw cultural tourism to the region. Bamiyan officials noted that efforts are underway to further improve tourism infrastructure and accessibility in order to strengthen the local tourism industry. With its breathtaking natural landscapes and ancient heritage sites, Bamiyan remains one of Afghanistan’s most attractive and culturally significant destinations. The surge in domestic travel during Eid underscores the growing public interest in local tourism and the potential for this sector to contribute to economic development and cultural exchange across the country.

Afghanistan face landmine threat: HALO

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Hazardous Area Life-support Organisation (HALO Trust) has highlighted that Afghanistan remains one of the world’s most landmine-contaminated countries, with 6.4 million people currently at risk from explosives. The HALO Trust stated: “Afghanistan is one of the world’s most landmine-contaminated countries, with 6.4 million Afghans currently at risk from explosives.” Dr. Farid Homayoun, HALO’s programme manager for Afghanistan, urged the international community to continue its support, warning that the issue risks becoming “a forgotten humanitarian problem.”

Since 1988, HALO has cleared over 1,400 square kilometers of land, returning it safely to communities. Their work, which includes clearance, risk education, and other activities, has benefited more than 17 million people. The Organisation says that every month, around 50 people in Afghanistan are killed or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnance, with 80 percent of the victims being children.

Minister visit university

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Zia-ur-Rahman Al-Aryubi, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education of Afghanistan, visited Kazan National Research and Technical University and Kazan Federal University during the 3rd World Forum of Ministers of Higher Education and Education. University officials expressed their commitment to signing cooperation agreements with Afghanistan universities. The agreements aim to strengthen scientific and research relations, establish joint educational programs, and ensure high-quality academic standards.

Wakhan Road construction to finish by year-end

KABUL (TOLONews): Gravel work on phases one and two of the Wakhan Road project is expected to be completed by the end of this solar year. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, while rejecting any challenges to the project, emphasized that the Islamic Emirate is committed to completing it. The Wakhan Road project, spanning 120 kilometers, is considered one of the most significant infrastructure initiatives that has received serious attention since the return of the Islamic Emirate to power. Noorulhadi Adel, spokesperson for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, stated:

“There are no problems with the Wakhan-Badakhshan road project, which connects to China. The work is progressing smoothly and regularly.” Economic experts say that completing this project will not only enhance trade relations between Kabul and Beijing but also pave the way for direct exports to China. Abdul Zahoor Modaber, an economic analyst, said: “If the Wakhan road is utilized properly, Afghanistan’s dependency on neighboring countries will decrease. It will link the country to major markets like China and through that, to Europe. This would elevate Afghanistan’s trade to a global level, and

the corridor would hold strategic importance in the country’s commercial relations.” Mir Shaker Yaqoubi, another economic expert, said: “It is beneficial for us to establish relations with China, and if the Wakhan road is completed sooner, we can export and import goods to and from China in the simplest way. This would benefit both Afghanistan and China.” Previously, the Chinese ambassador in Kabul had stated that China aims to contribute to Afghanistan’s economic development through joint infrastructure projects — a move that could significantly expand economic ties between the two countries.

Youth drowns in Logar dam

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): A 28-year-old man drowned in a dam in central Logar and lost his life, police said on Wednesday. The police spokesman Maulvi Ahmadullah Anas told Pajhwok Afghan News the young victim drowned while swimming in Sorkhab dam of Mohammad Agha district on Tuesday. He said the victim’s dead body was pulled out from water by Logar police personnel and a special team from Kabul and handed over to his family last night. Anas asked local residents and tourists from other provinces to avoid swimming in the dam. Last year, similar incidents occurred in Pul-e-Alam, the capital of Logar, and Baraki Barak district.

Herat girls revive ancient miniature and illumination arts

HERAT (TOLONews): A group of young female artists in Herat are striving to preserve and expand the historical arts of miniature painting and illumination from the Herat school. According to these girls, these delicate art forms are part of the country’s history and cultural identity, and they are committed to keeping the Herat artistic tradition alive. After being deprived of formal education, these girls have turned to learning miniature and illumination arts. These two art forms are considered the foundational pillars of the Herat school of art. Arezo Mohandeszada, an art student, told TOLONews in Herat: “We want to expand and develop the ancient Herat-style arts of illumination and miniature with the cooperation of our teachers, fellow students, and colleagues.” These arts require precision and delicacy. These young female artists work patiently for days and even weeks on each piece of their artistic creations. Farsila Noorzai, another



art student in Herat, said: “This art requires attention to fine detail and takes a lot of time, but when I work on miniature and illumination art, I never feel tired.” Mona Ziaee is another girl determined to keep these two arts alive. She told TOLONews: “Miniature is an art of delicacy and has a history of several hundred years. That’s why I wanted to learn it.”

Local officials in Herat pledge that they support artists to help the growth of the country’s traditional arts. Hamidullah Ghiyasi, head of culture and arts at the Herat Department of Information and Culture, said: “The Department of Information and Culture of Herat Province, in cooperation with artists—especially in the field of illumina-

tion and miniature—and in partnership with cultural institutions and art galleries, has managed to establish strong connections.” Miniature and illumination are considered vital parts of the Herat school of art. This school, founded by Master Kamal-ud-Din Behzad during the Timurid era, has a history of more than 600 years.

Free education app ‘Darakht-e-Danesh’ launches on App Store

KABUL (Khaama Press): The new Darakht-e-Danesh app offers free, offline educational resources in multiple languages for learners in Afghanistan and beyond. A newly launched free application, “Darakht-e Danesh”, is now available on the App Store, offering users broad and easy access to educational resources. The app aims to empower students, teachers, and lifelong learners across Afghanistan and beyond. This educational platform provides over 8,000 resources in 127 different subjects, making it one of the most comprehensive multilingual learning apps in the region. The content is available in Persian (Dari), Pashto, English, Uzbeki, Nuristani, Shughni, Pashai, Sawi, Munji, and Balochi—catering to Afghanistan’s diverse linguistic communities. The app includes a wide range of books, guides, articles, and educational materials. It is specifically designed to support both classroom teaching and self-guided learning, helping improve literacy and general knowledge throughout the country. One of the standout features of “Darakht-e Danesh” is its offline accessibility. Once users download the content, they can access the materials without an internet connection—addressing a major challenge in regions with limited connectivity. Users can search for the application under the title “Darakht-e Danesh Library” on the App Store.

2,650 enmities resolved through jirgas in 4 years

KABUL (Pajhwok): Since the Islamic Emirate’s return to power about four years ago, 2,650 enmities among families have been resolved through jirgas and mediation across the country, something analysts consider an important step towards establishing social stability and eliminating hatred. Resolving conflicts through jirgas in Afghanistan has a long history, but still long-standing and bloody hostilities in some areas remain, putting at risk the lives of the parties involved. Mufti Taslimullah Haqqani, the head of information and public relations at the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs, told Pajhwok Afghan News that since the Islamic Emirate’s return, 1,200 major and 1,450 minor conflicts had been resolved through jirgas across the country. He said these conflicts had claimed hundreds of lives and caused injuries to many besides millions of dollars in financial losses, but in cooperation with the provincial departments of the ministry,

religious scholars and tribal elders had been able to resolve these cases. Haqqani mentioned two such hostilities in Ghor and Nuristan provinces that lasted for a hundred years and claimed dozens of lives. He said no force was used in resolving conflicts between people, but they were solved with the consent of the parties involved. He said most of the time people themselves approached them to make peace between them. He said currently, people in the center and provinces had shared hundreds of conflicts with them and had requested their resolution. Religious and social perspectives Noorullah Kausar, a member of the Academy of Sciences and a religious scholar, said peace was a fundamental commandment of Islam and anyone who makes peace between Muslims will receive a great reward. He added: “Islam is a religion of peace, brotherhood and sisterhood. It is not permissible for a Muslim to have a dispute, fight or claim with

another Muslim under any circumstances; because this is a prohibited and illegitimate act in Islam. Islam seeks peace.” He said that if disputes between people were not resolved, it could have a negative impact on social life and unity among Muslims. According to him, the government has a responsibility to make peace between people, resolve disputes and prevent bad customs so that a healthy atmosphere is created between people. People’s experiences Jamil and Mohammad Wali, residents of Musa Khel district in Khost province ended their 50-year-old enmity over land, in which one person had been killed. The conflict was resolved through a Jirga last year. Jamil said life in enmity was difficult and bitter and that he was happy that his difficult life had come to an end. Mohammad Wali said they endured many problems during the enmity. Analyst: Resolving disputes through jirgas leads to lasting peace

Legal expert Abdul Shakoor Dadras says it is good process to resolve disputes through Jirga because accepting the jirga’s decisions means resolving the enmity forever. He also added that for many years, the courts in Afghanistan had not been able to resolve such disputes. He said cases in courts remained unaddressed for months, while people wanted their problems to be resolved quickly, therefore they considered it necessary to approach tribal elders and resolve their disputes. He said the courts should also be more active in this regard because they had great authority and should try to resolve disputes between people in a timely manner. According to him, jirgas which resolve disputes should obtain written documents from the parties involved and carry out this peace process in cooperation with the courts. He said conflicts could be prevented forever when the government was strong and its judicial system was fair,

and the causes of conflicts were eliminated. The social importance of jirgas Analyst Moin Gul Chamkani said Afghanistan has a unique culture where jirgas were historically held to resolve small and big disputes. “Jirgas have solved people’s problems and the society runs on these jirgas.” He said when a dispute reaches the court, they first tell him to go and resolve the problem through the Jirga. According to him, Jirga gives good results if no personal interest is involved. Chamkani said the Islamic Emirate should find solutions to difficult issues. He said one of the benefits of resolving disputes through the Jirga is was that the hatred was buried forever and the government’s efforts in resolving disputes lead to reducing the gap between the people and the government and social stability. He urged the government to pay more attention to the process of resolving disputes between people and to strengthen this process.

Lajward Ahmadzai, a tribal elder in Kabul who has spent about 25 years in jirgas, considers the role of jirgas important in resolving conflicts and says that members of jirgas take into account all Islamic and cultural issues in their decisions and make reconciliations based on them. He said: “After the return of the Islamic Emirate to power, some things in jirgas have been banned. Previously, jirgas had a different form. Long ago, in rural areas, when someone committed a murder, jirgas would give women in exchange for the murder and now this thing has been banned.” He added that with the arrival of the Islamic Emirate, jirgas had increased and most people resolved their disputes through the forums. Resolving disputes through jirgas has been a tradition in Afghanistan since ancient times, but this tradition has become even stronger with the advent of the Islamic Emirate.



# Trump says China deal ‘done’, Beijing to supply rare earths

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump touted ties with China as "excellent" on Wednesday, saying the superpowers reached a deal after two days of talks aimed at preserving a truce in their damaging trade war. Trump said on his Truth Social platform that China would supply rare earth minerals and magnets — vital elements for US industries — while Washington would allow Chinese students to remain in US universities.

His post came hours after top US and Chinese negotiators announced a "framework" agreement late Tuesday following two days of marathon talks in London. "Our deal with China is done," Trump wrote, adding that the agreement was still "subject to final approval with President Xi (Jinping) and me."

"President Xi and I are going to work closely together to open up China to American Trade," he said in a second post. "This would be a great WIN for both countries!!!" US stock markets showed little enthusiasm despite Trump's latest statements, with the broad-based S&P 500 and the Dow flat while the tech-heavy Nasdaq edged higher in morning deals.

The two sides had agreed to reduce their tit-for-tat, triple-digit tariffs during talks in Geneva last month, but cracks appeared in the detente after Trump accused China of violating the deal. Washington was concerned at slower supplies of rare earths after Beijing in early April began requiring domestic exporters to apply for a license — widely seen as a response to US tariffs.

Rare earths are used in everything from electric vehicles to hard drives, wind turbines and missiles. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said in London on Tuesday that US measures imposed when rare earths "were not coming" would likely be relaxed once Beijing moved forward with more license approvals. In his Truth Social post, Trump said China will supply "full magnets, and any necessary rare earths... up front."

## Musk says some of his posts about Trump ‘went too far’

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Billionaire businessman Elon Musk said on Wednesday he regretted some of the posts he made last week about U.S. President Donald Trump as they had gone "too far". Trump said on Saturday his relationship with Musk was over after they exchanged insults on social media, with the Tesla and SpaceX CEO describing the president's sweeping tax and spending bill as a "disgusting abomination."

Musk has since deleted some posts critical of Trump, including one signaling support for impeaching the president, and sources close to the world's richest man say his anger has started to subside and he may want to repair the relationship. "I regret some of my posts about President Donald Trump last week. They went too far," Musk wrote in a post on his social media platform X on Wednesday, without saying which specific posts he was talking about. Tesla shares in Frankfurt rose 2.7% after Musk's post. Musk bankrolled a large part of Trump's 2024 presidential campaign, spending nearly \$300 million in last year's U.S. elections and taking credit for Republicans retaining a majority of seats in the House and retaking a majority in the Senate.

Trump then named him to head an effort to downsize the federal workforce and slash spending. Musk left the role late last month after criticizing Trump's marquee tax bill, calling it too expensive and a measure that would undermine his work at the Department of Government Efficiency. Declaring their relationship over on Saturday, Trump said there would be "serious consequences" if Musk decided to fund U.S. Democrats running against Republicans who vote for the tax and spending bill. Trump also said he had no intention of repairing ties with Musk. On Monday, Trump said he would not have a problem if Musk called and that he had no plans to discontinue the Starlink satellite internet provided to the White House by Musk's SpaceX but might move his Tesla off-site. "We had a good relationship, and I just wish him well," Trump said. Musk responded with a heart emoji to a video on X showing Trump's remarks.

Washington has infuriated Beijing by vowing to revoke the visas of Chinese students — a major source of revenue for US universities. On Wednesday, Trump said: "We will provide to China what was agreed to, including Chinese students using our colleges and universities." The US president also said that under the deal, the United States would apply 55% tariffs on Chinese goods — a combination of his 30% additional levies and the rough average of pre-existing duties, a White House official said.

He said Beijing would charge 10% duties on US goods. The rates are the same as those that were previously agreed in the truce, which brought US

tariffs down from 145% and those imposed by China from 125%. In a Chinese state media readout of the talks released Wednesday, Vice Premier He Lifeng, who headed Beijing's team in London, stressed the need for the two sides to strengthen cooperation in future dialogue.

"As a next step, the two sides should... continuously enhance consensus, reduce misunderstandings and strengthen cooperation," He Lifeng said, according to state broadcaster CCTV. Speaking to reporters in London, China International Trade Representative Li Chenggang said: "Our communication has been very professional, rational, in-depth and candid."



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar called on Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

## Minister visits Naval HQs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar, visited Naval Headquarters, Islamabad, and called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

During the meeting, contemporary maritime issues and Pakistan Navy's role in regional maritime security and Indian Ocean Region were discussed. Both dignitaries also deliberated on the prospects of maritime economy and its significance for overall economic growth of the country. The Federal Minister appreciated Pakistan Navy's role in the promotion and development of Pakistan's maritime sector.

Later, a comprehensive briefing was given to the Minister on Pakistan's maritime interests, challenges, opportunities, and the initiatives undertaken by Pakistan Navy in coordination with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs. The dignitary was also apprised of the preparations for upcoming 2nd edition of Pakistan International Maritime Expo and Conference (PIMEC-2025), and its vital role in enhancing maritime awareness and promoting the Blue Economy as a driver of Pakistan's future economic growth.

## Sardar Liaquat appointed

AJK HC CJ

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Acting Chief Justice (CJ) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) High Court Justice Sardar Liaquat Hussain has been appointed as permanent CJ of the AJK High Court, says an official notification issued in the State Metropolis on Wednesday.

Justice Sardar Liaquat Hussain, the most senior judge of the AJK High Court, was earlier performing as Acting Chief Justice of the AJK High Court. He had taken over the charge of the office as Acting Chief Justice of the AJK HC on Tuesday after taking the oath of his office on June 09, 2025.

## Finance Bill 2025-26 laid before Senate

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Tuesday laid the Finance Bill 2025 before the Senate, in accordance with Article 73 of the Constitution, seeking recommendations from the upper house.

The Finance Bill, which outlines key fiscal proposals and policy measures for the upcoming financial year, was formally submitted for the Senate's review and feedback. Speaking during the session, the finance minister invited senators to present their recommendations on the bill, which will subsequently be forwarded to the National Assembly for consideration.

Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani called on members to submit their recommendations on the Finance Bill 2025, including the annual budget statement, by 5:00 PM on Thursday, June 12. No recommendations will be entertained after the deadline. A formal report is also to be submitted to the relevant standing committee.

As per the procedure, budget proposals in the Finance Bill will be referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, while recommendations related to the PSDP will be examined by the Standing Committee.

# Iran threatens to strike US bases

TEHRAN: Iran's defence minister has said his country would target US military bases in the region if conflict breaks out with the United States, as President Donald Trump said he was losing confidence that a nuclear deal would be agreed.

Washington and Tehran have held five rounds of talks since April as Trump seeks an agreement that would place constraints on Iran's uranium enrichment. He has threatened to attack Iran if no deal can be agreed. Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh said on Wednesday that Iran would target US military bases in the region if the US attacked it first.

"Some officials on the other side threaten conflict if negotiations don't come to fruition. If a conflict is imposed on us ... all US bases are within our reach and we will boldly target them in host countries," Nasirzadeh told reporters, the Reuters news agency reported. The sixth round of talks is expected later this week, with Trump saying they will take place on Thursday, and Tehran saying they will be held on Sunday in Oman.

Trump said that he was growing less confident that a nuclear deal would be reached, in comments in a podcast released on Wednesday. "I don't know," the US leader told the podcast Pod Force One on Monday, when asked whether he thought he could strike a deal with Iran. "I'm less confident now than I would have been a couple of months ago. Something happened to them, but I am much less confident of a deal being made," he said.

Trump repeated the US position that Iran would be stopped from developing a nuclear bomb, regardless of whether a deal was reached. "But it would be nicer to do it without warfare, without people dying, it's so much nicer to do it," he told the podcast. "But I don't think I see the same level of enthusiasm for them to make a deal."

Iran insists that its nuclear programme is purely for civilian purposes, but Western powers have long expressed fear that Tehran intends to develop a nuclear weapon. In the next round of talks, Iran is expected to deliver its counter to a previous US offer that was rejected by Tehran. The global nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is currently meeting in Vienna, where it is poised to vote on a resolution to censure Iran over accusations it has failed to comply with nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

Iran has promised a "proportionate" response to any action against it by the watchdog or Western powers. Russia has also called for greater efforts to find a resolution to the nuclear issue. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who oversees arms control and US relations, said on Wednesday that Moscow could provide practical help to strike a solution, offering that Russia could remove nuclear material from Iran to be converted into civilian reactor fuel.

"We are ready to provide assistance to both Washington and Tehran, not only politically, not only in the form of ideas that could be of use in the negotiation process, but also practically," Ryabkov told reporters, according to Reuters. Iran's

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also weighed in on the impending talks, stressing that Iran did not wish to develop nuclear weapons, and calling for the continuation of its enrichment programme under the supervision of the IAEA.

President Trump entered office saying that Iran should not have nuclear weapons. That is actually in line with our own doctrine and could become the main foundation for a deal," Araghchi wrote on X. "As we resume talks on Sunday, it is clear that an agreement that can ensure the continued peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program is within reach — and could be achieved rapidly," he wrote.

"That mutually beneficial outcome relies on the continuation of Iran's enrichment program, under the full supervision of the IAEA, and the effective termination of sanctions." Another major sticking point in the talks has been Iran's missile programme, which would be used in the delivery of any nuclear weapon. Nasirzadeh also said on Wednesday that Iran had successfully tested a missile carrying a 2,000kg (4,410lb) warhead last week. He did not specify whether this was a variant of the Khorramshahr ballistic missile — Iran's longest-range projectile that can travel over 2,000km (1,240 miles) — or a new model, or provide further details about the missile. During his first White House term from 2017-2021, Trump pulled the US out of a 2015 deal between Iran and world powers that placed limits on Tehran's uranium enrichment drive in exchange for relief from sanctions. — Aljazeera

## Three killed in fire at Iran chemical plant

TEHRAN: At least three people have been killed and two others admitted to hospital after a welding accident led to an explosion and fire at a chemical factory in Iran, officials say. The accident occurred shortly after 11am local time (07:30 GMT) on Wednesday in a methanol storage unit at the Kaveh Petrochemical Company in Bandar Deyr, a city in the southern Bushehr province, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported.

A fire broke out after welding on a barge at the site ignited an explosion, Kourosh Dehghani, the provincial head of the crisis management organisation, told Iranian state television. He said firefighters had contained the blaze and were now working to cool the site. No further casualties were expected, he added.

Footage from the blaze carried on state media showed large clouds of thick black smoke rising from the site, as firefighting units trained their hoses on the fire. The chemical plant, situated on a 200-hectare (494-acre) site in the Gulf region, is a key producer of methanol, making up to 2.3 million tonnes of the highly flammable chemical each year, according to its website. — Aljazeera

## JCP convenes meeting on 19th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A crucial meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) has been scheduled for June 19 at 2pm in the Supreme Court building, Islamabad. The agenda includes the extension of tenure for Supreme Court constitutional benches.

The commission will also review the criteria for evaluating the annual performance of High Court judges. Additionally, a policy decision is expected under Article 175A of the Constitution. On April 11, the JCP appointed Justice Ali Baqar Najafi of the Lahore High Court as a judge of the Supreme Court.

The JCP meeting, chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, approved the appointment of one additional judge to the Supreme Court. The decision to appoint Justice Ali Baqar Najafi to the Supreme Court was made by majority vote.

## 49 dead in South Africa flooding

CAPE TOWN: At least 49 people have died in heavy flooding in South Africa's Eastern Cape province after an extreme cold front brought torrential rain and blanketed snow in parts of the country, officials said. Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane said on Wednesday that the death toll, provided by police, is expected to rise as authorities continue to search for the missing.

"As we speak here, other bodies are being discovered," Mabuyane told reporters at a briefing. In one tragic incident, authorities reported the deaths of six high school students who were washed away on Tuesday when their school bus was caught in floodwaters near a river. Four other students were among the missing, Mabuyane said.

Authorities found the school bus earlier Wednesday, but it was empty. Three of the students were rescued on Tuesday when they were found clinging to trees, the provincial government said. Disaster response teams have been activated in Eastern Cape province and the neighbouring KwaZulu-Natal province after torrential rain hit parts of southern and eastern South Africa over the weekend. Power outages have affected hundreds of thousands of homes, authorities said. — Aljazeera

# 55,000 Palestinians killed in Gaza war

DEIR AL-BALAH (AP): The Palestinian death toll from the 20-month Israel-Hamas war has climbed past 55,000, the Gaza Health Ministry said Wednesday. The ministry doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants, but has said that women and children make up more than half the dead.

It's a grim milestone in the war that began with Hamas' attack into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and shows no sign of ending. Israel says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas, accusing the militants of hiding among civilians, because they operate in populated areas. The ministry says 55,104 people have been killed since the start of the war and 127,394 wounded. Many more are believed to be buried under the rubble or in areas that are inaccessible to local medics.

Israeli forces have destroyed vast areas of Gaza, displaced about 90 percent of its population and in recent weeks have transformed more than half of the coastal territory into a military buffer zone that includes the now mostly uninhabited southern city of Rafah. A 2½-month blockade imposed by Israel when it ended a ceasefire with Hamas raised fears of famine and was slightly eased in May. The launch of a new Israeli- and US-backed aid system has been marred by chaos and violence, and the UN says it has struggled to bring in food because of Israeli restrictions, a breakdown of law and order, and widespread looting.

Israel accuses Hamas of siphoning off aid, but the UN and aid groups deny there is any systematic diversion of aid to militants. Hamas has suffered major setbacks militarily, and Israel says it has killed more than 20,000 militants, without providing evidence. The militants still hold 55 hostages — less than half of them believed to be alive — and control areas outside of military zones despite facing rare protests earlier this year.

The war began when Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the Oct. 7 attack and abducted 251 hostages. More than half the captives have been released in ceasefires or other deals. Israeli forces have rescued eight and recovered the remains of dozens more. Israel's military campaign, one of the deadliest and most destructive since World War II, has transformed large parts of cities into mounds of rubble. Hundreds of

thousands of people are living in squalid tent camps and unused schools, and the health system has been gutted, even as it copes with waves of wounded from Israeli strikes.

Meanwhile, an Israeli court ruled to keep in detention eight pro-Palestine activists who were arrested this week by the Israeli navy aboard the Madleen ship, which was bound for Gaza. The British-flagged vessel, operated by the pro-Palestinian Freedom Flotilla Coalition, had 11 activists and a journalist on board, including the Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who was carrying aid for Palestinians in Gaza as an act of solidarity amid the Israeli attacks.

Israel released Thunberg on Tuesday following pressure from European governments. However, eight activists from Türkiye, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Brazil remain in the Ramla detention center, according to the Wafa news agency and lawyers from the Haifa-based Adalah legal center.

On Wednesday, an Israeli court rejected the appeals made by Adalah's lawyers to release the eight activists and ruled to keep them in custody. The activists are Suayb Ordu from Türkiye; Mark van Rins from the Netherlands; Pascal Moreras, Riva Fiard, member of the European Parliament Rima Hassan, Yanis Mohammadi, all from France; Tiago Ovila from Brazil; and Yasmin Ajar from Germany.

Adalah said that the Israeli court based its decision to continue the detention on the grounds of their "illegal entry into Israel." The legal center emphasized that none of the Madleen's activists intended to enter Israel or its territorial waters as they planned to depart from Sicily and reach Gaza's territorial waters, which are part of the state of Palestine, via international waters. The Israeli navy intercepted the Madleen ship early on Tuesday morning, detaining the activists and taking them to Israel.

Adalah said that the court has scheduled a detention review hearing for July 8 if authorities have not deported the activists by that date. Following her release and deportation from Israel on Tuesday, Thunberg said: "I was very clear in my testimony that we were kidnapped on international waters and brought against our own will into Israel." "This is yet another intentional violation of rights that is added to the list of countless other violations that Israel is committing," she said.

## Russian drone attacks kill three, wound 60 in Ukraine's Kharkiv

KYIV (AFP): Russian drone strikes have killed three people and wounded 60, including children, in the northeastern city of Kharkiv, officials say. The city, just 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the Russian border, bore the brunt of Russia's latest aerial assault early on Wednesday, with 17 drones striking two residential areas, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said.

"Those are ordinary sites of peaceful life ... that should never be targeted," he wrote on Telegram. Among the 60 wounded in the attacks were nine children aged between 2 and 15, according to Kharkiv

regional head Oleh Syniehubov. One Kharkiv resident, Olena Khoruzheva, told the AFP news agency how she had run with her two children away from the windows of her building when she heard the drones approach.

"The younger one lay on the floor, hands on his head. I was on top of him," the 41-year-old pharmacist said. "We heard it approaching. Silence, and then we were thrown against the wall ... there were more explosions, then we heard people shouting 'Help! Help!'" Her 65-year-old neighbour was killed in the attack, she said.

The assault left emergency crews, city workers and volunteers scrambling through the night to rescue people from burning buildings and restore essential services in the city, which has been frequently targeted in recent months. The Associated Press news agency reported. "We stand strong. We help one another. And we will endure," the city's mayor wrote on Telegram. The strikes on Kharkiv were part of a wave of 85 drones deployed by Russia overnight, the Ukrainian Air Force said, adding that its air defence systems had intercepted 40.