

Fazl calls on Ayaz Sadiq
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman called on National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on Thursday to discuss the prevailing political situation and ongoing deliberations surrounding the Federal budget. The speaker affirmed that Pakistan has unequivocally denounced Israeli aggression and expressed solidarity with Iran.

The Frontier Post

TEHRAN, TEL AVIV: An Iranian missile barrage has struck several sites across Israel, damaging a hospital in the country's south, and Israel has attacked Iran's Arak heavy water nuclear reactor as the two countries trade fire for a seventh consecutive day. At least 240 people were wounded in the Iranian attacks, including four seriously, according to Israel's Ministry of Health. The majority were lightly wounded, including 70 at the Soroka Medical Center in the city of Beersheba in southern Israel.

Iran said it was targeting a military site in that attack. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi claimed the missile attack hit an Israeli military and intelligence centre located



TEL AVIV: Rescue workers busy in relief work after Iran air strikes on Israel.

Russia warns US

MOSCOW (AFP): Russia's foreign ministry on Thursday warned the United States not to take military action against Iran, amid speculation over whether Washington will enter the war alongside Israel. Moscow issued its warning after Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in a phone call condemned Israeli attacks on Iran and urged a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Israel launched an unprecedented wave of strikes at Iran last week, to which Tehran responded with missile and drone attacks.

US President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday he was considering whether to join Israel's strikes. "I may do it, I may not do it," he said. Russian foreign ministry's spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters: "We would like to particularly warn Washington against military intervention in the situation." Any US military action "would be an extremely dangerous step with truly unpredictable negative consequences", she added. Earlier on Thursday, following the leaders' call, the Kremlin said Putin and Xi "strongly condemn Israel's actions". Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters that Moscow and Beijing believed the end to the hostilities "should be achieved exclusively by political and diplomatic means".

Xi told Putin that a ceasefire was the "top priority" and urged Israel to halt its attacks, Chinese state media reported. "Promoting a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities is the top priority. Armed force is not the correct way to resolve international disputes," Xi said, according to China's state news agency Xinhua. "Parties to the conflict, especially Israel, should cease hostilities as soon as possible to prevent a cyclical escalation and resolutely avoid the spillover of the war," he added. Putin is pitching himself as a mediator between the warring sides. Russia is close to Iran, having boosted military ties amid its offensive on Ukraine, but also strives for good relations with Israel.

near Soroka hospital, causing only "superficial damage to a small section" of the health facility. Iranian projectiles also made impacts in at least six other locations, including in Tel Aviv and two of its districts – Holon and Ramat Gan, according to local media reports.

The Israeli army said its fighter jets struck dozens of sites in Iran, including Natanz and the heavy water nuclear reactor, which was originally called Arak and is now named Khondab. The military said it specifically targeted "the structure of the reactor's core seal, which is a

The escalation comes after Israel launched a major attack on Iranian military facilities and nuclear sites last Friday, killing senior military officials and top nuclear scientists. Iran responded to that attack by launching waves of missiles at targets in Israel, although most have been shot down by Israel's multi-tiered air defences. The conflict has quickly widened this week with both countries striking one another.

The Soroka Medical Center, which has more than 1,000 beds and provides services to about one million residents of southern Israel, said

US mly move aircraft from bases in ME

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The US military has moved some aircraft and ships from bases in the Middle East that may be vulnerable to any potential Iranian attack, two US officials said. The moves come as President Donald Trump kept the world guessing whether the United States would join Israel's bombardment of Iran's nuclear and missile sites, as residents fled its capital on the sixth day of the air assault.

Senior US officials are preparing for the possibility of a strike on Iran in the coming days, Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter. The report, citing the people, noted that the situation is still evolving and could change. Some of the people, according to Bloomberg, pointed to potential plans for a weekend strike. Speaking to reporters earlier on Wednesday outside the White House, Trump declined to say if he had made any decision on whether to join Israel's campaign. "I may do it. I may not do it. I mean, nobody knows what I'm going to do," he said. Separately, the US embassy in Qatar issued an alert on Thursday temporarily restricting its personnel from accessing the Al-Udeid Air Base, the largest US military installation in the Middle East, which is located in the desert outside Doha. The embassy told personnel and US citizens in Qatar to step up vigilance in "an abundance of caution and in light of ongoing regional hostilities."

PM calls zero tolerance on fake medicines

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the deployment of advanced technology to eliminate the illegal trade of medicines amid a zero-tolerance policy and called for stringent oversight mechanisms.

The prime minister chaired a high-level meeting on national health affairs, where he lauded the Ministry of National Health Services for its proactive approach under the leadership of Federal Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The prime minister reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to delivering quality healthcare to citizens across Pakistan. In the meeting, PM Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that providing the best possible healthcare facilities to the people remains the government's top priority.

He directed the formulation of a collaborative roadmap involving welfare organizations and the private sector to improve health services in Islamabad. Highlighting the importance of international standards, PM Shehbaz encouraged Pakistani pharmaceutical companies to seek accreditation from the World Health Organization (WHO), stating it would not only enhance the quality of local medicines but also open doors to export opportunities. PM Shehbaz also underscored that there can be no compromise on the quality of medical education" and directed third-party validation of all medical colleges in Pakistan. He further instructed for a comprehensive review of the nursing sector to strengthen its capacity and service delivery. He firmly stated that no political interference would be tolerated in the implementation of health reforms, ensuring a merit-based and transparent approach across the board.

During the briefing, officials informed the Prime Minister that the entire process for registering medicines and medical devices is being fully digitized and will be completed by the end of next month. Moreover, the registration timeline is being reduced from one year to just three months. They added that efforts are also underway to operationalize newly established Basic Health Units, Regional Blood Centers, and the Isolation Hospital



and Infectious Treatment Center (IHITC) in Islamabad with the support of philanthropists.

The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Dr. Ahsan Iqbal (Planning & Development), Syed Mustafa Kamal (National Health), Ahad Khan Cheema (Economic Affairs), Minister of State for Health Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, and senior officials from relevant institutions.

Shehbaz directs for finalizing industrial policy at earliest to boost production: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed to finalize the industrial policy at the earliest to increase production and provide sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by industries. He also issued directions to the relevant authorities that the industrial policy be finalized in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Describing the industrial sector as the backbone of the country's exports, the Prime Minister stressed that the development of industries is essential to achieving export-led economic growth. Chairing a meeting on the promotion of the Industrial sector, the prime minister underscored that equipping local industries with a skilled workforce and modern technology to international standards was the government's top priority. "Investment in the country will be promoted through tariff rationalization," the prime minister said, adding that "Uncertain industrial policies have hindered industrial growth. Through an effective policy, we will take industrial development to new heights". The recent economic policies, he said, were formulated keeping in view the development of the country's industrial sector. During the meeting, recommendations for the development of national industries were presented to the Prime Minister. He was informed that the manufacturing sector of the country will be revived through an effective industrial policy. The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar and other relevant high officials.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to ensure transparency in all phases of Jinnah Medical Complex and Research Center to be constructed in the federal capital.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the progress on the project, said that Jinnah Medical Complex would be a state-of-the-art hospital equipped with the best medical facilities and advanced medical research equipment to serve the entire region. During the briefing on the project, it was told that roadshows were held in China, Turkey, South Korea, and Singapore, where the globally renowned companies had expressed interest in the project. It was told that two conferences were held regarding the construction of the Complex, attended by 33 companies from 10 countries.

President visits Naval HQs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, visited Naval Headquarters in Islamabad. Upon arrival, the President was warmly received by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, and was presented a Guard of Honour by a smartly turned-out naval contingent. The President also laid a floral wreath at the Shuhada Monument and was later introduced to the Principal Staff Officers at Naval Headquarters.

President, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari held a meeting with Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf. During the meeting, Naval Chief apprised the President on matters pertaining to regional maritime security and operational readiness of Pakistan Navy. Later, the President was given a detailed briefing on Pakistan Navy's strategy to ensure impenetrable deterrence demonstrated during MARKA-E-HAQ.

The President expressed deep satisfaction over Pakistan Navy's high level of operational preparedness and felicitated it on successfully defending the maritime frontiers of the motherland against Indian aggression.

SC rules judges' transfers constitutional

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court's constitutional bench has announced its reserved verdict in the judges' transfer case, ruling that the transfer of judges is not unconstitutional.

The five-member bench, headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, concluded hearings on the case earlier. Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Shahid Bilal, and Justice Saifur Ali Shah Panwar agreed in the majority judgment, declaring that judges' transfers are not unconstitutional.

Justice Mazhar announced the brief verdict, with the court rejecting the petitions related to judges' seniority and transfers by a 3-2 majority. During the proceedings, PTI founder Imran Khan's lawyer, Idrees Ashraf, argued that Articles 200 and 175 of the Constitution should be interpreted harmoniously, as they appear to be in conflict. Justice Mazhar remarked that the Judicial Commission has no authority over transfers. The lawyer responded that permanent transfers cannot be made to vacant judicial seats.

The Attorney General informed the court that a senior judge (ranked 3rd in Islamabad High Court) is enrolled with the Islamabad Bar Council. Justice Naem Afghan asked whether any past examples existed of judges being transferred under Article 200. The Attorney General replied that there is no precedent for such transfers. He added that the President and Prime Minister have a limited role in the transfer process, which also involves Chief Justices, and that malicious intent cannot be attributed to this process.

Justice Mazhar noted that Article 200 outlines a complete procedure for judges' transfers. The Attorney General added that no challenge had been made against the Prime Minister's advice or the business rules. Lawyer Munir A. Malik told the court they had never claimed that the transferred judges were "deputationists," to which Justice Mazhar responded that the petition itself referred to the judges as such—questioning how they could be labeled that way.

With arguments from all parties concluded, the court reserved its decision. Justices Sarfraz Dogar, Muhammad Asif, and Khadim Hussain Soomro were transferred to the Islamabad High Court. Five judges of the IHC challenged these transfers in the Supreme Court, including Justices Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Babar Sattar, Tariq Jahangiri, Sardar Ejaz Ishaq, and Saman Rafat Imtiaz. Founding PTI Chairman Imran Khan and the Karachi Bar Association had also filed petitions.

17 new schemes approved for Toba Tek Singh in ADP

E.P. Report

TOBA TEK SING: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's ambitious development vision has breathed new life into all districts of the province. Her pledge that "every district, every tehsil, and every village in Punjab will progress" has moved beyond rhetoric and is now materializing through concrete action. As part of this vision, the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the fiscal year 2025-26 includes 17 new development schemes for District Toba Tek Singh, with a total estimated cost of Rs. 3.18 billion. To kick-start these initiatives, Rs. 426 million have been released during the current financial year. These projects are set to redefine the district's infrastructure, services, and overall urban landscape.

Among these schemes, two projects hold particular strategic significance. The first is the Chichawatni to Kamalia Bypass Road (Phase 1)—an 18.5-kilometre dual carriageway that will cost approximately Rs. 1.79 billion. This road will not only improve connectivity between Chichawatni, Kamalia, and Toba Tek Singh but will also catalyze trade, agriculture, and economic activity throughout the region. It is expected to facilitate the movement of goods, support local industry, and make inter-district travel smoother and faster for the general public. The second major initiative is the construction of a modern sports complex in Pir Mahal at a cost of Rs. 300 million. This state-of-the-art facility will provide local youth with opportunities to engage in healthy activities and excel in sports at a provincial and national level. The project reflects the Chief Minister's belief that "a healthy Punjab is a prosperous Punjab."

The remaining 15 development schemes have been carefully designed to address the real and pressing needs of the public. These include the upgradation of the Civil Rest House located on Jhang Road and the establishment of a new Rescue 1122 station in Sandhlianwali, which will enhance emergency response capabilities in rural areas. Road infrastructure will be strengthened through the construction of new roads from Gojra to Chak 351/JB and Chak 361/GB, improving

access and mobility. Another key project is the construction of a new building for the District Attorney's Office, which will support efficient legal and administrative operations. The addition of commercial shops at the Gojra Hockey Stadium is aimed at boosting local commerce and generating revenue to support sports development. In the justice sector, the provision of pending facilities at the Pir Mahal Judicial Complex will improve public access to legal services and promote timely justice delivery.

To address civic issues, the sewerage scheme in Chak 256/GB will be upgraded to improve sanitation, while the installation of paved roads and tough tiles in Chak 356/JB and Chak 97/JB will provide residents with safer and cleaner streets. The construction of a new DPO Complex is another key step toward strengthening law enforcement infrastructure and modernizing policing in the district. Similarly, the rehabilitation and repair of roads from Basti Darkhana Wala to Saddam Hussain Basti and between Chak 304/JB and 311/JB will make transportation safer and more efficient, especially for the timely delivery of agricultural produce to markets.

All these projects are aligned with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's people-centric development agenda, which emphasizes equitable investment across urban and rural areas alike. Her administration is ensuring that every district—not just major cities—receives the funding, attention, and development opportunities it needs.

It is evident that Maryam Nawaz Sharif's development strategy goes beyond mere policy announcements—it is backed by action and personal oversight. Her inclusive and balanced approach is paving the way for a more equitable and prosperous Punjab, where every individual and every community is part of the journey toward progress.

Two-day training workshop organized for teachers: Under the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif to improve the standard of education in public schools across the province, the model of Public-Private Partnership is being actively promoted. In this context, a two-day training workshop

was organized under the Public Schools Reorganization Programme, supported by the Punjab Education Foundation, in collaboration with HANDS Welfare Foundation.

The workshop took place at Government Primary School 344 GB and was attended by the teaching staff of ten government schools managed by HANDS Foundation. The objective of the training was to enhance the professional skills of teachers, improve teaching standards, introduce modern educational practices, and strengthen classroom management.

Executive Manager Punjab at HANDS, Amir Naseem along with Arzoo Afroz and Asma Batool, led the sessions as master trainers. Participants were given hands-on training on effective curriculum delivery, building positive relationships with students and adopting innovative teaching methodologies.

Peace & Interfaith Harmony Committee meeting held: To ensure the peaceful and respectful observance of Muharram-ul-Haram, a key meeting of the District Peace Committee and Interfaith Harmony Committee was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu and District Police Officer Ibadat Nisar.

The meeting was attended by members of the peace committee, religious scholars from various sects, and prominent religious and social figures. Speaking on the occasion, DC Muhammad Naeem Sandhu emphasized that all available resources will be utilized to promote patience, tolerance, and interfaith harmony during Muharram. He affirmed the district administration's commitment to ensuring the peaceful and well-organized conduct of all religious processions and gatherings.

DPO Ibadat Nisar briefed the participants on security arrangements, stating that foolproof measures will be implemented at sensitive locations, including walk-through gates, metal detectors, and surveillance through CCTV cameras. He added that law enforcement agencies would remain on high alert. Religious scholars and community leaders appreciated the steps taken by the administration and assured their full cooperation.



NOSHERA: District and Sessions Judge, Muhammad Asif Khan, and Additional IG Operations, Muhammad Ali Baba Khel, offering their condolences to Pir Iftikhar Saeed on the passing of his brother-in-law, Shaukat Javed Anjum.

Unknown robbers looted bakery

E.P. Report

LARKANA: Unknown armed robbers stormed Hafiz Sweets' shop in the Royal Road area of Market Police Station Larkana city and looted Rs 6 lakh in cash and valuable mobile phones and fled.

On information, the police reached the shop, found out the details and started an investigation. When contacted by the media, shop employee Ghulam Hussain Brohi said that when I opened the shop in the morning, four unknown armed robbers riding on two motorcycles entered the shop and looted more than Rs 6 lakh and valuable mobile phones and fled. He appealed to the SSP Larkana to arrest the culprits, return the looted cash and mobile phones and bring justice to us.

DC chairs meeting on security for Muharram: Deputy Commissioner Larkana, Sharjeel Noor Channa has urged the police officials to make foolproof security arrangements in the district during Muharram and improve the law and order situation. He has also instructed other concerned officials to play their role in a happy and genuine manner so that the month of Muharram passes peacefully.

DC said that cleanliness, street lights and other necessary arrangements should be ensured during the mourning processions and gatherings in the district so that the public, especially the mourners, do not face any inconvenience. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting held recently on security arrangements during Muharram.

KP CM's aide inaugurates highway

E.P. Report

HANGU: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Communications and Works Muhammad Sohail Afridi has formally inaugurated the construction work of the Hangu-Sarozai Main Highway project on Thursday. Member of the National Assembly Yousuf Khan and Chairman DDAC and Member Provincial Assembly Shah Turab Khan also attended the inaugural ceremony.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Muhammad Sohail Afridi said that the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a key role in approving this important project. This highway is being constructed keeping in mind the public needs of the area and the government is making every effort to complete its work as soon as possible. He said that the construction and repair of main highways in the entire province has been targeted on priority basis and this project is part of these priorities.

Talking about the political situation, Sohail Afridi said that we have come out for a real revolution instead of politics of budget and funds. We are taking forward the vision of the constitution, rule of law, independence of judiciary and peace that Imran Khan has given. He said that until Imran Khan's stance on the budget is clear, no budget can be passed till June 30.

Sindh govt to support filmmaking: Sharjeel

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The opening ceremony of the Pakistan International Film Festival was held at the Karachi Film School, with Sindh's Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, attending as the chief guest. Upon his arrival, he was warmly welcomed by the President of the Film Festival, Sultana Siddiqui, the organizers, and prominent figures from the media and entertainment industry.

Films from several countries, including Pakistan, China, and Germany, will be screened at the festival. On this occasion, an important dialogue on Intellectual Property Rights in the film industry was also organized.

Addressing the ceremony, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that, unfortunately, both society and successive governments have consistently overlooked the critical issue of intellectual property rights. He emphasized that existing laws in this regard must be enforced more strictly. He noted that when the copyrights of creative works are not protected, they are easily stolen, which demoralizes artists and creators.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that intellectual property rights should be included in the curriculum to raise awareness among children and youth about the importance of protecting ideas and creative works. He added that the Sindh government began efforts last year to support filmmaking, and filmmakers are being encouraged to promote Pakistan's national narrative



across the globe.

He said that more than a hundred films are being produced in India on the India-Pakistan war to reinforce a false narrative, but India can only win such wars in films - not in reality. He said that the Indian media has consistently propagated false narratives in an aggressive manner, whereas we need to promote the true narrative of Pakistan across the world.

Sultana Siddiqui said that the youth need to be trained in new technologies and the field of filmmaking so they can fully express their creative talents. She added that the participation of key industry figures in the film society is encouraging, and through films, we can present our national narrative to the world. She also praised the Pakistani media for showing commendable restraint during the recent Pakistan-India tensions.

Festival director Misbah Khalid said that today marks the first day of the Pakistan International Film Festival, and their goal is to provide opportunities for

the youth. He appealed to the government to support their efforts. Farrukh Amil, head of the Pakistan Intellectual Property Authority, said that Pakistan is a multicultural and multi-artistic country, and the film festival is an excellent platform to showcase our cultural identity. He emphasized that awareness about copyrights is crucial for those involved in the fine arts, and the authority is working on amendments to the laws in this regard.

Farrukh Amil, referring to the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar festival and the handicrafts showcased there, said that such cultural heritage should also be granted copyright protection. He added that with the rise of AI and digital technologies, the importance of ownership rights for artistic works has increased more than ever before. Hameed Riaz, CEO of AMI Music, said that although films and songs are being produced in Pakistan, insufficient attention is being given to copyrights, which is harming our artists.

Daughter commits suicide while father shot killed on same day

E.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: A tragic and deeply distressing incident unfolded in the village of Ram Tarar, Hafizabad, where a man was shot dead by his brother-in-law while bringing home the body of his daughter, who had taken her own life earlier the same day.

According to police sources, Zainab, the young daughter of Nawazish Ali, ended her life by ingesting poisonous tablets following a domestic dispute. As Nawazish was returning to the village with her body for burial, he was intercepted by his brother-in-law, Khalid Hussain, who opened fire on him. Nawazish succumbed to his injuries on the spot before medical help could arrive, while the suspect fled the scene.

Initial investigations suggest the murder was fueled by an ongoing family grudge. Khalid was reportedly enraged over Nawazish's recent scolding of Zainab, who was also Khalid's niece.

The double tragedy of both father and daughter dying on the same day has left the entire village in shock. A joint funeral was held, attended by a large number of mourners, and both were laid to rest side by side in an emotionally charged farewell. Police in Jalalpur Bhattian have registered a case and launched a search operation to apprehend the suspect. Further investigations are underway.

Kisan board criticizes govt to address Agri sector: Senior leaders of Kisan Board Pakistan have strongly criticized the government's failure to address the worsening crisis in the agricultural sector, warning of serious consequences for food production if immediate reforms are not introduced.

Addressing a press conference at

the district office, Kisan Board's Central Vice President Amanullah Chatha and Punjab President Rasheed Ahmed Minhala expressed grave concern over the recently announced federal and provincial budgets. They pointed out that in the government's own pre-budget economic survey, it was acknowledged that agricultural output has declined by 13.5% instead of showing any growth.

"Despite this alarming drop and the visible collapse of agricultural policy, the government has not allocated even a single rupee for the revival of agriculture in the provincial development budget," they stated. "This has left farmers across the province frustrated and protesting."

The leaders highlighted the massive financial losses farmers have suffered, particularly in Punjab, due to the government's failure to ensure fair wheat prices. "Farmers have incurred a loss of nearly Rs. 2,200 billion just because they were not given the appropriate support price for wheat," said Amanullah Chatha. "As a result, many farmers are now unable to bear the cost of cultivating rice, which will likely lead to a drastic reduction in both the area under cultivation and the expected yield."

They demanded that the government immediately revise its "anti-farmer" policies and ensure fair pricing for major crops including wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane. They also urged significant reductions in the cost of fertilizers, electricity, diesel, agricultural machinery, and pesticides to make farming viable again.

The speakers also condemned the use of police force against peaceful protestors demonstrating against the wheat policy, and criticized the government for failing to hold those responsible for violence accountable. District President Sohail Ahmad

Tarar, Hafiz Zafarullah Saroya, and Malik Shoukat Ali Phularwan also addressed the press conference, echoing the demand for urgent action to prevent a full-blown agricultural crisis in the country.

APGPWA rejects 5% increase in pensions: The All Punjab Government Pensioners Welfare Association has strongly condemned the Punjab government's proposal to increase pensions by only 5% in the upcoming annual budget, calling it "unjust" and "highly disappointing."

In a joint statement issued by the association's Patron-in-Chief Prof. Ch. Salahuddin, Central President Sanaulah Khokhar, and Secretary General Prof. Muhammad Bashir Sial, the pensioners described the proposed raise as irrational and inadequate, especially considering the size and financial capacity of Punjab, the country's largest province.

They argued that instead of setting a progressive example for other provinces by increasing pensions by at least 8%, the Punjab government has proposed a lower increase than even the smaller provinces. "This is a matter of deep concern and regret for the entire pensioners' community," the statement read. "Senior citizens who have devoted their lives to public service deserve better."

The association fully rejected the 5% raise and demanded that, before the final approval of the budget, the government must revise its proposal and ensure a minimum 10% increase in pensions for all retired government employees in Punjab. They urged the provincial leadership to adopt a compassionate and fair approach, keeping in view the soaring inflation and increasing cost of living, which have made it extremely difficult for elderly pensioners to meet their basic needs.

ADEGA flays KP budget

E.P. Report

SHANGLA: A strong protest and rally held under the leadership of AGEGA Chairman Muhammad Islam, in response to the provincial government's complete neglect regarding the Disparity Allowance. A deadline of June 25 has been given if their demands are not met.

According to details, a massive protest was organized today at the District Headquarters in Alpuri, Shangla. The protest was led by various organizations including APTA, Malgari Ustazan, MTA, APCA Health Department, Tanzeem Asatiza Pakistan, Wahdat-e-Asatiza, ITA, SST, and SOA. Office bearers and members of these organizations actively participated.

On the occasion, the Chairman of the organization addressed the staff at Government Primary School No. 1 and said, "It is a grave injustice that within the same country, the

federal capital receives 70% Disparity Allowance, while the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is unfairly given only 15%.

We are simply demanding our due right—just as other provinces are granted up to 45% Disparity Allowance, we, too, as human beings and government employees, should be given at least 30%. The growing concern and frustration among employees must be addressed, and we should not be deprived of our basic rights."

He warned that if their demands are not met, all members of the participating organizations will be forced into a large-scale protest on June 25 in front of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. He added that all government employees are currently united under the leadership of provincial representatives Wazir Zada, Samiullah, and Niaz Ali Khattak, and will remain united until their demands are fulfilled.

SDO held introductory session:

Sub-Divisional Education Officer (SDO) Aurangzeb, ASDEO Circle Najeebullah, and Relationship Manager of Asset Management Companies, Muftahullah, addressed an important introductory session on the CP Fund Pension Scheme at the SDO Office in Chakisar.

This scheme serves as an alternative to the traditional government pension plan for public employees recruited in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the year 2022. The session aimed to raise awareness among teachers and relevant stakeholders about the structure, benefits, and implementation of the CP Fund Scheme.

In his speech, SDEO Aurangzeb not only highlighted the key features of the scheme but also emphasized the importance of teachers performing their duties with dedication and professionalism. He stated that a committed and well-informed teacher is the foundation of a prosperous nation.

Ban on plastic bags enforced across Sindh

E.P. Report

KARACHI: To ensure strict enforcement of the complete ban on all types of plastic bags in Sindh, district monitoring teams of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) were active in markets across the province today. The teams visited shops one by one, formally served the ban orders to shopkeepers, and strictly warned them that legal action would be taken under the Sindh Environmental Protection Act if violations were found during future inspections.

Since SEPA's district headquarters is in Karachi, the enforcement activities

were closely monitored in all districts of the city. The Keamari district team visiting Sheer Shah and Metroville markets, while the East District team was active in Garden and Scheme 33. The Malir district team inspected Landhi and Manzil Pump areas, and in Korangi, two well-known supermarkets and plastic bag manufacturing factories were checked. The Central District team operated in Federal B Area and Gole Market, while the South District team visited Ocean Mall, and the West District team covered markets in suburban areas.

On this occasion, DG SEPA Waqar Hussain Phulpoto urged officers and

staff in a message to ensure dedicated enforcement of the ban. He emphasized resolving any resistance through dialogue, as short-sightedness sometimes tries to hinder long-term benefits. However, he made it clear that persistent and committed individuals always continue efforts for improvement.

It is important to note that the Sindh government imposed a ban on the production, sale, and use of all types of plastic bags across the province two months ago, with a grace period that ended on June 15. SEPA's monitoring teams remain determined to ensure effective implementation of this ban throughout Sindh.

Balochistan to designate Hinglaj Mata Temple

E.P. Report

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has announced its plan to designate the historic Hinglaj Mata Temple in Lasbela district as a global tourist site. This move was discussed in a meeting between Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti and Senator Danesh Kumar, where they reviewed strate-

gies to boost religious tourism for minorities within the province.

Hinglaj Mata Temple, a revered pilgrimage site for the Hindu community—particularly in Balochistan—has stood for centuries and attracts hundreds of thousands of devotees from Pakistan and abroad annually. The government's initiative aims to

promote religious harmony, uplift minority tourism, and project a positive global image of Balochistan.

Chief Minister Bugti emphasised that Balochistan represents a blend of diverse cultures and communities, and the temple is a testament to its deep-rooted tradition of coexistence and historical richness.



KMU keen to establish campus in Kabul, says VC Zia ul Haq



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar has reaffirmed its commitment to offering Afghan students the same, and in some areas even enhanced, academic facilities as those provided to Pakistani students. KMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq stated that the university is keen to establish a Kabul campus to deliver high-quality medical education to Afghan students right at their

doorstep. He expressed hope that the Afghan government would soon provide the necessary building for this purpose. He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation from the Afghan Consulate, led by Deputy Consul General Mufti Noorullah. The Vice Chancellor informed the delegation that hundreds of Afghan students are currently enrolled in various medical disciplines at KMU and its affiliated institutions across

the province. These students are being provided with educational, research, and residential facilities on par with their Pakistani counterparts. In some areas, they are receiving additional benefits, which reflect the strong bonds of Pak-Afghan friendship and Islamic brotherhood. Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq highlighted the significant potential for strengthening bilateral ties in fields such as medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, nursing, and

allied health sciences. He added that KMU degrees are internationally recognized, and through the proposed Kabul campus, Afghan students will gain greater access to advanced education and employment opportunities not only in Gulf countries but also across Asia and Europe. On this occasion, Afghan Deputy Consul General Mufti Noorullah expressed gratitude for the facilities being extended to Afghan students by KMU. He remarked that Pakistan and Afghanistan are "two bodies, one soul," and no force in the world can create a rift between them. He added that Pakistan is like a second home to the Afghan nation, and the support extended by the people of Pakistan in the areas of shelter, education, health, and employment over the past four decades is deeply appreciated. He assured that the identification of a suitable building for the KMU Kabul campus would be finalized soon and expressed hope that once identified, the university would promptly operationalize the proposed campus.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chairing meeting to review the province's preparedness and preemptive measures ahead of the expected monsoon rains.

Chief Secretary reviews monsoon preparedness measures

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, was held to review the province's preparedness and preemptive measures ahead of the expected monsoon rains and potential flood threats. The meeting was attended by administrative secretaries, Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), and other relevant officials, while commissioners from divisions joined via video link. The meeting focused on detailed preparedness plans for flood-prone areas, with a special emphasis on lessons learned from the 2022 floods. Officials briefed that a comprehensive

Monsoon Contingency Plan 2025 has been developed to deal with any emergency situations. Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah directed district administrations to continue strict action against illegal constructions and encroachments along rivers and waterways. He emphasized that funds for flood prevention and emergency response are being ensured at all levels. Briefing the meeting, DG PDMA stated that PDMA has provided Rescue 1122 with 50 de-watering pumps in districts vulnerable to urban flooding. These districts include Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat, Kohat, Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Malakand (Bathkela), Swat (Mingora), Mansehra, and

Abbottabad. Additionally, a dedicated de-watering unit is being established in Peshawar. The meeting also reviewed the logistical needs and resources required by PDMA to respond to any flood emergency. It was informed that PDMA's Control Room and Helpline 1700 remain operational to provide emergency assistance. Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah instructed district administrations to ensure advance stockpiling of essential supplies including food items, fuel, and medicines in vulnerable areas. He stressed the need for proactive coordination among all departments and timely completion of preparedness activities to mitigate losses from potential torrential rains, wind-

storms, and flooding. He further directed the Irrigation Department to inspect protective embankments along rivers and canals, while the Local Government Department was tasked with ensuring the cleaning of sewerage lines to prevent urban flooding. In light of increased tourist activity during the season, special arrangements are to be made in tourist districts, including the regular issuance of travel advisories. It was also informed that the government is enforcing Section 144 to ban the use of plastic bags and swimming in rivers during the monsoon season. The Health Department is making advance arrangements to counter the spread of waterborne diseases.

BoK opens second women-centric branch at SBBWU Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Bank of Khyber has taken a significant step towards promoting financial inclusion and empowering women in the region with the launch of its second women-centric branch at Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Peshawar in collaboration with the Treasury Section of the university. This initiative is designed to provide specialized financial services to the staff and students of the university, fostering economic growth and development. Mr. Abdullah Ghaffar, Group Head Islamic Banking while speaking to the audience said that the branch offers a range of innovative products and services, including the 'Fempower Account' for females and the 'Student Power Account' for students. These accounts are tailored to meet the unique needs of women and students, providing them with

easy access to banking services and financial management tools. Additionally, the branch will offer loan facilities to support the educational and personal needs of students and staff. The branch will also provide internship opportunities for students, enabling them to gain practical experience and develop valuable skills in the banking sector. Furthermore, the bank will offer personal finance facilities to staff at special rates through Islamic banking.

Prof. Dr. Safia Ahmed (T.I), Vice Chancellor, while expressing her thoughts, said that the launch of this branch is a testament to Bank of Khyber's commitment to supporting the financial inclusion and empowerment of women and students. The provision of specialized financial services and opportunities to SBBWU will promote

financial literacy among women and young people. The management of Bank Ms. Sana Younas, Treasurer SBBWU, expressed the commitment to working together to promote financial inclusion and empowerment of women in the university. This partnership is expected to have a positive impact on the lives of women and students, enabling them to achieve their financial goals and aspirations.



Shaheed BB's Birthday Celebrations Event to be celebrated with great enthusiasm

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Secretary General Muhammad Humayun Khan has issued directives for organizing events across the country in connection with the birthday of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. The former Prime Minister's 72nd birthday will be observed on June 21, and in this regard, celebrations will be held at the provincial and district offices. According to PPP Secretary General Muhammad Humayun Khan, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed's 72nd birthday will be commemorated nationwide on June 21. The Pakistan Peoples Party has officially announced its plan for these birthday celebrations. In a statement issued by Humayun Khan,

it was stated that PPP's provincial, divisional, and district headquarters will host ceremonies in honor of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, where birthday cakes will be cut. The 72nd birthday of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto will be celebrated with passion and fervor across the country. Events will be organized at all divisional and district headquarters. PPP's provincial, divisional, and district presidents, along with other office-bearers and party leaders, will ensure the effective organization of these celebrations in their respective regions. Birthday cakes will be cut at each event, and glowing tributes will be paid to Shaheed Bibi for her sacrifices for democracy, the country, and its people. All party office-bearers at the

provincial, divisional, district, tehsil, union council, and ward levels, along with all local government representatives, will participate in these celebrations. Humayun Khan said that democracy in the country today exists due to the sacrifices of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. She struggled for the supremacy of the constitution, parliament, and the people's right to rule. He emphasized that under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the PPP is moving forward with the vision of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. He noted that the current democratic system in Pakistan is the result of Benazir Bhutto Shaheed's struggle. She was elected Prime Minister of the country twice and holds the distinction of being the first female Prime Minister of an Islamic country.

Ihtesham Ali inaugurates advanced diagnostic services

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Health Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ihtesham Ali, formally inaugurated advanced diagnostic services including CT Scan, Endoscopy, and ETT at the Police and Services Hospital. During his visit on Thursday, the Health Advisor inaugurated the CT Scan facility in the Radiology Department, the ETT service in the Cardiology Unit, and the Endoscopy service in the Gastroenterology Department. On this occasion, Medical Superintendent of the hospital Dr. Mushtaq Afridi, heads of concerned departments, and other medical staff were also present. Mr. Ihtesham Ali stated that the addition of these services will significantly enhance the hospital's diagnostic capacity and ensure timely treatment for government employees. Previously, patients were referred to other hospitals for such tests, but now these essential facilities are available within their own hospital. He further highlighted that the Police and Services Hospital serves as a vital healthcare institution for thousands of government employees and their families. He commended the MS Dr. Mushtaq Afridi and his team for their efforts in operationalizing these services.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Inspector General of Prisons Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Department of Criminology, University of Peshawar. The signing ceremony was held at the Vice Chancellor's Secretariat, University of Peshawar. The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Vice Chancellor of the University of Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Johar Ali, welcomed the guests and expressed his delight in hosting Inspector General of Prisons KP, Mr. Muhammad Usman Mehsum, with whom he shared a history of positive interactions. Dr. Johar Ali acknowledged the significant efforts of Assistant Professor Dr. Muhammad Ibrar in facilitating the development of the MoU. Chairman of the Department of Criminology, Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain provided an overview of the MoU and elaborated on the procedural journey leading to the establishment of the Department of Criminology at the University of Peshawar. He announced the department's plans to initiate MPhil and PhD programs in the upcoming fall semester, subject to the approval of the NOC. Currently, more than 300 students are enrolled in the department's BS Criminology program. Dr. Basharat Hussain emphasized the importance of this MoU, which



will open avenues for student internships within the prison system, foster research facilitation between the department and the Inspectorate General of Prisons, and introduce accredited courses that may be utilized as promotional qualifications for prison and law enforcement officials in the future. He also expressed appreciation to Mr. Muhammad Usman Mehsum for his responsiveness and support, particularly noting that earlier attempts to sign a similar MoU with the police department did not yield a positive response. Inspector General of Prisons KP, Mr. Muhammad Usman Mehsum, in his address, extended his sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Johar Ali, Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain, and Dr. Muhammad Ibrar for their efforts in initiating this collaboration. He emphasized that the MoU reflects a shared vision and has been designed to serve both aca-

demical growth and administrative excellence. Mr. Mehsum underscored the critical importance of cooperation between academia and public institutions in order to improve systems and create long-term, sustainable impact. He proposed the formulation of Standard Operating Procedures for effective implementation of the MoU. He also suggested the inclusion of online lectures by faculty for the staff of the Haripur Prison Staff Training Academy, engagement of prison staff in events organized by the Department of Criminology, and the regular sharing of student-led research findings and recommendations with the KP Prisons Department. Mr. Muhammad Usman Mehsum confirmed that the MoU had received formal approval from the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Johar Ali further endorsed the idea of mak-

ing the proposed accredited courses a requirement for the promotion of executive officers in the prisons department. Responding to this, Chairman Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain explained that the MoU includes not only accredited courses but also provisions for curriculum revisions at prison training schools, to be reviewed by a committee. Dr. Johar Ali concluded the ceremony by describing the MoU as part of a broader institutional vision to strengthen ties between academia and the criminal justice system, and to contribute to reshaping the public perception of prisons in the province. The MoU was formally signed by Prof. Dr. Johar Ali, Mr. Muhammad Usman Mehsum, and Prof. Dr. Basharat Hussain, marking a significant step forward in academic-government collaboration for the betterment of criminological education and prison administration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Kundi emphasizes empowering women through modern home economics education

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi in a meeting with Principal of the College of Home Economics, University of Peshawar, Professor Dr. Shazia Khan at the Governor House on Thursday discussed the development of the education sector, particularly the significance of home economics education. During the meeting, Dr. Shazia Khan briefed the Governor on the academic performance and initiatives of the institution in promoting home economics education. She highlighted the efforts being made to equip students with practical knowledge and skills that are essential for personal and economic empowerment. Governor Kundi underscored the need to provide women with greater opportunities to participate in economic activities, emphasizing that economic empowerment is key to women's independence. "A large number of educated women in our province do not pursue formal employment. We must encourage them to initiate income-generating activities from their homes and ensure full government support in this regard," he said. He acknowledged that home economics remains a preferred field among women but stressed the importance of innovation to keep the curriculum relevant in the face of modern educational challenges.



In brief

Firing during funeral leaves 3 dead, 10 Injured F.P. Report

KOHAT: At least three people were killed in a shooting that occurred during a funeral in the Gambat area of Kohat district on Thursday. Gumbat police informed, the tragic incident claimed the lives of three individuals including two women and one man. Additionally, 10 people sustained injuries, including seven women. Police said the shooting was linked to an old enmity. The suspects managed to flee the scene, while police have launched a man-hunt to arrest the assailants.

PO held after exchange of firing F.P. Report

BANNU: A notorious criminal involved in multiple cases of theft, robbery, and contract killings was arrested in an injured condition following an exchange of fire with police personnel in Bannu. Heavy arms were recovered from his possession. The suspect was a proclaimed offender and also wanted by Karachi police in a murder case. According to details, SHO City Police Station Tariq Mehmood was on routine patrol when he received a tip-off regarding the presence of armed criminals near Dande Kalla Chowk, allegedly planning a major heist. Acting promptly, the police team moved towards the location. The arrested individual was identified as Janabz resident of Bahadur Sokari. He is reportedly involved in at least 7 cases registered at City Police Station and 17 others at Cantt Police Station. Additionally, he is wanted by Karachi police in a murder case. Police recovered a loaded Kalashnikov rifle and two magazines from the suspect's possession. His accomplices, however, managed to escape under the cover of darkness. Police have initiated efforts to trace and apprehend the remaining members of the gang.

Women balance diet stressed F.P. Report

BUNER: A one-day seminar was organized with the aim to create awareness about the malnutrition of women and children in Buner district. A joint awareness walk was also conducted to send the message to public. Focal Person for Social Behavior Change Campaign Muhammad Afzal, District Health Officer Buner Dr. Akhtar Nawaz Khan and Lady Health Workers Program Coordinator Dr. Atiq ur Rehman shared valued information on the topic of good health of mothers and children leading towards prosperous Pakistan. The speakers said that an awareness campaign has been formally launched under Benazir Nashu Nama Programme to address the malnutrition of pregnant women and children in Buner district. They told the participants that the lack of availability of nutritious food also affects the social behavior of the mother and child. In this regard, in view of the malnutrition and increasing weakness among children in Buner district, the Benazir Nashu Nama Program, the Health Department and UNICEF have jointly launched a special campaign for pregnant women and children, under which awareness walks will be organized in different areas so that this message reaches every house and pregnant women and children benefit from it and the dream of a prosperous future of Pakistan can be fulfilled.

Govt employees warn protest sit-in outside CM house

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Government employees from across Lower Dir on Thursday warned the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government of a province-wide protest sit-in outside the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar on June 25 if their demands were not met.

The warning came during a protest demonstration organized by the All-Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Lower Dir chapter on the Timergara Press Club. The protestors demanded the implementation of the 30% Disparity Reduction Allowance (DRA) announced by the federal government and a raise in salaries in line with the current inflation rate.

As part of the protest, a complete pendo-down and lockout strike was observed in government offices, and schools remained closed throughout the district.

Hundreds of employees took part in the demonstration, representing various AGEGA-affiliated bodies including the All-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Subject Specialists Association (AKSSA), Wahdat-e-Asatiza, All Pakistan Clerks' Association (APCA), Young Teachers Association, All Primary Teachers Association (APTA), Village Council Secretaries, Tanzeem-e-Asatiza, Paramedics Association, Itihad-e-Asatiza, Insaf Teachers Association, Malgari Ustazan, and staff from the administrative departments.

The protesters marched from the Education Complex in Balambat to Shaheed Chowk, Timergara, where they staged a sit-in. Holding placards and banners inscribed with their demands, the demonstrators criticized the provincial

government for ignoring their concerns.

Addressing the protest, AGEGA Chairman Akhonzada Obaidullah, APCA Provincial Chairman Muhammad Saleem Khan, AGEGA General Secretary Muslim Khan, APTA District President Qazi Habibullah, AKSSA President Yousaf Khan, Young Teachers Association Provincial President Atta ur Rehman, Insaf Teachers Association District President Abdur Rehman, and others accused the provincial government of mismanaging funds and ignoring employee welfare. They said the KP government had filled its coffers for luxuries but had no funds for salary increases. The speakers also condemned the proposed pension reforms, calling them an attempt to deprive employees of their rightful benefits.

The leaders reiterated that if the provincial government fails to approve the DRA and revise salaries in accordance with inflation, government employees from all districts would converge in Peshawar for a sit-in protest on June 25.

Sports' gala held: A sports gala was organized by the District Sports Office at Government High School Mian Banda, featuring athletics events such as races, javelin throw, high jump, and long jump. District Education Officer Inayatullah Khan, Assistant Commissioner Timergara Abdul Aziz, and District Sports Officer Ibrahim Mohmand attended as chief guests. Trophies and cash prizes were awarded to winning students.

Speakers emphasized the importance of sports in promoting leadership, teamwork, and physical fitness among students. They said that physical activity was essential for a healthy body and mind, and students should actively participate in sports alongside academics to ensure their overall development.

Arrangements for Muharram reviewed

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: In order to ensure the law and order and better arrangements in connection with the upcoming Muharram-ul-Haram, an important meeting was held in Parachinar under the chairmanship of the Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah, which besides others, was also attended by the DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, Deputy Commissioner Kurram Ashfaq Khan, Commanding Officer 39-AK Colonel Ali, DPO Kurram Malik Habib Khan, Assistant Commissioner Upper Kurram and district heads of all concerned departments.

During the meeting, security, cleanliness, lighting, water, medical facilities,

and other administrative matters were discussed in detail for the peaceful and effective holding of gatherings and processions during the Muharram-ul-Haram in the Kurram district. Commissioner Kohat on this occasion, directed all the departments to ensure provision of all necessary facilities during Muharram-ul-Haram under mutual communication, coordination and a coherent strategy so that the citizens do not face any kind of trouble.

Commissioner Kohat emphasized that maintaining communal harmony, brotherhood and a peaceful atmosphere is the common responsibility of all of us. At the end, the participants expressed their determination that all institutions will fulfill their responsibilities to

maintain peace and order during the Muharram-ul-Haram with mutual cooperation.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Kohat also met with Shia and Sunni elders in this regard and took them into confidence. Similarly, he also inspected the routes of Muharram processions in detail and gave necessary instructions regarding security measures. Sunni and Shia elders assured their full cooperation for the peaceful conduct of Muharram-ul-Haram.

The district administration also announced the establishment of monitoring committees and coordination committees at different levels in the coming days so that immediate contact and coordination can be ensured in any situation.

TMA workers demand increase in allowances

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: On the call of All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA), workers of Tehsil Municipal Authority (TMA), Landi Kotal demanded thirty percent increase in their allowances in a protest demo held in tehsil compound on Thursday.

Led by its head Abdurrehman, scores of the employees while carrying placards inscribed with slogans in favor of their demands, recorded their protest in front of TMA, Landi Kotal. They expressed their reservations over what they said anti-employees' policy of the incumbent government and said no relief was granted to them in the recently announced provincial budget.

Salaries and allowances of the parliamentarians were increased many fold while



the government employees were granted tricked them only on fifty percent increase in their benefits that was unfair, they remarked.

They maintained that they along with other government employees of the province would warmly participate in the protest rally, organized on June 23rd, 2025 in front of the provincial assembly to safeguard their interests. In the same way under the banner of AGEGA protest rallies of the government employees were organized outside Jamrud and Bara Press club

to resent the ignoring attitude of the provincial government.

They went on that the Federal government approved thirty percent in allowances for government employees but the KP government announced fifty percent increase that was a step mother behavior towards them. They had been executing their duties with efficiency and honesty therefore they demanded a federal government like increase in their salaries and allowances to perform free of economic pressure.

PAM delegation calls on VC Kohat University

F.P. Report

KOHAT: A delegation of the Poshtana Adabi Malgari (PAM) Kohat, led by prominent literary figure and former member of the Provincial Assembly Dr. Iqbal Fana, met the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of Kohat University Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas in his office and welcomed him and congratulated him on assuming the important responsibilities of the Vice Chancellor.

The delegation was comprised of Professor Dr. Wazir Shadan, Professor Sajjad Ali Khan, Professor Fazal

Rahim Faazil, Dr. Shakir Orakzai, and Advocate Fazal Mahmood. They presented a bouquet to the Vice Chancellor and formally welcomed him to Kohat University. They on this occasion, also submitted a formal request for the establishment of a Pashto department in the university.

Vice Chancellor Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas expressed happiness over the visit of the delegation and assured them that the efforts made by PAM for the Pashto language and literature of Kohat would soon be implemented. It may be recalled that the Vice

Chancellor also belongs to an academic and literary Pashtun family. He is the grandson of the renowned Pashto writer Syed Jafar Hussain Rashtuni. Rashtuni is the author of more than 30 books, among which the poetic translation of the Holy Quran is noteworthy.

The members of the PAM Kohat also presented their academic and literary works (books) as gifts to the Vice Chancellor and said that PAM Kohat attaches great importance to the Vice Chancellor's love and dedication to the Pashto language and literature.

Seminar highlights importance of balanced diet for mothers, children

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A one-day seminar titled "Healthy Food, Healthy Mothers and Children, Prosperous Pakistan" was organized in Swat by the Benazir Nashunma Program, Health Department, World Food Program, and UNICEF. The seminar aimed to address malnutrition among women and children and create awareness about the importance of a balanced diet.

Deputy DHO Swat Dr. Fazal Arif and other experts emphasized the significance of a balanced diet in increasing immunity. They stressed that children, young girls, pregnant, and lactating mothers should consume a variety of foods, including pulses, vegetables, fruits, grains, milk, and meat.

The seminar recommended that pregnant and lactating women require a diverse diet rich in nutrients. Participants were urged to include at least five types of food in their daily diet. Lady health workers



were tasked with providing door-to-door awareness and identifying women and children suffering from malnutrition.

The program was highlighted for its efforts in not only raising awareness about balanced diets but also providing financial assistance to women, mothers, young girls, and children.

The seminar concluded with a

walk, emphasizing the importance of nutrition and encouraging the community to adopt healthy eating habits. The experts agreed that nutritional deficiencies can be addressed through a balanced diet that includes vegetables, fruits, pulses, and other food items. By promoting healthy eating habits, the community can work towards reducing malnutrition among women and children.

Sports competition kicks off at KUST

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Professor Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, vice chancellor inaugurated Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) graced the event as the chief guest and emphasized the importance of sports in promoting both physical and mental well-being among students.

The ceremony was attended by Director Sports KUST Mr. Wajid Khan, Director Administration Mr. Asad Habib, Protocol Officer Muhammad Asim, Events Manager Hafiz Rubail Nazir, along with faculty members, students, non-teaching staff, and a large number of sports enthusiasts.

The event marked the commencement of various sports competitions, a walk, and other activities that will continue until June 23, 2025. Speaking on the occasion, Director Sports Mr. Wajid Khan stated that the aim of the week is not only to promote sports but also to encourage students to embrace discipline, teamwork, and a positive lifestyle.

Law, order situation reviewed

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Former Interior Minister Sherryar Afridi MNA, Chairman DDAC Kohat Shafi Jan MPA and MPA Daud Shah Advocate, on Thursday held separate Jirgas of Ahl-e-Sunnah and Ahl-e-Tashee on the security and other arrangements on the upcoming Muharram-ul-Haram in the office of Deputy Commissioner Kohat.

The Jirgas besides others, were also attended by the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, DPO Kohat Dr. Zahidullah, Tehsil Mayor Kohat Qari Sher Zaman, Tehsil Mayor Lachi Muhammad Ehsan, prominent political figure Seth Gohar Saifullah, ADC (G) Hamid Iqbal, Assistant Commissioners, eminent scholars of Ahl-e-Sunnah and Ahl-e-Tashee, members of the civil society and representatives of various organizations, as well as officers of the Pak Army, other government departments and security agencies.

A detailed review of the security and other arrangements for the peaceful conduct of Muharram-ul-Haram and the establishment of lasting peace during it was reviewed and necessary instructions were given to the concerned departments and institutions.

It was decided in the Jirgas that special arrangements for foolproof security will be made during the Muharram-ul-Haram. Cleanliness will be ensured along the procession routes and around mosques and Imambarahs and arrangements will be made for water supply. A special traffic plan will be made for traffic management by the Traffic Police. Furthermore, there will be no load shedding of electricity and gas during Muharram and no religious scholars of any sect will be allowed to make provocative speeches.

Lack of teaching staff at girls' school in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North) Information Secretary, Engineer Hafiz Yaqoob-ur-Rehman, has expressed grave concern over the non-appointment of teaching staff at Government Girls Higher Secondary School Shatai Dara in tehsil Balambat, which has resulted in the suspension of educational activities and deprivation of female students from higher education.

Accompanied by local elders, including elected farmer member of Village Council Shatai Dara Dilawar Khan and former tehsil nazim Imranuddin Advocate, Hafiz Yaqoob visited the school to review the situation. During the visit, he noted that although the school was upgraded to higher secondary level in 2017 by a Jamaat-e-Islami MPA to promote girls' education in the area, intermediate classes have yet to be launched due to the lack of appointed faculty.

Speaking to the media, Engineer Hafiz Yaqoob strongly urged the provincial education department to immediately begin intermediate classes and deploy the required teaching staff. He warned that if immediate action is not taken, students, parents, and local residents will be forced to protest, and the education department and district administration will be held fully responsible for the consequences.

Echoing these concerns, Dilawar Khan and Imranuddin Advocate criticized the government's apathy and emphasized that education is a fundamental right of every child. They urged authorities to act without further delay or risk facing strong public backlash.

Engineer Hafiz Yaqoob also made it clear that Jamaat-e-Islami would not tolerate any negligence in the education sector and vowed to fight for the educational rights of female students through all available means. He reiterated the demand for the immediate commencement of intermediate classes at the school to ensure girls are not deprived of their right to education.

Board employees' demand: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Boards Employees Coordination Council has rejected the government's proposed decision to introduce e-marking in board examinations,

AGEGA hold protest in favor of demands

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Hundreds of government employees staged a protest demonstration in front of the Mardan Press Club under the auspices of AGEGA in support of their demands. The protesters held banners and placards on which their demands were written.

The protesters raised slogans against the provincial government. Addressing the protest were Central General Secretary of APCA, Niazi Khattak, Provincial General Secretary of AGGA, Hafiz Zubair Ahmed, Chairman of the Education Council, Usman Sangar, Hafiz Inam, Ikram Bacha, Sharafat Ullah Yousafzai, Nasiruddin, Muhammad Sher Khan, Khalid and others criticized the PTI government and said that all employees have the right to a 100% increase in salaries and a 30% disparity reduction allowance on the federal model.

The provincial government should stop exploiting government employees and give them their rights. The speakers said that the recent budget is an anti-government budget that has set an example of injustice and inequality for ordinary citizens as well as government employees. The speakers said that before the budget, Provincial Finance Advisor Muzammil Aslam had promised the AGEGA leaders that the provincial government would increase the salaries of government employees on the federal model but the provincial

budget deprived the employees of the legitimate right of government employees, namely disparity redistribution allowance. **Secretary social welfare visits drug rehab center:** Secretary Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment Department Nazir Hussain Shah paid a surprise visit to the Drug Rehabilitation Center in Mardan.

During the visit, the Secretary inspected various wards, assessed hygiene conditions, and reviewed other facilities provided at the center. He appreciated the hard work and compassionate care being extended by the staff to the individuals undergoing rehabilitation.

He also gave certain suggestions and issued directives for further improvement, which were duly noted by the relevant officials. The officials assured that these recommendations would be incorporated into future planning to further strengthen the institution and enhance the effectiveness of its services.

Vaccinations in childhood key for healthy life: Vaccines are a highly effective tool to protect children from life-threatening diseases, said Dr. Imtiaz Ali, EPI Coordinator, during an awareness seminar held at the TB Hospital in Baghdadah, Mardan. The event was organized under the guidance of the district administration and the health department, focusing on polio eradication and routine immunization.

Dr. Imtiaz emphasized

that polio is an incurable but preventable disease, and timely immunization can save children from life-long paralysis. He stressed the importance of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), which is operational in Mardan like the rest of the country, offering free vaccines to protect against 12 deadly diseases, including TB, polio, pneumonia, hepatitis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, measles, rubella, typhoid, meningitis, and diarrhea.

Dr. Fahad Asif (DSO - DEOC) and Zawar Hussain (DHCSO) also spoke at the seminar, pointing out that polio primarily affects children under ten and spreads due to poor hygiene and contaminated food or water. They urged parents to ensure their children are vaccinated on time to help build a healthy and disease-free society.

Commissioner directs to approve revised PC1 for Girls cadet college: Commissioner Mardan Nisar Ahmad has directed the concerned authorities to ensure the prompt approval of the revised PC-1 for the Girls Cadet College Mardan by the relevant forum. He emphasized that this step is essential for the timely completion of the project and the relocation of the college to its newly constructed campus. He made these remarks while presiding over a meeting at his office to review the progress of the construction work at the Girls Cadet College.



Russia fears another loss in Middle East

MOSCOW (BBC): When Israel launched Operation Rising Lion, officials in Russia described the current escalation in the Middle East as "alarming" and "dangerous." Still, Russian media were quick to stress the potential positives for Moscow.

Among them: A rise in global oil prices which is forecast to boost Russia's coffers; The distraction of global attention away from Russia's war on Ukraine. "Kyiv has been forgotten" was a headline in Moskovsky Komsomolets; And if the Kremlin's offer to mediate in the conflict was accepted, Russia could portray itself as a key player in the Middle East and as a peacemaker, despite its actions in Ukraine.

However, the longer Israel's military operation goes on, the greater the realisation that Russia has much to lose from current events. "The escalation of the conflict carries serious risks and potential costs for Moscow," wrote Russian political scientist Andrei Kortunov in business daily Kommersant. "The fact remains that Russia was unable to prevent a mass strike by Israel on a country with which five months ago [Russia] signed a comprehensive strategic

partnership.

"Clearly Moscow is not prepared to go beyond political statements condemning Israel, it's not ready to provide Iran with military assistance." The Russian-Iranian strategic partnership deal which Vladimir Putin and President Masoud Pezeshkian signed earlier this year is not a military alliance. It does not oblige Moscow to come to Tehran's defence. At the time, though, Moscow talked it up.

In an interview with the Ria Novosti news agency, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted that the agreement paid "special attention to the strengthening of co-ordination in the interests of peace and security on the regional and global levels, and the desire of Moscow and Tehran for closer co-operation on security and defence". In the last six months Moscow has already lost one key ally in the Middle East, Bashar al-Assad. After the Syrian leader was deposed last December he was offered asylum in Russia. The prospect of regime change in Iran, the thought of losing another strategic partner in the region, will be of major concern to

Moscow.

Commenting on developments in the Middle East, Moskovsky Komsomolets concluded: "In global politics right now, massive changes are taking place in real time which will affect life in our country, either directly or indirectly." Vladimir Putin will be spending much of this week in St Petersburg where the city is hosting its annual International Economic Forum.

The event was once dubbed "Russia's Davos", but the label doesn't really apply now. In recent years the chief executives of big Western companies have stayed away – especially since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Nonetheless, the organisers claim that this year representatives from more than 140 countries and territories will attend.

Russian authorities will almost certainly use the event to try to demonstrate that attempts to isolate Russia over the war in Ukraine have failed. An economic forum it may be, but geopolitics is never far away. We'll be watching closely for any comments the Kremlin leader makes about the Middle East and about Ukraine.

France to hold next G7 summit in Evian spa town

PARIS (AFP): Next year's summit of the Group of Seven powers will take place in Evian, the French spa town known for its eponymous mineral water, President Emmanuel Macron announced. Macron made the announcement with a social media video as he took part in the 2025 summit in the Canadian Rockies resort of Kananaskis.

Speaking afterward to reporters, Macron said that Evian and its surrounding region "have shown a real willingness and real commitment to hold this major international gathering." Evian-les-Bains, in the Alps near the border with Switzerland, gained fame starting in the 19th century for its natural spring water and became a high-end resort that drew royalty and celebrities.

It will not be Evian's first time at the center of international diplomacy. In 1962, the Evian Accords ended the Algerian war and established the way for the northern African country's independence from France.

The G7 summit rotates each year among one member of the club of major industrial democracies -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. France was last host of the G7 in 2019 when the summit took place in the southwestern beach resort of Biarritz. The United States will be host in 2027, offering President Donald Trump an opportunity to throw a major international summit in a locale of his choosing.

The 2025 summit focused in part on Trump-related trade tensions and support for Ukraine, with President Volodymyr Zelensky among the invited guests, but was overshadowed by Israel's military campaign against Iran.

Russia has a plan for long-term aggression

BRUSSELS (AP): Russia poses a direct threat to the European Union through acts of sabotage and cyberattacks, but its massive military spending suggests that President Vladimir Putin also plans to use his armed forces elsewhere in the future, the EU's top diplomat warned.

"Russia is already a direct threat to the European Union," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said. She listed a series of Russian airspace violations, provocative military exercises, and attacks on energy grids, pipelines and undersea cables. Kallas noted that Russia is already spending more on defense than the EU's 27 nations combined, and this year will invest more "on defense than its own health care, education and social policy combined."

"This is a long-term plan for a long-term aggression. You don't spend that much on (the) military, if you do not plan to use it," Kallas told EU lawmakers in Strasbourg, France. "Europe is under attack and our continent sits in a world becoming more dangerous," she added.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte has said that Russia is producing as much weapons and ammunition in three months as the 32 allies together make in a year. He believes that Russia could be in a position to launch an attack on a NATO ally by the end of the decade. The acts of sabotage and cyberattacks are mostly aimed at undermining European support for Ukraine, military officers and experts have said.

But concern is mounting in Europe that Russia could try to test NATO's Article 5 security guarantee — the pledge that an attack on any one of the allies would be met with a collective response from all 32. In 2021, NATO allies acknowledged that significant and cumulative cyberattacks might, in certain circumstances, also be considered an armed attack that could lead them to invoke Article 5, but so far no action has been taken.

With the Trump administration now turning its sights on security challenges in the Middle East and China, Europe has been left to fend for itself, and for Ukraine, and finds itself in a more precarious position.



BANGKOK: Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra flanked by senior army figures at a news conference.

Hypersonic missiles are stirring fears in the Iran-Israel conflict

BARCELONA (AP): Iran is boasting that it has hypersonic missiles and says it already has begun firing the cutting-edge weapons at Israel. There is no evidence that Iran has unleashed the missiles, and experts are skeptical of the claim.

But the use of these fast-moving projectiles could test Israel's vaunted missile-defense system and alter the course of the fighting between the two bitter enemies. Here's a closer look at these advanced weapons: What is a hypersonic missile and what makes them so feared?

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard claimed that it had fired what it said were hypersonic "Fattah 1" missiles toward Israel. But whether these missiles are hypersonic is a matter of debate. Simply put, hypersonic weapons are any missile that travels beyond Mach 5, five times the speed of sound. Ballistic missiles, fired high up or outside the earth's atmosphere, routinely reach this speed. But in modern warfare, experts say hypersonic weapons must also have advanced navigation systems – making them nimble and capable of changing their trajectory. This can challenge traditional defense systems, said Jack Watling, a senior fellow at the Royal United Services Institute.

Traditional ballistic missiles fly on a trajectory that missile-defense systems like the US-made Patriot can anticipate. Cruise missiles, which can hug terrain, or hypersonic missiles, which are fired to a lower altitude, have less predictable trajectories and are harder to stop. "Radar can see a missile on a ballistic curve because

it's above the radar horizon. If it's a hypersonic glide vehicle, it can fly lower and hills get in the way," Watling said. "That further reduces the time that you will have to engage because if it comes over the horizon, you suddenly see it, and then it's over."

Who has hypersonic missiles or is developing them? Experts say the US and China are the only countries that have developed new-generation hypersonic missiles — but neither have used them in battle. Other nations such as Russia, North Korea and Pakistan have tested or used missiles with similar but less sophisticated technology.

"In the way that it is currently being used, the term 'hypersonic' often has little to no meaning and at the same time fuels competitive dynamics and a fear of missing out on the technology," according to a 2022 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The US says it is putting hypersonic missiles on a stealth destroyer and is developing and testing other programs.

China tested its first hypersonic missile in 2017 and has since developed an array of hypersonic weapons that the US Defense Department says could threaten Hawaii, Alaska and even the continental US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has warned of China's "huge investments" in military technology including hypersonic weapons. Most countries can't make missiles that would weather the temperature and momentum stresses of these incredibly fast munitions, Watling said.

"This is a hugely complicated task.

The Iranians don't have the capacity to manufacture them," he said. Most of the missiles Iran has deployed against Israel travel at hypersonic speed, but are barely maneuverable, so are not considered true hypersonic missiles, said Yehoshua Kalisky, a senior researcher at the Israeli think tank INSS and a former scientist in Israeli defense industries. The missile it has launched, the Fattah 1 has had minimal success. Israel says Iran has fired over 400 missiles, with over 40 causing damage or casualties.

"Israel is able to intercept more than 95% of the missiles because speed is not crucial," said Kalisky. "What is important is the maneuverability of the incoming missiles, and so far the maneuverability of these missiles is limited." He said Iran has two fast and maneuverable missiles, the Khorramshahr and Fattah 2, that would be "more difficult" to intercept. But neither have been deployed. When and where have hypersonic missiles been used?

Russia has claimed to have used hypersonic missiles in its war against Ukraine, but experts say that while fast they do not maneuver enough to be considered true hypersonic weapons. Russia President Vladimir Putin boasted of the development and use of the Oreshnik in Ukraine — claiming that flies "like a meteorite" at 10 times the speed of sound, and that it was immune to any missile defense system. Ukrainian military officials said it reached Mach 11. The Pentagon said last December the Oreshnik fired was an experimental type of intermediate-range ballistic missile.

Russia tells US not to strike Iran, warns of nuclear catastrophe

ST. PETERSBURG (Reuters): Russia is telling the United States not to strike Iran because it would radically destabilise the Middle East, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said, and Moscow said Israeli strikes risked triggering a nuclear catastrophe.

Russia signed a strategic partnership with Iran in January and also has a relationship with Israel, although it has been strained by Moscow's war in Ukraine. A Russian offer to mediate in the Israel-Iran conflict has not been taken up. Ryabkov, speaking on the sidelines of an economic forum in St Petersburg, told Interfax news agency Moscow was urging Washington to refrain from direct involvement.

"This would be a step

that would radically destabilise the entire situation," Interfax cited Ryabkov as saying, and criticising such "speculative, conjectural options." The head of Russia's SVR foreign intelligence service, Sergei Naryshkin, has said the situation between Iran and Israel is now critical and Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear infrastructure meant the world was "millimetres" from catastrophe.

"Nuclear facilities are being struck," she told Reuters, adding that the UN nuclear safety watchdog had already noted specific damage. "Where is the (concern from the) entire world community? Where are all the environmentalists? I don't know if they

think they are far away and that this (radiation) wave won't reach them. Well, let them read what happened at Fukushima," she said, referring to the 2011 accident at the Japanese nuclear plant.

Israel says it has struck Iranian nuclear facilities to prevent Tehran developing an atomic weapon. Iran denies seeking nuclear arms. In a 20-year strategic partnership pact signed in January by President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Russia did not undertake to help Tehran militarily and is under no obligation to do so despite the countries' close military ties.

Putin, who has already lost an important partner in the Middle East with the fall of Syria's Bashar al-

ICE walks back limits on raids targeting farms, restaurants and hotels

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US immigration officials have walked back limits on enforcement targeting farms, restaurants, hotels and food processing plants just days after putting restrictions in place, two former officials familiar with the matter said, an abrupt shift that followed contradictory public statements by President Donald Trump.

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement leadership told field office heads during a call that it would roll back a directive issued last week that largely paused raids on the businesses, the former officials said, requesting anonymity to discuss the new guidance. ICE officials were told a daily quota to make 3,000 arrests per day - 10 times the average last year during former President Joe Biden's administration - would remain in effect, the former officials said. ICE field office heads had raised concerns they could not meet the quota without raids at the businesses that had been exempted, one of the sources said.

It was not clear why last week's directive was reversed. Some ICE officials left the call confused, and it appeared they would still need to tread carefully with raids on the previously exempted businesses, the former officials said. US Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said ICE would continue to make arrests at worksites but did not respond to questions about the new guidance.

"There will be no safe spaces for industries who harbor violent criminals or purposely try to undermine ICE's efforts," she said in a

statement. The Washington Post first reported the reversal. Trump took office in January aiming to deport record numbers of immigrants in the US illegally. ICE doubled the pace of arrests under Trump compared with last year but still remains far below what would be needed to deport millions of people. Top White House aide Stephen Miller ordered ICE in late May to dramatically increase arrests to 3,000 per day, leading to intensified raids that prominently targeted some businesses.

Trump said in a Truth Social post that farms and hotel businesses had been suffering from the ramped up enforcement but also said, without evidence or explanation, that criminals were trying to fill those jobs. ICE issued guidance that day pausing most immigration enforcement

at agricultural, hospitality and food processing businesses. But in another Truth Social post, Trump called on ICE to target the Democratic strongholds of Los Angeles, Chicago and New York and to use the full extent of their authority to increase deportations. A White House official said Trump was keeping a promise to deliver the country's single largest mass deportation program.

"Anyone present in the United States illegally is at risk of deportation," the White House official said. Deborah Fleischaker, who held senior roles at both DHS and ICE during Biden's presidency, said the shifting ICE guidance reflects broader turmoil at the agency since Trump took office. The White House has ousted multiple ICE leaders as it pressed for more arrests.

Xi signs treaty to elevate ties with Central Asia

BEIJING (Reuters): China President Xi Jinping signed a treaty to elevate ties with Central Asian nations, as Beijing looks to further deepen cooperation on trade, energy and infrastructure with the resource-rich region.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Beijing has been stepping up efforts to boost economic links with Central Asian nations traditionally within Russia's sphere of influence, drawn by their strategic location and energy resources. At a regional summit in the Kazakh capital of Astana, Xi, lauding a milestone, signed a treaty of "permanent good-neighbourliness and friendly cooperation" with leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, China's official Xinhua news agency reported.

The summit this week is the second such gathering, following the pomp-filled, inaugural gathering in northwest China in 2023. Both occasions have coincided with meetings of G7 leaders. "At present, the world is undergoing accelerating changes unseen in a century, entering a new period of turbulence and transformation," Xinhua quoted Xi as saying in a speech at the summit.

"Trade wars and tariff wars produce no winners, and unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonism are bound to harm both others and oneself," he said, in a thinly veiled swipe at the United States that had engaged in escalating tariffs with Beijing. "China is ready to work with Central Asian countries to safeguard international justice, oppose hegemonism and power politics," Xi said.

He also pledged 1.5 billion yuan (\$208.86 million) in grant assistance to the Central Asian countries this year to support their livelihood and development projects, and called for more cooperation in areas including trade, minerals and agriculture. Despite a trade truce with the US, Beijing has been keen to consolidate relations with its regional partners.

China's two-way trade with the five Central Asian countries reached a record 286.42 billion yuan in the first five months this year, a 10.4% year-on-year increase, Xinhua reported citing the Chinese Customs. Turkmenistan, a major supplier of natural gas for China, is the only Central Asian nation with a trade surplus with China. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan's trade deficits

with China run into the tens of billions.

In separate bilateral meetings with the regional leaders, Xi called for expanded cooperation in natural gas, minerals, international railway and law enforcement, according to summaries posted by the Chinese foreign ministry. In meetings with the Uzbek and Kyrgyz presidents, he urged progress on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, an overland route bypassing Russia.

The project has been discussed since the 1990s but gained new importance after the sanctions on Russia resulted in shippers between China and Europe avoiding sending goods via Russia. The five former Soviet republics offer China alternative routes to secure fuel and food in the event of disruptions elsewhere.

In the long-term, the Central Asia route could potentially help cut freight transport times between China and Europe. In a separate meeting with Turkmen President Serdar Berdimukhamedov, Xi said "both sides should expand the scale of natural gas cooperation, explore cooperation in non-resource fields, and optimize trade structure."

G7 summit minus Trump rallies behind Ukraine

ALBERTA (AFP): Group of Seven leaders vowed greater support for Ukraine but stopped short of joint condemnation of Russia for its growing attacks, at a summit missing Donald Trump.

The US president had been due to speak at the G7 summit with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, with whom he has had a volatile relationship, but flew back over the Israel-Iran conflict. Zelensky met the remaining leaders at a remote lodge in the Canadian Rockies hours after Russia hit Kyiv with one of the worst bombardments since it invaded in February 2022, killing at least 10 people in the capital.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney welcomed Zelensky and announced Can\$2 billion (\$1.47bn) of military support, including drones and helicopters, for Ukraine. But the G7 summit stopped short of issuing a joint statement, unlike in past years under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden when the club of major industrial democracies denounced Russian "aggression."

A Canadian official, backtracking on an earlier account of the United States trying to water down a pro-

posed statement, said there was never an attempt to issue one due to Trump's continued hopes of mediating with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "It was clear that it would not have been feasible to find detailed language that all G7 partners could agree to in that context," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Carney dismissed suggestions of friction, saying that all G7 leaders agreed to be "resolute in exploring all options to maximize pressure on Russia, including financial sanctions." But he admitted that some G7 leaders "would say above and beyond" what was in the chair's summary he issued instead of a formal statement signed by all leaders.

G7 leaders, however, managed unity on a joint statement on the Iran conflict that backed Israel but also called broadly for de-escalation, despite Trump contemplating greater US military involvement. Carney earlier joined Britain in tightening sanctions on Russia's so-called shadow fleet of ships used to circumvent international sanctions on its oil sales. "These sanctions strike right at the heart of Putin's war machine, choking off his ability to continue his bar-

baric war in Ukraine," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a statement.

US lawmakers have drafted a package of new sanctions on Russia but Trump has been hesitant to give his support and isolate Putin, to whom he spoke by telephone on the eve of the G7 summit. Trump infamously berated Zelensky in the Oval Office on February 28, saying he was ungrateful for US aid, but has since voiced disappointment that Putin has rebuffed a US proposal for at least a temporary ceasefire.

Zelensky told Carney the latest Russian attack showed the need for allies' support and pressure on Moscow -- while making clear that he still backed Trump-led calls for negotiations. "It's important for our soldiers to be strong in the battlefield, to stay strong until Russia will be ready for the peace negotiations," said Zelensky, who cut short meetings in Canada scheduled after the summit.

French President Emmanuel Macron accused his Russian counterpart of exploiting global focus on the Middle East to carry out the deadly attack. "It shows the complete cynicism of President Putin," Macron told reporters at the summit.

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US defence firms chase European military spending wave

US defence giants, backed by a strong Congressional delegation from Washington, used the Paris Airshow to showcase cutting-edge technologies and court European partners as they seek to tap into rising regional military spending. Many European nations have pledged to significantly increase defence budgets in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and as US President Donald Trump's administration has threatened to scale back military support for the region, reporter Reuters.

That tension has been notably absent at this week's Paris Airshow, where US lawmakers and arms manufacturers pledged greater transatlantic partnership as Europe ramps up spending on everything from artillery shells and fighter jets to missile defence systems. "We understand that our allies and partners are a force multiplier, so we are stronger when we are working together," US Senator Jerry Moran, a member of Trump's Republican party, told reporters at the show, the world's largest aerospace and defence gathering.

Moran, whose delegation was supporting US weapons makers, said it was in Paris to send a message that the US "is a dependable and reliable partner". The conciliatory tone stands in stark contrast to the Trump administration's recent string of disparaging remarks about Europe and its defence industry. "I think antagonising our allies does not make us stronger," Democrat Senator Jeanne Shaheen told reporters in Paris, expressing her desire to cement defence relations with Europe.

Despite pledges by many European nations to boost military self-sufficiency, the continent remains heavily reliant on US defence manufacturers, said Reuters.

For instance, Europe buys American-made fighter jets and missiles from Lockheed Martin, Patriot missile defence systems from Raytheon Technologies and military jets and helicopters built by Boeing. In emerging military areas, like artificial intelligence, drones and satellite constellations, US tech firms like Anduril, Palantir and Elon Musk's SpaceX are far ahead, quotes Reuters.

US firms are hoping to press home their advantage as European military spending surges, including through partnerships which are a way to soften any potential diplomatic tensions, delegates said.

US drone-maker Anduril and German defence giant Rheinmetall said on Wednesday they will link up to build military drones for European markets, in a sign of Europe leveraging American technology to boost military capabilities. Thomas Laliberty, president of Land & Air Defense Systems at Raytheon, said there were no easy replacements for its weapons in Europe and he expected the firm to maintain a long-term footprint on the continent, including through new partnerships.

Laliberty said Raytheon was close to announcing a plan to manufacture Stingers — a lightweight air defence missile used by Ukrainian forces against Russia — in Europe. "For immediate needs, Raytheon is well positioned to support the European demand," Laliberty told reporters in Paris. "We have a very bright future here."

Boeing, which won a contract from Trump's administration to develop the next-generation F-47 fighter jet this year, said Europe and the US would remain long-term partners despite political wobbles, partly to hold off the Chinese threat.

"Nobody can do it themselves - maybe the Chinese can try, but certainly the rest of us, we are going to have to work together," said Turbo Sjogren, Boeing's general manager for government services.

"To do otherwise takes too long and will be unaffordable."

The chairman of Italian aerospace and defence group Leonardo , Stefano Pontecorvo, added that US participation in some European programmes would be "unavoidable" in coming years due to the defence technologies available to them.

European rivals were bullish about their future growth prospects but said budget constraints and a lack of regional alliances were holding back progress, conceding that they would continue to need significant US support.

"National sovereignty matters but fragmentation is detrimental. We need to find a way to hit a balance," Leonardo CEO Roberto Cingolani told reporters on Tuesday. Jean-Brice Dumont, head of air power, defence and space at Airbus, said Europe's dependence on the US was "very high".

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The Statesman General: Asim Munir and the rise of responsible power

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

THE recent extraordinary meeting between Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir and United States President Donald Trump has captured the attention of global observers, analysts, and governments alike. It was not merely a high-profile engagement between two prominent figures; it was a historic symbol of recognition-recognition of Pakistan as a peaceful, responsible, and militarily capable nation, and a confirmation that its armed forces stand among the finest in the world. The respect and honor extended to General Asim Munir by President Trump served as a diplomatic seal on Pakistan's growing credibility, strategic relevance, and moral stature in a turbulent geopolitical landscape.

This meeting carried the weight of a thousand messages. At its core, it signaled to the world that Pakistan's measured and professional approach in military affairs is not only acknowledged but admired. General Munir, representing the disciplined and courageous ethos of the Pakistan Army, carried with him the image of a country that chooses reason over rage, strategic patience over impulsive retaliation, and responsibility over recklessness. The world took notice when Pakistan, faced with India's recent aggressive provocations, responded with precisely the amount of force required-not an inch more, not a moment too late. This calculated yet firm reply not only stunned India but sent an even stronger signal to those who quietly enable New

Delhi's confrontational policies.

Historically, wars and military escalations are often remembered for their devastation, but seldom for restraint. Pakistan's response-guided by wisdom rather than vengeance-will be recorded as one of the rare moments in modern history when a nation, though capable of inflicting great damage, chose the path of intelligent and limited engagement. This in itself was a moral and military triumph. And as the Qur'an reminds us in Surah Aal-e-Imran (3:26), "Say, O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent." The elevation and recognition of General Munir at such a forum is but a reflection of divine will that lifts the dignified and humbles the arrogant.

The reverberations of this meeting were most acute across the eastern border. The Indian political and media establishment has found itself stunned into uneasy silence. For a country long obsessed with regional hegemony and military domination, the image of a Pakistani General being honored on the world stage-particularly by a leader like Donald Trump who represents the core of Western political influence-was difficult to digest. It shook the ideological foundations of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had long relied on an aggressive stance towards Pakistan to

maintain its nationalist rhetoric. Now, that very narrative has begun to unravel. The political myth of India's unchallengeable dominance has been exposed, not through war, but through diplomacy, international acknowledgment, and truth.

The weight of this encounter also lies in the shifting tides of global power. General Munir's meeting came at a time when Pakistan had recently demonstrated the successful operational use of Chinese military products-an event that did not go unnoticed by military analysts and global powers. In diplomacy, emotions are secondary to interests. The effectiveness of China's defense technology in Pakistan's hands has raised important considerations for both Western and Eastern defense strategies. President Trump's outreach to General Munir may also be seen in this light-as a recalibration of alliances, a gesture of engagement, and a tacit acknowledgment that the future of regional security lies not in isolating Pakistan, but in working with it.

Beyond South Asia, this meeting has triggered hopeful discussions in broader geopolitical theatres.

General Munir is not just a national military leader; he is increasingly seen as a statesman with influence that extends far beyond Pakistan's borders. In diplomatic circles, it is being quietly discussed that his sober and balanced approach might help de-escalate long-standing tensions between Iran and Israel. His credibility as a responsible figure with strategic clarity makes him

a suitable interlocutor in delicate negotiations. Furthermore, the Kashmir issue-long ignored or treated as a bilateral dead-lock-has now been reignited in global conscience. With Pakistan's role being increasingly viewed through a lens of reason and responsibility, the possibility of genuine international mediation is growing.

Meanwhile, the Indian media-so often loud, brash, and boastful-is now reeling from the shock. The coverage has turned defensive, confused, and at times contradictory. The narrative they crafted for decades has collapsed under the quiet strength of Pakistan's diplomacy and military restraint.

What the world witnessed in that moment between Donald Trump and General Syed Asim Munir was not just a handshake-it was a shift. A shift in perceptions, in alliances, and in the narrative of South Asian politics. It was a quiet but firm declaration that Pakistan, once seen through the distorted lens of regional hostility and global suspicion, now stands as a credible, mature, and indispensable actor on the world stage.

This meeting will be remembered not just for the symbolism it carried, but for the doors it opened-for peace in the region, for balanced diplomacy, and for the assertion of truth over propaganda. It offered a glimpse into a new geopolitical future where Pakistan's voice is not only heard but respected. And in this dignified emergence, the legacy of Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir will be etched-not just in military annals, but in the history of global diplomacy and peace.

UK projects power in Middle East while maintaining neutrality

Zaid M. Belbagi

SINCE last Friday, the hostilities between Israel and Iran have intensified, with both sides locked in continuous attacks. In response to this growing instability, the UK moved quickly to strengthen its military presence in the Middle East by deploying additional Royal Air Force jets, including Typhoons and air-to-air refuelers. This precautionary measure is part of London's efforts to safeguard its interests and protect its personnel, particularly after Iran threatened to target Western bases should the UK, US or France intervene in its operations against Israel.

The UK has long maintained a significant military footprint in the Middle East. Permanent bases include a naval support facility in Bahrain, the Duqm logistics base and Al-Musannah airbase in Oman and Al-Minhad airbase in the UAE, as well as RAF Akrotiri and Dhakeila in Cyprus. These constitute strategic hubs that support operations across the region.

This presence has significant economic rationale as, since 2010, approximately 60 percent of UK arms exports have gone to the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia being the largest buyer. Trade with the Gulf Cooperation Council states is currently valued at \$57

billion (\$76 billion) annually, with more than £5 billion of that attributed to defense exports.

These exports include fighter jets, military equipment and arms. Gulf countries have shown strong interest in the UK's Typhoon program in particular. Oman, for instance, has received 12 Typhoons and eight Hawk Mk 166 advanced jet trainers. In 2018, Qatar placed a £5 billion order for 24 Typhoons, with an additional 12 jets recently requested. Similarly, Saudi Arabia has already acquired 72 Eurofighter Typhoons from the UK and has been in negotiations for 48 more for several years.

This flourishing defense cooperation reflects the UK's strategic commitment to the region. The Middle East is identified as a priority area in the UK's recently published strategic defense review, which outlines plans to deepen security ties, expand defense trade and develop long-term technology and capability partnerships that also foster economic growth. The UK's permanent presence in the region stands as a clear signal of its long-term commitment. Its decision last December to join the US-Bahrain Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement further deepens its role as a pivotal security partner in the

Middle East.

Moreover, British forces continue to contribute significantly to regional stability. The Royal Navy has helped secure vital shipping lanes in the Red Sea against Houthi threats and, through Operation Shader, the UK remains actively engaged in the international coalition against Daesh.

On the other hand, the Middle East, particularly the Gulf countries, have provided the UK with vital access and basing rights, enabling it to continue to support international security operations and uphold freedom of navigation. These elements are crucial for ensuring domestic energy security, protecting global seaborne trade routes and projecting UK power internationally.

However, amid the escalating conflict between Iran and Israel, marked by ongoing missile and airstrike exchanges, the UK is adopting a precautionary approach to safeguard its military assets in the region. The aim is clear: to prevent any harm to its forces while the situation remains volatile.

This preventive posture reflects the UK's broader stance on the conflict. On Saturday, following a conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Foreign Secretary David Lammy addressed Parliament to outline Britain's diplomatic and military position in the

unfolding crisis. He reaffirmed that, in moments of such tension, the government's top priority remains the safety and welfare of British nationals.

Looking ahead, this carefully maintained neutrality may come under pressure. As outlined in the 2025 strategic defense review, the UK's defense and military cooperation with the Middle East continues to expand, with flourishing partnerships across the Gulf, especially in Bahrain, the UK's longest-standing security partner in the region. This deepening engagement could, over time, create friction or disagreements with Israel, especially as attacks continue and the regional crisis deepens.

With the British involvement in US-Bahrain Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement and growing coordination with Washington and Gulf partners, the UK is transitioning toward a more integrated security role in the region, beyond mere deterrence. The UK now stands at a critical juncture, where safeguarding its military footprint must align with its carefully crafted neutrality. The decisions made in the coming months will not just decide the future of its alliances and presence in the Middle East, they could also redefine Britain's very place on the global defense stage.

From peripheral to pivotal: Pakistan's new place in global strategy

Aiman Khattak

FOR decades, the axis of diplomacy between Washington and Islamabad has pivoted between cautious engagement and strategic necessity. But on June 18, 2025, an extraordinary moment unfolded in the American capital, one that not only reshaped that axis but recalibrated Pakistan's diplomatic posture altogether. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, was received at the White House by President Donald J. Trump in a one-on-one engagement that defied historic precedent and protocol alike.

No previous Chief of Army Staff in Pakistan's history despite multiple high-level visits had ever been invited into the White House, let alone for a private luncheon with the President and a meeting with the entire U.S. Cabinet. Even General

Perviz Musharraf's encounters with American presidents took place in his capacity as Pakistan's head of state. Moreover, General Raheel Sharif and Qamar Javed Bajwa engaged in significant dialogues during their Washington trips, but not in a setting that mirrored the level of urgency, and symbolism that surrounded Field Marshal Munir's reception. The sheer scale and structure of this meeting lunch in the Cabinet Room followed by a private session in the Oval Office marked it as more than diplomatic courtesy; it was strategic choreography.

Field Marshal Munir was joined by Pakistan's National Security Advisor. On the American side, President Trump was accompanied by Secretary of State Senator Marco Rubio and Special Representative for Middle Eastern Affairs, Steve Witkoff. Over what

Munir for his effectiveness against ISIS-K. He revealed that Field Marshal Munir personally informed the U.S. of the arrest of a high-profile Daesh terrorist, "Jaafar", a level of cooperation that underlines the growing synergy between the two security establishments.

But beyond the military optics, the White House session ventured into uncharted terrain. Discussions included avenues for expanding bilateral cooperation in trade, AI, energy, cryptocurrency, mineral extraction, and emerging technologies. According to U.S. analyst Michael Kugelman, the breadth of the dialogue should not be viewed solely through the lens of Iran-Israel conflict. "Trump takes deep personal interest in these matters," he noted, "and Asim Munir has the authority to engage across all of them. It is likely that Kashmir was discussed too."

Indeed, in a rare and candid moment, President Trump lauded Munir's role in preventing a wider war between Pakistan and India. The COAS expressed Pakistan's deep appreciation for Trump's mediatory role in facilitating the ceasefire, acknowledging the U.S. President's "statesmanship and his ability to comprehend and address the multifaceted challenges faced by the global community." This subtle but profound moment affirmed that the Pakistan Army, under Field Marshal Munir, has not only reclaimed regional stability but done so in a way that resonates globally.

The aura around Field Marshal Asim Munir, therefore, is not confined to uniformed command. What sets him apart is the deliberate confidence with which he has engaged with world powers on his terms, with strategic clarity. The invitation extended by him to

Field Marshal Munir was joined by Pakistan's National Security Advisor. On the American side, President Trump was accompanied by Secretary of State Senator Marco Rubio and Special Representative for Middle Eastern Affairs, Steve Witkoff. Over what was originally slated as a one-hour engagement eventually stretching beyond two the conversation expanded across multiple domains, from regional crises to forward-looking economic and technological cooperation. To add on, this was no ordinary dialogue. The meeting came at a time of intensifying Iran-Israel tensions. Only weeks earlier, Field Marshal Munir had met with Iranian General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri—who has since been killed in an Israeli strike. This volatile situation along Pakistan's western border has implications for the broader regional architecture, particularly as Washington seeks to manage its response. Against this backdrop, Trump's decision to leave the G7 Summit early to return to Washington specifically for this meeting is an unmistakable signal of how the U.S. views its current priorities in South Asia.

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At the heart of this meeting was an unspoken acknowledgement: that traditional diplomacy had faltered in recent years, and that the locus of trust, at least from Washington's vantage, now lay firmly with the military institution in Pakistan and the timing reinforces that. Only days before, U.S. CENTCOM Commander General Michael Kurihla had publicly praised Pakistan's military and specifically Field Marshal Gen Asim

President Trump to visit Pakistan was not a ceremonial gesture; it was the articulation of a matured bilateral confidence one rooted in mutual interests, not transactional need.

More tellingly, this visit carries a broader message: Pakistan is no longer content with reactive diplomacy. Under Munir's leadership, it seeks to reassert itself as a proactive regional force diplomatically, militarily, and economically. That Washington now appears ready to engage on this wider spectrum, not just in counter-terrorism but in frontier sectors like AI and cryptocurrency, is a departure from the past.

In a time of global disorder, Field Marshal Asim Munir's composure, credibility, and command have positioned him as not just a military leader but a statesman in uniform. The unfolding events in Iran, the fragile calm with India, and the strategic vacuum in Afghanistan have created a moment of recalibration in which only the most assured hands can steer the course. For now, that hand appears to belong to Pakistan's Field Marshal.

This meeting will not be remembered merely for its symbolism; it will be cited as the moment when Pakistan's military leadership stepped into the diplomatic spotlight not through conflict, but through competence. And in doing so, altered the contours of power in South Asia, perhaps for years to come.

Trump keeps everyone guessing on whether he'll go to war in Iran — perhaps including himself

HE might do it. But he might not. And you've got no idea whether he will. Then again, neither does he. Donald Trump's riffing ahead of the most wrenching national security decision in either of his presidencies is nothing like the complex wargaming and careful filling of public opinion that most commanders in chief require before they send Americans off to fight.

Trump's vague soliloquies and ambiguous comments, on camera and online, seem glib and even negligent given the grave potential consequences of a US attack on Iran's nuclear sites.

But it's how he rolls. He wants to keep friends and foes guessing. He's shown that he believes unpredictability and volatility — factors that most presidents seek to avoid in national security crises — offer him a key advantage.

Trump loves to be the center of attention with the world hanging on his every word. His equivocating creates space for him to postpone the moment of decision and to avoid locking in definitive courses of action he can't reverse. His fans say it's genius. But there's not much evidence that strategy transfers from a real estate magnate's boardroom to complex geopolitical showdowns and global peacemaking.

Iran's Ayatollahs, Israel, US allies, members of Congress, pundits, reporters and Americans watching at home can never be certain what Trump might do next. And no modern president has ever managed the run-up to a possible war as though he is sketching a series of cliffhangers to compel viewers to watch the next episode. Trump is no JFK calmly averting nuclear war with high-pressure diplomatic chess during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Trump's critics have dreaded the moment when he'd face the kind of international crisis he largely avoided during his first term. And his style has serious drawbacks.

His administration has yet to take the American people into its confidence and explain why it has suddenly changed its view that Iran was not building a nuclear weapon. Now, Trump says it's weeks away from one. There's no sign the administration intends to seek authorization from Congress for a possible new act of war against Iran — as the Constitution requires. And it's refusing to say whether it's gamed out how an attack on Iran's

nuclear plant at Fordow could reverberate through a treacherous region and whether it has any kind of exit strategy.

This would be troubling in isolation. But following Washington's disastrous history of plunging into quagmires caused by paltry planning for the day after shock-and-awe beginnings, it's tempting fate. And Trump's serial dishonesty and scorched-earth leadership style mean millions of Americans will need a lot more than his word to trust any decision to wage military action.

It's a tough call because of the potential consequences: Iranian attacks on US bases in the Middle East, potential terrorist attacks on US targets, and a shockwave that could destabilize the world if the regime in Tehran collapses. The latest developments are ominous. A third US aircraft carrier group is moving toward the Middle East. A fierce war of words between Trump and Iran's clerical leaders is heating up. And the president is huddling in daily Situation Room meetings with his top national security aides. CNN reported on Wednesday that the president is preoccupied with finding a way to strike key targets of Iran's nuclear program without being dragged into a full-scale war. Sources familiar with the matter said he wants to avoid the kind of open-ended conflict like those in Iraq and Afghanistan that he's vowed to avoid and that he used as a catalyst for his rise among MAGA voters skeptical of war. These revelations might offer Americans some comfort since they suggest that the president is weighing the implications of his decisions with greater diligence than his offhand patter suggests. There's some logic to his position. No one expects Trump to put US troops on the ground — they could be a sitting target in Iran or in any post-war failed state insurgency, as happened in Iraq and Afghanistan. Trump's first-term assassination raid that killed Iranian intelligence chief Qasem Soleimani didn't unleash fury against US targets that many analysts expected. And US bases in the region are heavily defended against missile attacks. There's also some question about how much Iran's degraded military can now throw at the US and Israel.

The president's plans might be a mystery. But his calculation is a simple one.

He must decide whether US interests are served by joining Israel's assault on Iran to try to destroy the Islamic Republic's nuclear program with unique bunker-busting capabilities that only the United States possesses.

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CNN's Kaitlan Collins that he hadn't made a final decision on what to do as he's besieged by pressure for action by Israelis and warnings from his own MAGA base to stay out of foreign wars. "I have ideas as to what to do, but I haven't made a final — I like to make the final decision one second before it's due, you know, because things change."

Trump's lack of precision worries Democrats.

"It's obviously unclear where his head is at right now, I think he was pretty indecisive on the sub-

ject of Iran, which I can understand," California Democratic Sen. Adam Schiff said on "The Situation Room."

"This is a difficult call. But I don't think we got much guidance as to whether he is optimistic about talks with Iran leaning in towards a potential strike on Iran," Schiff said, reacting to one of Trump's meandering press availabilities.

"It was pretty nebulous, the kind of usual stream-of-consciousness."

There's confusion about conflicting intelligence assessments in the US and Israel about Iran's nuclear progress. Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner is part of a group of senior lawmakers who are given access to the most sensitive classified information. But he's as much in the dark as anyone about what's next.

"I'm a member ... of the Gang of Eight. We're supposed to know," Warner told CNN's Kasie Hunt. "I have no foggy idea what this administration's plans are or what the foreign policy is vis-a-vis Iran."

The question of the administration's contingency planning is also coming into focus. But don't expect any details.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth was confronted by Michigan Democratic Sen. Elissa Slotkin during a hearing on Wednesday. Slotkin speaks from experience:

She was a CIA officer who completed combat tours in Baghdad after the George W. Bush administration's disastrous lack of forethought for how to win peace in Iraq.

"Have you commissioned any day-after planning?" Slotkin asked. "Any force protection, any use of ground troops, in Iran; any cost assessments, because I don't think we doubt what we can do as a country, and in the attack. It's the day after with Iraq and Afghanistan that so many of us have learned to be so deeply concerned about."

Hegseth reacted with disdain. "We have plans for everything, Senator," he said.

Trump showed similar hubris. "I have a plan for everything, but we'll see what happens," he told reporters on the Oval Office.

The president also says he's open to diplomacy. But there's no sign of a James Baker-style peace shuttle.

Far from offering his adversary a face-saving off-ramp, Trump is demanding total surrender at the outset. While this may match Israel's goals, it's a nonstarter for Iran's revolutionary corps of leaders in Tehran, who've founded their regime on more than 45 years of defying successive American presidents.

Trump often seems to be operating in a parallel universe. He for instance insists Iranian leaders wanted to meet and "to come to the White House."

Iran strongly denied any such aspirations.

"We are not begging for anything," Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi told CNN's Christiane Amanpour. "As long as the aggression continues, as long as this brutality continues, we cannot think of engaging."

This points to one of the liabilities of Trump's diplomacy, which also helps explained his failed Ukraine peace drive. His administration shows little skill in creating openings and multilayered negotiating scenarios that can loosen entrenched positions. Trump makes maximalist demands. When interlocutors demur, the process grinds to a halt. So, for now, the country seems on a path to another venture in the Middle East, with uncertain consequences.

But Trump had one more cliffhanger.

"Anything could happen," he said, when asked if the regime in Iran could fall in a response which exemplifies his entire presidency.

— CNN

Arakan Army may be an unexpectedly ally for the Rohingya

Eric Salobir

IN a striking twist of geopolitical irony, one of the most persecuted Muslim communities in the world — the Rohingya — may find their most realistic path home not through the government of Myanmar or through international institutions, but via an unlikely actor: the Arakan Army.

Long viewed with suspicion by the Rohingya themselves and largely ignored by the international community, the Arakan Army has, over the past two years, emerged as the dominant power in Rakhine State. With the Myanmar military regime in rapid retreat and the national unity government struggling to assert territorial control, the Arakan Army now governs 11 of Rakhine's 18 townships. For all intents and purposes, it is the authority that now decides who may live — and return — to western Myanmar.

This new reality should not be underestimated. For years, the global response to the Rohingya crisis has hinged on repatriation through negotiations with Myanmar's military or by placing pressure on the Association of Southeast Nations and the UN. Those efforts have categorically failed. Two rounds of repatriation since 2017 — one under the UN and another led by China — resulted in zero returns.

The refugees in Bangladesh are disillusioned, aid is running dry and extremism is beginning to fester in the camps. As Prime Minister Mohammed Yunus of Bangladesh warned last week at Chatham House, without urgent action "an explosion is imminent."

It is precisely this urgency that demands a recalibrated approach. The Arakan Army is not an ideal partner. It has, at times, rejected the term "Rohingya" and its historical relationship with Muslim communities in Rakhine has been tense. But power transforms actors and the Arakan Army's recent statements — including those by its Commander-in-Chief Twan Mrat Naing — show a remarkable evolution in tone.

The group has indicated it is open to the idea of peaceful coexistence, rule of law and even a phased return of refugees — provided certain conditions are met. In other words, it has moved from being a militant liberation movement to a proto-state willing to talk about governance. This shift opens a narrow but real window for engagement — and the Muslim world must not let it close.

Arab and Islamic nations, particularly those in the Gulf and within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, have long

expressed solidarity with the Rohingya. But solidarity without strategy is not enough. Now is the time to develop a policy grounded in the new facts on the ground. That means initiating quiet backchannel dialogues with the Arakan Army leadership, exploring what kinds of political, financial or development incentives could nudge them further toward embracing repatriation.

Bangladesh cannot do this alone. Dhaka faces tremendous domestic pressure over hosting nearly a million refugees. Its interim prime minister, **It is precisely this urgency that demands a recalibrated approach. The Arakan Army is not an ideal partner. It has, at times, rejected the term "Rohingya" and its historical relationship with Muslim communities in Rakhine has been tense. But power transforms actors and the Arakan Army's recent statements — including those by its Commander-in-Chief Twan Mrat Naing — show a remarkable evolution in tone.**

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Organization of Islamic Cooperation, have long expressed solidarity with the Rohingya. But solidarity without strategy is not enough. Now is the time to develop a policy grounded in the new facts on the ground. That means initiating quiet backchannel dialogues with the Arakan Army leadership, exploring what kinds of political, financial or development incentives could nudge them further toward embracing repatriation. Bangladesh cannot do this alone. Dhaka faces tremendous domestic pressure over hosting nearly a million refugees. Its interim prime minister, Yunus, is one of the few regional leaders willing to speak candidly about the crisis and the risk of radicalization if the camps remain neglected.

Yunus, is one of the few regional leaders willing to speak candidly about the crisis and the risk of radicalization if the camps remain neglected. But without regional and Muslim-majority support, Bangladesh lacks the leverage or resources to independently broker a deal with the Arakan Army.

Instead of pursuing unrealistic negotiations with the Myanmar junta or waiting for an elusive political settlement from the national unity government, the OIC should work with the Bangladeshi government and trusted international mediators to build a pragmatic roadmap for phased repatriation.

Such a plan might include security guarantees from the Arakan Army for returning families; pilot return programs to test integration, with third-party observers; development support for local Rakhine and Muslim communities alike, reducing the risk of economic grievance or communal tension; and legal pathways for the Rohingya to eventually gain recognition and rights under local law.

To be sure, this will require trust-building on all sides. Many Rohingya remain skeptical of the

Arakan Army's intentions. The memory of past abuses and betrayals is still raw. But when faced with a choice between permanent exile in squalid refugee camps and a monitored, supported return under new political realities, many may opt to go home — if they believe it is safe.

Here, the Muslim world can play a critical role. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkiye and Qatar — all of which have championed Muslim causes globally — can lend both political weight and practical resources to this effort. Their involvement can also reassure the Rohingya that they are

not alone and that their fate is not being decided by a new group of armed men, but by a process anchored in international norms and Islamic principles of justice.

This will not be an easy path. The Arakan Army still has much to prove. Its rhetoric must be backed by real commitments, including the cessation of discriminatory practices and the inclusion of Rohingya voices in political planning. The national unity government, too, must be encouraged to work constructively with the Arakan Army on this front, rather than cling to abstract ideals divorced from operational control.

Ultimately, the Rohingya crisis is a tragedy not just for Myanmar but for the Muslim world. It has exposed our collective inability to protect the vulnerable, to assert moral leadership and to respond with coherence and unity. But if we are willing to think beyond conventional diplomacy and engage with the de facto powers in Rakhine, we may yet chart a way forward.

The Arakan Army may not be the ally we expected. But it might be the ally we need — if we are bold enough to engage.

China's rapid progress in race to the moon

Khaled Abou Zahr

CHINA is making rapid progress with the building of a new space network called the Queqiao constellation. This system is designed to connect Earth and the moon through reliable communications, navigation and observation tools. The goal is to support future lunar missions by placing satellites and spacecraft in key positions around the moon and in space between the Earth and the moon, including areas known as Lagrange points, where gravity allows objects to stay in place more easily. This infrastructure is essential for China's plans to explore, work and even build settlements on the moon in the coming decades.

China last month moved a small spacecraft named Tiandu-1 into an orbit that means it loops around Earth once for every three times the moon circles our planet. This special orbit gives it a predictable position relative to the moon over time, which helps in studying the complex pull of the gravity of both Earth and the moon.

Another key satellite,

Queqiao-2, was launched last year and it is already helping China prepare for future moon landings. And the satellite DRO-B has entered a different kind of orbit and is now traveling through Lagrange points. These stable zones are where space stations or satellite hubs may one day be located.

In the US, the Artemis program is NASA's ambitious plan to return astronauts to the moon, establish a sustainable human presence there and use the lunar missions as a steppingstone for future Mars exploration. But Artemis has faced delays and budget uncertainties. The first uncrewed Artemis 1 mission successfully flew around the moon in 2022, but upcoming crewed missions have been pushed back. It has lately been shaped by political uncertainty and doubts over its focus.

The moon objective might have regained importance in the past month following the falling-out of US President Donald Trump and SpaceX's Elon Musk. Musk has been a long-time supporter of going straight to Mars and has publicly stated that moon

missions are a waste of resources and time. His closeness to Trump had hence cast doubts on the moon projects.

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Long-running Mars orbiters such as Mars

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proposal also calls for cutting NASA's workforce by about 32 percent, reducing staff from 17,391 to 11,853 employees.

The proposed budget also targets the cancellation of key Artemis program components. However, the budget request is just a proposal and will require approval from Congress to take effect. Moreover, following Musk's exit, the renewed momentum for the moon also comes as the Senate Commerce Committee unveiled a

Odyssey and MAVEN, as well as NASA's contribution to the European Rosalind Franklin rover, would also face cancellation. Beyond funding, the

\$10 billion reconciliation bill to fund NASA in response to the proposed budget cuts, with much of that planned for the Artemis program. The new Senate proposal recenters toward lunar

goals.

Many wonder why so much focus is on the moon. But it holds importance beyond scientific research. To start with, launching rockets from the moon is generally much cheaper and more efficient in terms of fuel compared to launching from Earth. This is primarily because the moon's gravity is about one-sixth that of Earth's, so rockets need less energy to escape the surface.

Moreover, on Earth, the atmospheric drag requires large amounts of fuel to reach orbit. In comparison, the Moon has no atmosphere, eliminating air resistance. Some estimates suggest that launching from the Moon could reduce fuel requirements by up to 90 percent compared to Earth launches for the same payload.

Another advantage is the moon's unique environment. It offers valuable resources, such as water in the form of ice, which can be used for life support and fuel production, potentially enabling sustainable space missions. Other more adventurous objectives have been stated, such as mining rare materials and developing new indus-

tries like lunar tourism and manufacturing.

Water on the moon is mostly found as ice in permanently shadowed regions near the poles, especially within craters that never receive sunlight. This is why China will focus on the moon's south pole. It plans to build a permanent lunar base there by 2035, focusing on using the moon's ice to support human missions and fuel production.

Upcoming Chang'e missions will seek resources and test technologies for habitat construction.

China has a focused and state-driven approach to establishing a permanent lunar presence. It seems much clearer than the US space program, especially as public debates roar in America. Yet, despite its budget challenges and political debates, the US is unleashing a vibrant private space sector, which is showing rapid innovation.

Despite the technical difficulties and setbacks faced by both nations, the race for the moon is now clearly on. The first to arrive will likely benefit just as much as when the New World was discovered.



PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 463.34 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Thursday losing 463.34 points, a negative change of 0.38 percent, closing at 120,002.59 points as compared to 120,465.93 points on the last trading day.

A total of 604,536,506 shares were traded during the day as compared to 707,300,056 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 20.442 billion against Rs 21.273 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 459 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 155 of them recorded gains and 269 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 35 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 64,601,455 shares at Rs 1.49 per share,

Sui South Gas with 35,626,055 shares at Rs 43.28 per share and Prud Mod. 1st with 30,294,099 shares at Rs 4.31 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 140.64 per share closing at Rs23,129.64 whereas runner-up was Macter International Limited with Rs51.39 rise in its share price to close at Rs565.29.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 1,377.01 per share price, closing at Rs 12,393.14, whereas the runner-up Hoechst Pakistan Limited with Rs 99.24 decline in its per share price to Rs 3,150.76.

Rupee sheds 09 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday depreciated by 09 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 283.64 against

the previous day's closing of Rs 283.55.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 283.7 and Rs 285.7 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.23 to close at Rs 325.25 against the last day's closing of Rs 326.48, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.95, whereas a decrease of Rs 1.32 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 380.40 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 381.72.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 and 02 paise to close at Rs 77.23 and Rs 75.59, respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs460 to Rs358,595 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.460 and was traded at Rs.358,595 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs.359,055 on the last trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.394 to Rs.307,437 from Rs.307,831 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it came down by Rs.361 to Rs.281,827 from Rs. 282,188. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver also dipped by Rs.58 and Rs.49 to Rs.3,820 and Rs.3,275 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$6 to \$3,372 from \$3,378, whereas that of silver came down by \$0.83 to \$36.37, the Association reported.

FACE and Agriculture Department Punjab organize ceremony



F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Agriculture Department Punjab and its strategic partner, the Food Security and Agriculture Center of Excellence (FACE), a Not-for-Profit organization, commemorated their successful collaboration in a ceremony held in Lahore.

This partnership marks a significant step forward in

modernizing farming practices across Punjab. This collaboration is designed to bolster the capacity of field officers in advanced crop management and the adoption of AI-based agriculture technologies.

Key initiatives include training and capacity building for field officers on crucial topics such as Crop Yield Increase, Satellite Data utilization, Drone-

based agriculture applications, and specialized crop-specific seminars. To ensure world-class training, FACE has enlisted the expertise of international agriculture specialists.

A critical component of this initiative is the deployment of Digital Pest Traps at 60 sites. This innovative technology facilitates the early detection and identification of pests, which is

vital for effective crop protection, especially considering that Pakistan loses 20% to 30% crop productivity to pest attacks.

Furthermore, FACE has inducted a batch of 30 agriculture university students and is providing them with three month paid internship and placing them with Agriculture Extension in Punjab. The students will gain invaluable on-field experience through this exposure.

FACE has also provided laptops to agriculture department to enable access to digital agriculture features such as crop monitoring and the utilization of satellite data for crop monitoring.

The celebratory ceremony was attended by key stakeholders, including the Secretary Agriculture, Field Officers, representatives from academia, farmers and the management of FACE.

Stocks drop, oil gains as Mideast unrest fuels inflation fears

LONDON (AFP/APP): Major stock markets mostly fell and oil prices rose Thursday as the Israel-Iran conflict added to fears over a renewed spike in inflation.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday warned that President Donald Trump's trade war could reignite US inflation and dampen economic growth as it kept its interest rates unchanged.

"Equity markets were in the red across Europe and most of Asia as investors were spooked by the escalating" Israel-Iran conflict, noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"Oil prices have shot up in recent days and any disruptions to Middle East supplies could put them even higher and stoke inflation."

After gaining more than one percent in Asian trad-

ing hours, crude futures pulled back but remained higher compared with levels on Wednesday.

Analysts said there was a risk that Tehran could shut the Strait of Hormuz -- a key shipping lane through which an estimated fifth of global oil supply flows.

"We don't see it as a likely scenario at this time, but... I think everybody should be watching," American Petroleum Institute president Mike Sommers told Bloomberg.

Concerns over potential supply constraints boosted share prices of energy majors Thursday.

French oil and gas giant TotalEnergies topped the Paris stock market around midday with a gain of 2.4 percent. British energy group BP won 1.4 percent

in London.

More central banks were making interest rate decisions on Thursday.

The Swiss National Bank cut interest rates by a quarter point to zero percent.

The move is aimed at taming the Swiss franc, a safe haven that has soared against the dollar since Trump launched his tariff onslaught in April.

Norway's central bank made an unexpected cut to its rate, saying economic uncertainty was "greater than normal" due to escalating conflicts and trade tensions.

The Bank of England was widely expected to freeze borrowing costs in an announcement due 1100 GMT.

The dollar traded mixed

against main rivals Thursday after the Fed kept rates unchanged for a fourth consecutive meeting despite Trump pressure to lower borrowing costs.

The Fed said in a statement that "uncertainty about the economic outlook has diminished but remains elevated".

The central bank cut its 2025 forecast for US economic growth and raised inflation and unemployment expectations -- in its first updated projections since Trump in April unveiled his levies on imports.

Fed chief Jerome Powell called the economy "still solid" but added that "increases in tariffs this year are likely to push up prices and weigh on economic activity".

PC Hospitality appoints Abbas Kamal as Hotel Manager to lead PC Muzaffarabad



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pearl-Continental (PC) Hospitality, the hospitality division of Hashoo Group and one of Asia's leading hospitality conglomerates, is proud to announce the appointment of Abbas Kamal as the new Hotel Manager of Pearl-Continental Hotel Muzaffarabad. This strategic leadership move reinforces Hashoo Group's commitment to cultivating exceptional talent and delivering elevated guest experiences across its portfolio.

Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Himalayan

foothills, where the Neelum and Jhelum rivers converge, Pearl-Continental Hotel Muzaffarabad offers a breathtaking sanctuary of serenity and natural splendor. With its panoramic views, premium accommodations, lush gardens, elegant event spaces, and curated Kashmiri cuisine, the property is a sought-after destination for weddings, family retreats, and nature-infused luxury getaways.

Abbas Kamal joins this iconic property with over 16 years of global hospitality experience, including 13 years with leading international brands in Dubai. He brings deep operational expertise and a sharp focus on service excellence. Most recently, he served as Director of Rooms at Pearl-Continental Bhurban, where his leadership contributed to consistent year-on-year business growth, along with significant improvements in team performance, service stand-

ards, and guest satisfaction.

Beginning his career as a Guest Service Agent and rising through the ranks of the Rooms Division, Kamal's journey spans globally acclaimed brands such as The Ritz-Carlton and the Autograph Collection. His international exposure has sharpened his ability to integrate world-class standards with authentic, locally inspired hospitality.

"Abbas Kamal's appointment marks an exciting new chapter for Pearl-Continental Muzaffarabad," said Bastien Blanc, Chief Executive Officer - Hospitality Division, Hashoo Group. "His proven track record in operational excellence, coupled with a strong focus on team culture and guest engagement, makes him ideally suited to lead this flagship resort in one of Pakistan's most awe-inspiring regions."

As Hotel Manager, Kamal will oversee all aspects of hotel operations - from enhancing guest expe-

riences and optimizing performance to expanding the property's visibility as a premier mountain destination. A key priority will also be curating memorable cultural journeys, allowing guests to savour the region's unique heritage through its rich hospitality traditions.

This appointment reflects Hashoo Group's unwavering commitment to nurturing leadership, driving operational excellence, and positioning Pakistan's natural beauty and cultural richness at the heart of its luxury hospitality experience.

Pearl-Continental Hospitality, Hashoo Group's hospitality division, is one of Asia's leading conglomerates, with a diverse portfolio spanning hotels, restaurants, education, and travel services. With over 60 operating and upcoming hotels, its brands include the luxury PC Signature, Pearl-Continental Hotels & Resorts, and PC Residences; the premi-



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Industry and Production Haroon Akhtar addressing a press conference on National Electric Vehicle Policy 2025-2030 at PID Media Center.

PC Board approves key steps for strategic transactions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Privatisation Commission (PC) Board has approved to initiate the process for appointing Financial Advisers (FAs) to enhance private sector participation in key power sector entities.

The decision was made during the 235th meeting of the Privatisation Commission (PC) Board, chaired by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation and Chairman of the Privatisation Commission Muhammad Ali, said a news release here on Thursday.

The power sector entities includes Distribution Companies (DISCOs), Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO), Sukkur Electric Power Company (SEPCO), Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO), and Hazara Electric Supply Company (HAZECCO), while Generation Companies (GENCOs) includes 747 MW Guddu Power Plant, and 525 MW Nandipur Power Plant.

The Board also reviewed and approved the audited financial statements of the Privatisation Commission for the fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

In addition, it approved the commission budget estimates for the financial year 2025-26, supporting its continued institutional operations and transactional progress.

The Board was further apprised of the latest developments in ongoing transactions which include Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL), Roosevelt Hotel (New York), and three power distribution companies Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO), and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO).

The Privatisation Commission reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring transparency, investor confidence, and efficient execution of strategic transactions in alignment with national economic goals.

Textile exports rise by 7.37 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): Textile exports witnessed an increase of 7.37 per cent during the first eleven months of the current financial year (July-May) as compared to the corresponding months of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The textile exports from the country were recorded at \$ 16,365.325 million during the July-May (2024-25) against the exports of \$ 15,241.482 million during July-May (2023-24).

The textile commodities that contributed in trade growth included knitwear the export of which increased by 14.46 percent to \$ 4,555.345 million from \$ 3,980.000 million while the export of bed wear surged by 10.56 percent to \$ 2,839.509 million from \$ 2,568.185 million.

The other commodities that witnessed growth in trade included towels, the export of which rose by 2.84 percent to \$995.423 million from \$ 967.936

million, tents, canvas, and tarpaulin by 9.58 percent to \$ 177.770 million from \$ 107.476 million; ready-made garments up by 16.35 percent to \$ 3,768.432 million this year compared to the exports of \$ 3,238.818 million last year.

Similarly, the export of art, silk and synthetic textile grew by 8.90 percent to \$ 365.708 million from \$ 335.816 million, made up articles (excl. towels and bed wear) increased by 8.78 percent to \$ 713.267 million from \$ 655.721 million while the export of other textile materials went up by 2.24 percent to \$ 673.474 million from \$ 658.702 million.

The textile commodities that witnessed negative trade growth included raw cotton the exports of which declined by 98.45 percent to \$0.871 million from \$56.086 million.

Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn declined by 32.04 percent to \$618.535 million from \$910.193 million whereas the export of cotton carded or combed dipped by 99.28 percent from \$0.837 million to \$0.006 million during the period under review.

The export of cotton cloth came down by 2.27 percent to \$1,686.309 million from \$1,730.834 million while the exports of yarn other than cotton yarn also declined by 0.65 percent to \$30.676 million from \$90.878 million.

Meanwhile, on YoY basis, the textile exports from the country witnessed a decrease of 1.75 percent during May 2025 as compared to the corresponding month of last year. The textile exports in May 2025 were recorded \$1,530.927 million against the exports of \$1,558.235 million in May 2024.

On MoM basis, the textile exports however increased by 25.42 percent in May 2025 when compared to the exports of \$ 1,220.661 million in April 2025, according to PBS data.

Changes in Faceless Customs Assessment demanded — to make it convenient for businessmen



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A five-member delegation led by president Frontier Customs Agents Association (FCAA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, met with the newly appointed Director Transit Trade, Peshawar, Muhammad Saeed Asad at the Model Customs Collectorate (MCC) Customs House Peshawar and welcomed him on assuming the post.

The delegation members included Senior Vice President of the Association Khalid Shahzad, Coordinator of Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) Vice President Imtiaz Ahmed Ali, Secretary General Mian Waheed Shah Bacha, Member Executive Committee and Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce Farooq Ahmed and Bilal Ahmed.

Superintendent of Customs Transit Trade Torkham, Siddique Akbar and Inspector Mazhar Maqsood were also present on the occasion. Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, who is also Senior Vice President, Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) said newly appointed Director Transit Trade has served on various positions in FBR and is well

aware of the problems being faced by business community.

While referring Afghan Transit Trade signed in 1965, Zia said the agreement continued to operate smoothly for 45 years, due to which, besides businessmen, customs clearing agents, border agents, shipping agents and transporters were doing their business with great facilities.

However, the decades old agreement was replaced in haste by Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTITA) of October 2010 in which the stakeholders were not taken into confidence, due to which this agreement was sabotaged and 70 percent of our trade was shifted to Chabahar and Bandar Abbas (Iran) instead of Karachi port.

The volume of Pak-

Afghan bilateral trade which was 2.5 billion dollars some time ago has plunged to \$70 million, claimed President FCAA.

Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said that there is a need to review this agreement and include relevant stakeholders in it to overcome these difficulties.

He also paid tribute to the transferred Director Amjadur-Rehman, Additional Director Dr. Tahir Iqbal Khattak and Deputy Director Maleeka and said that they spent their time with great honesty and efficiency.

On this occasion, Farooq Ahmed also mentioned the difficulties in Afghan transit trade. The delegation requested Director General Transit Trade Muhammad Mohsin Rafique to visit Peshawar at his first opportunity and visit Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Pakistan's liquid foreign reserves position

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at US\$ 17,004.5 million as of 13-Jun-2025. The break-up of the foreign reserves position is as under: Foreign reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan: US\$ 11,721.9 million.

Net foreign reserves held by commercial banks: US\$ 5,282.6 million.

Total liquid foreign reserves: US\$ 17,004.5 million. During the week ended on 13-Jun-2025, SBP reserves increased by US\$ 46 million to US\$ 11,721.9 million.

Changed of firm address

Name of my firm M/s Asim Khan Construction Co, as given in PEC License No: C-5/23881, is being changed to address Mohalla Muhammad Khan Raisalpur Nowshera, with permanent address House # 66 Main Karnal Amanullah Road Near I/B Gate Bhara Kaho Islamabad. necessary revision of address on PEC License will be arranged as soon as possible.

In the Court of Syed Zamarud Shah Judge Banking Court-II Federal Judicial Complex Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar
Case No: 302/1, Next Date: 18-07-2025,
SUIT for recovery of Rs. 11,23,191/-
ZTBL Charsadda Branch VS Mst. Khadija.
Notice Versus: Mst. Khadija W/o Zaheerudin R/o Shamozaai Chak Utmanzai Tehsil & Distt. Charsadda.
Where is the plaintiff Bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs.11,23,191/- against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institutions (Recovery of Finances) Ordinance 2001. You are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspaper filling which an exparte decree shall be passed in favor of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issue today on 12-6-2025 under my signature and seal of the Court.
Banking Court-II Peshawar



Nissanka 187 leads SL's solid reply after Bangladesh post 495



Angelo Mathews playing his last test for Sri Lanka waving to crowd after his way back to pavilion.

GALLE, SRI LANKA (ESPNCricinfo): Partnerships were the name of the game for Sri Lanka as every top-order batter chipped in to whittle away at Bangladesh's healthy first-innings total of 495. By stumps, Sri Lanka's deficit had been trimmed to just 127.

A majority of it was cut down courtesy Pathum Nissanka, who struck a career-best 187 off 256 balls. It was his first ton on home soil, and a knock that had seen him dominate from the first new ball to the second. He would have been eyeing a maiden Test double hundred - to go with one in ODIs - but that second new ball and the unpredictability of a wobble seam combined to dislodge him, as Hasan Mahmud sneaked an induckter through bat and pad late in the day.

That wicket may end up keeping Bangladesh's heads from dropping heading into day four, after the Sri Lanka batters had spent the majority of day three steadily shaking out any confidence the visitors may

have gathered during their dominance on the opening two days.

Nissanka was part of four steady stands, alongside Lahiru Udara, Dinesh Chandimal, Angelo Mathews and Kamindu Mendis, which were worth 47, 157, 89, and 38, respectively. More pressingly for Bangladesh, the scoring during each of these stands came at a fair clip, with Sri Lanka's run rate consistently hovering around four an over.

But even following Nissanka's dismissal, any respite seemed short lived as Dhananjaya de Silva and Kamindu already sped to a stand of 37 off 45 deliveries by the end of play. For Bangladesh, the four wickets were shared equally among Mahmud, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan and Mominul Haque.

But with three of the five bowlers employed going at over four runs runs an over, it was a tough day out for the visitors.

On a surface that had started showing signs of deterioration - but one that was still good for batting by

Galle's usual day three standards - Sri Lanka's batters showed Bangladesh where theirs had faltered. Well, as much as you could falter having scored 495.

Bangladesh had spent the first two days content at progressing at a touch above three runs an over, rarely shifting pressure on to the Sri Lanka bowlers. In the end, it proved to be the difference between a total of near-500 and perhaps 600.

Fine margins, usually, but with Sri Lanka knocking off 75% of Bangladesh's total in just three sessions, there now lies the very real possibility that Bangladesh could be asked to bat out day five - rain allowing - just to save the Test.

And while this Galle surface has been more batter-friendly than usual, the ball misbehaved occasionally, and you imagine that will only get more frequent over the next two days.

That said, Sri Lanka still have work to do to make that possibility a reality. But you wouldn't back against them judging by

how they went about their batting across the day.

Aside from a brief period before tea, when scoring slowed to a trickle, Sri Lanka's batters had it all their own way.

This was down to a combination of positive intent from the batters, and some inconsistent lines and lengths from the Bangladesh bowlers. Nissanka, in particular, was batting with supreme authority: anything short was dispatched square, and anything overpitched was laced through the covers.

His aggression, and ability to alleviate even small periods of pressure with a boundary or two, meant the pressure on his partners was kept to a minimum. It saw Chandimal notch up a 33rd Test fifty, while Mathews, too, might have enjoined a similar milestone if not for being at the end of one of those rare deliveries that misbehaved. Mominul, the part-timer, got one to dip and turn past Mathews' forward defence, tickling the outside edge on the way.

Each of the wickets to fall, in fact, were against the run of play. Debutant Udara had made it look a far cry from his first Test during a fluent 34-ball 29, before chipping a leading edge back to Taijul. Chandimal, meanwhile, clipped a leg-side offbreak low to leg slip off Nayeem.

But with each wicket, Sri Lanka simply dusted themselves off and set about putting together another brisk stand.

It was a sharp contrast from Bangladesh's innings, which had two mammoth stands in the middle, but either side of those had only one reach even 20.



EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY: Players of Palmeiras pose for a team photograph prior to the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 group A match between SE Palmeiras and Al Ahly SC at MetLife Stadium on June 19, 2025 in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Tendulkar confident Gill will do 'something special' Predicts 3-1 series win for India

L O N D O N (ESPNCricinfo): Sachin Tendulkar wants new India Test captain Shubman Gill to "shut the doors" to the external noise surrounding his approach to captaincy during the England tour. Tendulkar believes Gill will do "something special" on the tour and India will win the five-Test series 3-1.

"My advice to him [Gill] would be that he should not worry about what x, y, z is saying," Tendulkar told ESPNCricinfo. "His captaincy, whether Shubman is being aggressive, or defensive, or attacking enough, or not a proactive captain, or active captain - whatever that opinion is, it's only an opinion and it's from outside. I think what he needs to think about is what was discussed in the dressing room - when they are planning something, are they going according to that plan and whether the decision being made is in the interests of the team - that is what he needs to think about and not about the outside world.

"The outside world can only give opinions. These guys can go out and play as well, and only the dressing room will have that honour. No one else will have that. I would say, just go out, it's a huge honour, enjoy the moment and give your best for the country and do what is in the interest of the country. Other than that, I would say shut the doors to everything. I think that should be his thought process."

Gill, 25, having taken over the captaincy from Rohit Sharma last month, will not only be leading a young India side following

the retirements of senior batters Rohit and Virat Kohli, but will also be batting at No. 4 - a spot occupied by Tendulkar and Kohli for the last 30 years. Tendulkar, who batted in that position 275 times from 1992 till his retirement in 2013 and scored 13,492 runs, said Gill has earned that spot because "people have faith in him".

"Playing for India itself is a responsibility," Tendulkar said. "And it could be batting at any number, even if you go out to bat at 6 or 7, those runs are invaluable. No. 11 is also fulfilling the responsibility in a different capacity. It is good that people believe that he is capable of fulfilling that [No. 4] responsibility. The expectations that people have of him is a positive sign, because people have faith in him. He has to just go out and be himself, be determined and put his best foot forward with all his commitment. I'm sure he'll do something special."

Tendulkar, who averaged 54.31 with four centuries in England, also had some advice for the young Indian batters on tour, mainly on how they should play England's fast bowlers.

"There are three things which one needs to respect: overhead conditions, the wind, and the pitch," he said. "I feel something that all batters should think about and consider is a good, solid front-foot defence to a fast bowler. If you can defend well on the front foot to a fast bowler, then the rest of the things will fall into place. It is important to keep your

hands close to your body, have a solid front-foot defence. The balls which are meant to be hit are, anyway, going to go ahead because they all are attacking players. But the balls which are not meant to be hit, that is when the hands will go away from the body, and a dismissal could cost the game. So a good, solid defence on the front foot is going to be a key factor."

Tendulkar: 'Pant should back his instincts most of the time'

Among the senior batters in the India side will be 27-year-old Rishabh Pant, whose audacious approach during India's tour of Australia late last year came under scrutiny. Tendulkar wants Pant to find a balance between playing his natural game and playing to the match situation.

"He [Pant] should back his instincts most of the time," Tendulkar said. "But there'll be situations where he'll have to curb his game in the interests of the team. I know that whatever he does the rest of the time will also be in the interest of the team, but the approach might have to be different.

He has to have that flexibility in his mind. If there are times when you're looking to save the game, then he may have to adapt that defensive approach, for let's say an hour or 45 minutes or sometimes two hours, where he'll have to just take those risky shots out of the game and not be as aggressive. He could be positive, but the shot selection will come into play.

"Otherwise, nine out of ten times, if I'm the captain,

I'll say, 'Just go out and play your game, why worry about anything.' If you're looking to save the game, that is when the approach changes a bit, but otherwise I would tell him that you go out and be yourself and do what you feel is in the best interest of the team."

Tendulkar was part of the Indian side that last won a Test series in England. In 2007, India beat the hosts 1-0 after winning the second Test in Nottingham - where Tendulkar top-scored with 91 in the first innings - and drawing the other two. While Tendulkar backed the current Indian team to take on the England challenge, he is keenly awaiting the battle between India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and England's senior batter Joe Root.

"Winning the series was a fabulous, fabulous moment - that is what we strive for," he said, looking back at the 2007 series. "There were multiple good performances by individuals... Zaheer [Khan] played a role. I think everyone coming together and then chipping in at the right time makes a big difference. I still remember we were in the dressing room, celebrating at The Oval, the last Test. These kinds of moments stay with you forever.

We're still talking about it 18 years down the line. I hope we're able to do something this series too, so 20 years down the line we can still talk about it."

When asked about his prediction for the series scoreline, Tendulkar said: "I have settled for 3-1 to India."

Real forward Mbappe in hospital

NEW YORK (BBC): Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe is in hospital with gastroenteritis after missing their Club World Cup opener against Al-Hilal.

The France captain, 26, missed training on Tuesday with a fever and did not play in Wednesday's 1-1 draw against the Saudi Arabian side.

A Real statement on Thursday said Mbappe has "an acute case of gastroenteritis" and was admitted to hospital for "a series of tests".

Gastroenteritis is an infection in the gut which can cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

Real's next game is against Pachuca on Sunday at 20:00 BST.

There is no indication



whether Mbappe could be available for the game.

Mbappe scored 43 goals in 56 games in all competitions for Real in his first season after joining on a

free transfer from Paris St-Germain.

This is Real's first competition under Xabi Alonso, who replaced Carlo Ancelotti as manager at the

end of the La Liga season.

Real won the Uefa Super Cup and Fifa Intercontinental Cup in Mbappe's first season in Spanish football.

Los Angeles Lakers to sell majority ownership in historic deal

LOS ANGELES (BBC): The majority stake of the Los Angeles Lakers basketball franchise is being sold in what will mark the most expensive sale of a US sports team in history, according to a source familiar with the deal.

The Buss family has owned the team - one of the most iconic in sports globally - since 1979 and now has made a deal with TWG Global CEO Mark Walter, the source said.

The sale is reportedly worth an estimated \$10 billion (£7.45bn) - though it could increase once finalised.

Mr Walter also has a controlling stake in the Los Angeles Dodgers, the professional US baseball team that won the World Series last year.

The BBC has contacted the Lakers for comment.

A spokesperson for Mr Walter's company confirmed the billionaire financier was in the midst of a deal with the Lakers.

"Mark Walter is entering into an agreement to acquire additional interests in the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers, of which he has been a stakeholder since 2021," the spokesperson

said.

In 2021, Mr Walter became a co-owner of the team with a 20% stake. He has investments with various sports teams globally, including the Chelsea Football Club and the Cadillac Formula 1 Team, which is set to enter racing in 2026.

The deal comes after the March sale of the Boston Celtics basketball team to Bill Chisholm for \$6.1 billion - which at that time was dubbed the priciest sale of a US sports franchise. It had surpassed the 2023 sale of the Washington Commanders American football team for \$6.05 billion.

US media reported Wednesday that the National Basketball Association team's valuation is at least \$10 billion. Its sale will surpass those record-breaking deals by about \$4 billion.

Jerry Buss bought the team in a \$67.5 million deal in 1979 that included the Los Angeles Kings hockey team and a Los Angeles arena, known as the Kia Forum.

Since that year, the Lakers have won more championship titles than

any other NBA team.

Lakers legend Magic Johnson, who previously owned a stake in the team, said fans should be ecstatic about the sale and that Mr Walter will carry on the team's legacy - noting his ownership of the Dodgers led to a World Series win.

"I just talked to my sister Jeanie Buss to tell her congratulations, and that I'm so happy for her and family," Mr Johnson said on X.

"She's witnessed him build a winning team with the Dodgers and knows that Mark will do right by the Lakers team, organization, and fans!" he said in another post. "Both are extremely intelligent, visionaries, great leaders, and have positively impacted the greater Los Angeles community!"

Twice Asian champions Al-Ain conceded two thirds of the pitch for much of the first half and Juventus midfielder Khephren Thuram ran the show from about 35 metres out with Conceicao and Yildiz buzzing around in front of him.

A neat exchange of passing in the 11th minute set Alberto Costa free on the edge of the box and the young Portuguese right

back lofted over a cross which Kolo Muani met with a powerful header at the far post for the opening goal.

Costa's fine work down the right flank 10 minutes later set up the second goal for Conceicao, who ghosted across the box before unleashing a shot which took a deflection and flew over the outstretched arms of Rui Patrício in the Al-Ain goal.

A further 10 minutes on and the lively Yildiz took the ball on the left before cutting inside, taking two touches and firing a shot into the net off the post.

Al-Ain had to push forward if they were going to get anything out of the game but they paid the price for their ambition in stoppage time at the end of the first half. A through ball from Thuram found Kolo Muani peeling off the last defender and the French striker slotted the ball into net with the outside of his right foot to take his tally to five goals in his last six games for The Old Lady.

The Emirati side had a goal ruled out for offside at the start of the second half and skipper Kodjo Laba drew a fine save out of Juventus goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio in the 49th minute.

Conceicao, however, put the game well beyond them in the 58th minute when he skipped into the box from the right wing and beat Portuguese Patrício for the

second time with a fine low strike.

Patrício finally showed the quality that earned him 108 Portugal caps to deny Kolo Muani a hat-trick in the 66th minute and Juventus substitute Douglas Luiz came close to further blowing out the scoreline in the last couple of minutes.

Juventus next play Morocco's Wydad in Philadelphia on Sunday, while Al-Ain, who lost to Real Madrid in the 2018 Club World Cup final, face City in Atlanta later the same day.

Reality check for Alonso as Real Madrid make lacklustre Club World Cup start

Xabi Alonso's glittering Real Madrid playing career offered no protection for their new coach against the harsh spotlight of expectation on Wednesday, as they laboured to a deflating 1-1 draw with Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal in their Club World Cup opener.

The result laid bare the task facing the 43-year-old Spaniard, who will be expected to conjure instant success after swapping Bayer Leverkusen for the pressure cooker of 15-time European champions Madrid.

"We know things take time, we need to correct a few details, everything takes time it's been only nine days of work for me here," Alonso told a press conference after watching his

depleted squad struggle against opponents they were expected to dispatch with ease.

With captain Dani Carvajal and centre backs Antonio Ruediger and Eder Militao absent, Real's defensive fragility was exposed despite the summer additions of Dean Huijsen and Trent Alexander-Arnold.

The former Liverpool player looked particularly uncomfortable, failing to provide his trademark attacking threat while repeatedly being exposed by Al-Hilal's marauding Brazilian fullback Renan Lodi.

A clumsy penalty conceded by Raul Asencio compounded Real's defensive woes, allowing the Saudi side to cancel out academy product Gonzalo Garcia's opener.

Forced to innovate without the ill Kylian Mbappe and injured Brazilian teenager Endrick, Alonso's attacking options were limited.

The 21-year-old Gonzalo, thrust into the spotlight, scored once but spurned several opportunities that could have settled the contest.

Tactically, Alonso appeared to defer to Real Madrid tradition by abandoning the three-centre-back formation that defined his Leverkusen success, instead deploying a 4-3-3 reminiscent of Ancelotti's reign.





In brief

ANF recovers 362 kgs drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting six operations across the country, recovered as many as 362.182 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs396.7 million and arrested three suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday. He informed that 680 grams of ice were recovered from a suspect travelling to Qatar at Islamabad International Airport. As many as 500 grams of ice were recovered from a parcel sent to Bahrain at Karachi Jinnah International Airport. Similarly, 7,002 kgs of weed were recovered from a parcel arriving from Thailand at a courier office, Multan. As much as 2 kgs of ice were recovered from two suspects, riding a motorcycle near BRB canal in Lahore. As many as 148 kgs of morphine and 204 kgs of heroin hidden for smuggling were recovered in a deserted area of DG Khan, Road, Loralai. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Murderer gets death sentence

RAWALPINDI (APP): A local court has sentenced a criminal named Zafar to death for murdering a citizen during a property dispute. Fine of Rs. 1.0 million as compensation for the victim's family has also been imposed on the criminal. According to the details, the case was originally registered at Mandra Police Station in March 2010. CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani commended the investigation and legal teams for their effective handling of the case. "This conviction reflects police commitment to pursuing justice through solid investigations and proper legal follow-up," he said.

Three commit suicide

RAWALPINDI (APP): Three persons, including two women, committed suicide in the limits of two police stations of Rawalpindi on Thursday. According to a Rawalpindi Police spokesperson, in the first incident, a mother and her daughter, residents of the Girja Road area of Dhamial Police Station, consumed poisonous pills which led to their death. The two were shifted to the Benazir Bhutto Hospital but they could not survive. Faisal, the brother of the deceased, in his complaint to the police, alleged that his sister's husband Shabbir used to quarrel with his sister and even resorted to violence. Fed up with Shabbir's violent behaviour, his sister and niece had committed suicide, he claimed. The Dhamial Police registered a case on his complaint and arrested the accused Shabbir. Meanwhile, a young man committed suicide by shooting himself in the office of the Airport Housing Society within the limits of the Airport Police Station. The deceased identified as Waseem, a resident of Swat, worked as a security supervisor in the housing society. The reason for his suicide has not yet been ascertained. The police handed over the body to the heirs after postmortem and completing legal formalities.

241,911 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): IRSA on Thursday released 241,911 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 270,354 cusecs. The water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1453.60 feet which was 51.60 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet.

IGP Rizvi directs foolproof security for Muharram majalis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi chaired a high-level meeting on Thursday to review security arrangements for the upcoming month of Muharram.

An official told APP that the meeting was attended by all DIGs, SSPs, SPs, SDPOs, and SHOs of the capital police. The officers briefed the IGP on the security plans in their respective jurisdictions for religious processions, Majalis, and Imambargahs.

IGP Rizvi directed that security preparations be initiated immediately across

all zones. "Senior officers must visit Imambargahs, the routes of processions, and the venues of Majalis to ensure foolproof arrangements," he said.

IG Rizvi instructed that organizers of Imambargahs and scouts be engaged for close coordination, and specialized training sessions be arranged for scouts participating in security support.

"Bushes and shrubs along the procession routes must be cleared, and all resources should be used for surveillance around processions and Imambargahs," said IG Rizvi. He emphasized the importance

of launching search, combing, and intelligence-based operations throughout the district ahead of Muharram.

The IG Rizvi announced that a special control room would be set up in the Safe City Islamabad headquarters for centralized monitoring of the security arrangements. "Drone cameras and surveillance equipment will be used to ensure real-time monitoring," he added.

IG also instructed all officers to hold daily briefings for deployed personnel to keep them informed and prepared throughout the month of Muharram.

Pakistan announces 100 scholarships for Bangladeshi students

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major step to strengthen academic ties, Pakistan has announced 100 fully-funded scholarships for Bangladeshi students to pursue higher education in leading Pakistani universities.

The announcement was reiterated during the Special Vice Chancellors' Forum for Bangladesh, hosted by OIC-COMSTECH at its Secretariat. The forum brought together a seven-member delegation from Bangladesh comprising Vice Chancellors and senior representatives of prominent universities, along with Vice Chancellors from 15 top Pakistani universities, which are part of the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (CCoE).

Coordinator General of OIC-COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhury welcomed the visiting delegates and underscored the visit as a significant move toward deepening academ-

ic and scientific cooperation between two founding member countries of COMSTECH.

He announced the offering of 100 scholarships for Bangladeshi students as a gesture of academic solidarity.

Speaking on the occasion, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan, Md. Iqbal Hussain Khan lauded COMSTECH's initiative for facilitating meaningful academic engagement between higher education institutions of the two countries. He emphasized the importance of partnerships in science, technology, and education for shared progress.

During interactive sessions, Vice Chancellors from both sides explored avenues for collaboration, including student and faculty exchanges, joint research ventures, scholarship schemes, and the use of shared academic resources. It was agreed that each uni-

versity would designate a focal person to ensure continued communication and follow-up on agreed initiatives.

The forum featured notable presentations, including a talk by Chancellor of Sir Syed CASE Institute of Technology, Prof. Dr. Shoab A. Khan on the evolution of Artificial Intelligence in Pakistan, and insights by Chairperson of the Private Education Institutions Regulatory Authority, Prof. Dr. Shoab A. Khan on enhancing university rankings.

The Bangladeshi delegation, visiting from June 16 to 21, also held meetings with major universities in Islamabad, Lahore, and Murree.

The delegates appreciated the warm hospitality and termed their visit as historic, productive, and a promising beginning for sustained academic collaboration between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Pre-monsoon rains expected across Pakistan from June 20-23: PMD

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast pre-monsoon rains across various regions of the country from June 20-23 with occasional gaps, subsidizing the intense heat wave affecting several parts.

The expected wet spell will bring dust storms, rain, wind, and thundershowers, while isolated areas may also experience heavy rainfall and hailstorms.

According to the Met Office, moist currents from the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea were entering upper and central parts of the country. A westerly wave was also likely to approach the upper regions on June 20, which will contribute to the development of unstable weather conditions during this period.

From June 20 to 23, rain-wind/thunderstorms with isolated heavy falls and hailstorms are expected in parts of upper and central Punjab, including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Lahore,

Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sialkot, Narowal, Sargodha, and Mianwali.

Rain and thunderstorm activity are also likely in the upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa such as Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Charsadda, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Battagram, Shangla, Kohistan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, Kohat, Bannu, Karak, Dera Ismail Khan, and Waziristan.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, Murree, and Galliyat are also expected to receive scattered rain and thunderstorms during this period.

From June 21-23, dust-storm and rain-wind/thunderstorm activity is predicted in parts of south Punjab and northeastern Balochistan, including Zhob, Barkhan, Musakhel, Kalat, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, and Sahiwal.

Meanwhile, from June 22-24, the upper districts of Sindh, particularly Sukkur, Larkana, Dadu, and Jacobabad, are also likely to receive duststorms and thundershowers.

The Met Office warned that windstorms and lightning may cause damage to vulnerable structures such as electric poles, trees, solar panels, and parked vehicles, especially in upper and central regions including Islamabad. The intense heatwave currently affecting many parts of the country is expected to gradually subside during the forecast period.

There is a risk of urban flooding in low-lying areas of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, and Islamabad during heavy downpours. Farmers are advised to manage their crop activities in line with the forecast. General public, travelers, and tourists are urged to take precautionary measures and avoid unnecessary travel to vulnerable or flood-prone areas.

National Peace Festival highlights inclusive peacebuilding, gender equality

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Peace Festival 2025's second day spotlighted crucial themes of inclusive peacebuilding, with thought-provoking discussions on education, gender equality, interfaith dialogue, and digital resilience at the National Skills University Islamabad.

Organized by the Shaor Foundation for Education and Awareness (SFEA), the event convened academics, policymakers, and community leaders to address strategies for countering violent extremism and fostering social cohesion.

Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor of Fatima Jinnah Women's University Dr. Bushra Mirza underscored the need for women and gender-

diverse leadership in creating inclusive environments. She said that their active participation in leadership positions can drive meaningful change, promote equality, and foster a culture of diversity and social cohesion, ultimately leading to more peaceful and resilient communities."

She emphasized the need for universities to proactively foster inclusive environments that cultivate leadership and encourage community engagement, providing students with opportunities to grow and contribute positively to society. Vice Chancellor of National Skills University, Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, underscored the pivotal role of skills-based education in countering radicalization.

He said that by imparting digital literacy and critical thinking skills, educational institutions can empower youth to make informed decisions and resist extremist ideologies.

He commented that this approach fosters a culture of peace, tolerance, and resilience, enabling young people to contribute positively to society.

He noted that vocational, digital, and critical thinking skills equip young people to become peacebuilders within their communities, fostering resilience against social polarization and violence.

"Skills-based education is crucial for promoting peace and stability in communities, and ultimately, the nation", he stated. Ass-



ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Education and Professional Training Nadeem Mehboob visiting summer camp held at National Institute of Special Education.

11 agents detained

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad's district administration carried out a surprise operation outside the Excise Department, leading to the arrest of eleven agents allegedly involved in unauthorised activities.

According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area conducted a surprise inspection outside the Islamabad Excise and Taxation Office on Thursday.

During the operation, 11 agents were taken into custody. These individuals were reportedly involved in assisting citizens for a fee in tasks such as vehicle registration, token tax payment, and issuance of driving licenses — work that is supposed to be handled directly by government staff.

According to officials, the arrested agents were found loitering outside the Excise Office, approaching visitors and offering paid help in completing official processes.

The agents were reportedly operating without any legal authorisation. After their arrest, all 11 were transferred to a local police lockup.

This action was part of a broader campaign by the ICT administration to remove the presence of unauthorised middlemen around public service offices. Officials say these individuals often exploit citizens, particularly those unfamiliar with official procedures.

The Assistant Commissioner stated that the crackdown was carried out without prior notice to ensure transparency and avoid any tip-offs. Law enforcement teams accompanied the AC during the raid, and immediate detentions were made on the spot.

The administration also shared that similar operations will continue in the coming days across other departments where complaints of agent involvement have been reported. Instructions have already been issued to relevant departments to monitor the surroundings of their offices and discourage any such activity.

The ICT administration has encouraged the public to avoid using agents and instead complete their work through official channels. It also urged citizens to report any such activity to the local authorities.

Further legal action is expected against the arrested agents after necessary documentation and investigation.

Two drug peddlers held in operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): A

grand search and combing operation was carried out on Thursday in multiple areas falling under the jurisdiction of Industrial Area Police Station, Secretariat Police Station, and Bani Gala Police Station, as part of efforts to curb criminal activities in the capital.

An official told APP that the operation was conducted under the supervision of Zonal Superintendents of Police (SPs), with female police personnel also taking part. Before the operation, police personnel were briefed in detail about the objectives and procedures

of the operation.

He said a total of 171 individuals were verified during the operation, while 188 households and 15 shops were checked by the police teams.

He said law enforcement officials also inspected 108 motorcycles and 52 vehicles to ensure compliance with legal requirements and to detect any irregularities.

He said 15 suspicious individuals were shifted to the police station for further questioning.

During the operation, two suspects involved in drug peddling were arrested, and 2,000 grams of heroin along with 60 litres

of liquor were recovered.

He said the primary aim of the operation was to eliminate criminal elements and ensure peace and security in the region.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi had issued special directions to conduct grand search operations across the district to root out crime.

He appealed to the citizens to cooperate with police personnel during checking and to report any suspicious activity in their surroundings. "The safety and security of the public remains our top priority," he added.

CDA sets deadline for outstanding payments

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has launched a stringent recovery campaign, directing all defaulters to clear their outstanding dues by June 30, 2025, or face legal action, including property seizures and public naming.

The decision was finalized during a high-level meeting at the CDA Headquarters, chaired by Acting Chairman Talat Mehmood on Thursday and attended by senior officials, including members of the Environment, Planning, and Recovery wings.

A dedicated committee, led by DG Recovery, has

been formed to expedite the retrieval of long-pending dues. The authority aims to recover unpaid property and development charges, outstanding water bills, defaulted instalments on commercial/residential plots and unsettled transfer fees.

To facilitate payments, the CDA's One Window Facilitation Center will extend its operating hours from 9 AM to 9 PM until the deadline.

Defaulters failing to meet the June 30 cutoff will face heavy money fines and penalties, legal proceedings, including property sealing and auction as well

3 public disclosure of names and property details in newspapers.

Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa has taken personal charge of the initiative, ensuring strict enforcement. The recovered funds will be channeled into Islamabad's infrastructure development and civic projects.

The CDA has issued a final warning, urging citizens and businesses to settle dues immediately to avoid punitive measures.

For assistance, the public can visit the Capital Development Authority's facilitation center or contact the designated helpline.

PTDC named official tourism partner FIDIC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) has been designated as the official tourism partner for the upcoming FIDIC Asia Pacific Mid-Year conference scheduled to take place from 15 to 17 July here.

The Association of Consulting Engineers Pakistan under the umbrella of FIDIC Asia Pacific will organize three-day prestigious international forum to convene senior representatives from the engineering and infrastructure sectors, including leading global consulting firms, multilateral development institutions such as the Asian Development Bank

and the World Bank, as well as regional policymakers and stakeholders, said a press release.

As the Official Tourism Partner, PTDC will play a key role in highlighting the country's diverse and rich tourism landscape to an international audience. This strategic collaboration is aimed at promoting Pakistan as a dynamic destination for global tourism, investment, and cross-sectoral engagement.

"We are honored to be partnering with FIDIC Asia Pacific and ACEP for this important event," said a PTDC spokesperson. "This partnership is not only

underscored the growing global interest in Pakistan's tourism potential but also reaffirms our commitment in facilitating international dialogue and development through cultural and economic exchange."

Through its participation, PTDC will provide delegates with curated tourism experiences, destination insights, and opportunities to explore the country's cultural heritage, natural beauty, and hospitality sector. The event will serve as a vital platform for positioning Pakistan on the global map as a center for both sustainable tourism and international collaboration.

Senate secretariat hosts study visit for students from Bannu, Battagram

ISLAMABAD (APP): Delegations from two educational institutions – Government Postgraduate College for Women, Bannu, and Al-Tarmizi Public School, Battagram – visited the Senate of Pakistan on Thursday.

The 25-member delegation from Government Postgraduate College for Women, Bannu, and a 34-member delegation comprising students and faculty members from Al-Tarmizi Public School, Battagram, were warmly welcomed by senior officials of the Upper House.

The delegations were taken on a guided tour of the Senate Museum, where they watched a comprehensive documentary showcasing the history of the Senate, key national events, constitutional evolution, and parliamentary development.

The film visually and contextually depicted Pakistan's constitutional journey and significant moments in the country's legislative history.

Besides this, the visit provided the students with a deep insight into parliamentary traditions, the Senate's role, and its constitutional significance.

Subsequently, the delegations also visited the Senate Hall, where they observed a live session. On this occasion, they were briefed on the legislative process, parliamentary procedures, and the overall functioning of the Senate.

MoRR inks agreements

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has inked cooperation agreements worth more than 580,000 US dollars with three NGOs to facilitate refugees in 14 provinces. These three agreements valued 851,572 US dollars. The agreements were inked with the Women for Afghan Women Development Foundation, Afghan Economic Strengthening and Regional Development Authority and Rah Roshan Health and Social Services Foundation.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil Hajj 23, 1446 — Friday, June 20, 2025

Smartphones banned

KANDAHAR (Amu TV): The Taliban's Directorate of Education in Kandahar Province has issued an order prohibiting the use of smartphones by both teachers and students in all schools across the region, according to sources familiar with the directive. The ban is based on a direct order from Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and is to be enforced until further notice, sources said. Violators will face legal consequences, according to the statement.

Over 1,100 schools built in past 4 years: Ministry of Education

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Education said that in the past nearly four years, buildings have been constructed for more than 1,100 schools and religious schools across the country.

According to ministry spokesperson Mansoor Ahmad Hamza, these schools were built using the ministry's budget, with financial support from aid organizations, businesspeople, and education advocates.

In addition, nearly 3,000 other schools that were damaged by natural disasters have also been rebuilt during this period.

The ministry spokesperson added: "These construction projects were carried out with the ministry's budget and financial support from partner organizations, national traders, and individuals who value edu-

cation. Standard buildings were built for more than 1,100 schools and religious schools, and nearly 3,000 schools damaged by insurgents and natural disasters were reconstructed."

Meanwhile, a number of students in Paktia and Khost provinces have called for more educational facilities and resources.

Ruhullah, a student in Paktia, told TOLONews: "When textbooks are not available, we can only learn fifty percent of the lesson, because fifty percent is taught by the teacher, and the other fifty percent comes from the book."

Younis, a student in Khost, said: "Our school has no building, and in hot weather students can't study properly. The school needs a proper building and administrative setup."

Earlier this year, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that nearly four million children in Afghanistan remain out of school due to a lack of proper infrastructure, clean drinking water, sanitary facilities, and qualified teachers, especially female teachers.

Aslam Danishmal, a university lecturer, stressed the importance of quality infrastructure: "A standard school should have a laboratory, library, and teaching materials for teachers to ensure effective education."

Previously, the Literacy Directorate of the Ministry of Education stated that in the past year, 6,819 literacy classes were launched across the country. According to officials, more than 122,000 people graduated from these courses.

US resumes special visa services for Afghans

KABUL (Khaama Press): The US has resumed Special Immigrant Visa services for Afghans, offering resettlement support including housing, jobs, and language training.

Afghan Evac, has confirmed that the US government has resumed its Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for eligible Afghans.

The announcement marks an important development for thousands awaiting relocation after months of uncertainty.

In a message shared on its official X page on Wednesday, Afghan Evac called on SIV holders who arrived in the US within the last 90 days to promptly contact a resettlement agency. This is essential to begin accessing available assistance.

According to the organization, SIV holders who connect with a resettlement agency will receive support with housing, job placement, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and other essential services to help them integrate into American society.

The agency clarified that those SIV holders who have not yet entered the US will be eligible for these services as soon as they arrive.

Afghan Evac is continuing to coordinate efforts with American authorities to ensure a smooth transition for newcomers.

This policy shift follows a period of restriction under former President Donald Trump, who had imposed a travel ban affecting citizens from 12 countries, including Afghanistan.

The lifting of these restrictions now allows many Afghan allies to seek safety and stability in the United States.

The resumption of SIV processing and resettlement services reflects a renewed US commitment to its Afghan allies, many of whom supported American missions during two decades of conflict.

The move is widely welcomed by refugee advocates and international organizations.

As resettlement efforts resume, the cooperation between US institutions and groups like Afghan Evac will be critical to ensuring a humane and effective integration process for Afghan families seeking a new life in safety.

Hanafi in China:

Strong, friendly relations require positive engagement



KABUL (Ariana News): Abdul Salam Hanafi, Administrative Deputy of Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), has met with senior Chinese officials and a number of investors during his visit to China.

The meetings, also attended by Nooruddin Azizi, Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, and Mohammad Naeem Wardak, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, emphasized

the importance of win-win cooperation between Afghanistan and China in various areas.

Hanafi stated that the Islamic Emirate supports China's major "Belt and Road" initiative and expressed hope for enhanced and expanded cooperation between the two countries across multiple sectors.

On the Chinese side, Wang Dongming, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National

People's Congress, said that China and Afghanistan, as close neighbors, have no issues in their relations and stressed that cooperation should be strengthened based on mutual interests. He also noted that the opening of the China-South Asia Expo would bring new economic opportunities for Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Chinese investors expressed their interest in investing in Afghanistan during a meet-

ing with the Afghan delegation and called for the Islamic Emirate's support in facilitating such investments.

In response, Deputy Prime Minister Hanafi highlighted Afghanistan's broad investment opportunities and assured that the Islamic Emirate is fully prepared to provide all necessary support and facilities for both domestic and foreign investors, particularly those from China.

Doctors advise dental check-up before pregnancy

KABUL (Pajhwok): Health specialists recommend that women should undergo a dental examination before becoming pregnant to ensure good oral health, as procedures such as fillings or extractions can pose risks during pregnancy.

Dr. Zarghona Mahdi, a gynaecologist in Kabul, explained that pregnancy involved physical and hormonal changes that affect a woman's overall health—including oral health, which plays a crucial role in the digestive system. "If digestion is disrupted, both mother and foetus may face nutritional issues,"

She noted that during the first trimester, many women experience nausea and vomiting, which can increase mouth acidity and lead to tooth decay and gum problems.

Dr. Mahdi added that reduced immunity and increased acidity could cause normally beneficial

oral bacteria to become harmful, leading to white spots on the teeth.

She advised women to visit a dentist before pregnancy for a complete oral health check-up—not just for the teeth but the entire mouth.

"The mouth should be examined for any decay or cavities that may require treatment. If untreated, they can worsen. Overall, maintaining oral hygiene is vital. Women should brush their teeth after every meal using fluoride or antibacterial toothpaste," she said.

She also recommended increasing intake of calcium- and vitamin D-rich foods during pregnancy, such as eggs, milk, fruits, and vegetables, and advised spending at least 10 minutes daily in sunlight for vitamin D absorption.

Dental treatment during pregnancy
Dr. Mahdi explained: "Permanent dental treat-

ments are not recommended in the first trimester. The second trimester is the safest period for dental care, while in the third trimester, certain medications are restricted."

How can pregnant women relieve toothache?

"At the onset of toothache, apply a warm compress to the affected area to reduce swelling and ease pain. If that fails, try rinsing with cold salt water. If the pain persists, simple paracetamol can be taken for relief," she advised.

Dr. Ismail Yaqubi, a specialist in oral and dental diseases, said gum inflammation and bleeding are common during pregnancy and may cause tooth pain.

He stressed the importance of a healthy diet: "If teeth are not in good condition, chewing becomes difficult, leading to poor nutrition, which can negatively affect both mother and unborn child."

He added: "Dental treatment is safe during the second trimester. In the first and third trimesters, it should be limited to emergencies only, due to the potential risks associated with anaesthesia and some medications."

Mothers' experiences

Fatima Ahmadi said: "During my first pregnancy, I experienced unbearable toothache. My family advised me not to take any medicine during that time."

Now pregnant again, she manages her pain with mouthwash and mild painkillers, following her doctor's guidance.

Similarly, Rukhsar Mohammadi recalled: "In my first pregnancy, certain foods triggered tooth pain. Everyone told me not to take medication, fearing it would harm the baby."

She later found out from her doctor that her pain was due to food sensitivity, not a dental problem.

Afghanistan grants visa exemption for pilgrims



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi says a one month visa exemption has been granted to Iranian pilgrims returning home via Afghanistan after performing Hajj.

He said that relevant entities in western Herat province have been instructed to take all necessary measures to ensure the pilgrims' safe and secure transfer to their homeland.

Muttaqi made these remarks at a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Kabul Alireza Bigdeli, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said.

A statement from the ministry said the two sides

discussed the evolving regional situation and the transit of Iranian pilgrims through Afghanistan.

Muttaqi condemned Israel's recent attacks on Iran, calling it a clear violation of international law. He reaffirmed that Afghans stand in solidarity with the Iranian people and said the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) was fully prepared to facilitate the return of Iranian pilgrims via Afghan territory.

He further noted that, in accordance with a decision by the Office of the Prime Minister, Iranian pilgrims travelling through Afghanistan from Saudi Arabia had been granted a

one-month visa waiver.

In addition, concerned departments in Herat had been directed to make all necessary arrangements to ensure a smooth and safe passage for the pilgrims.

For his part, Ambassador Bigdeli shared his government's stance on the recent developments and expressed appreciation to the Islamic Emirate for facilitating the pilgrims' transit—describing it as a laudable step towards strengthening bilateral relations.

He hoped that the relevant institutions of both countries would successfully manage and complete the process of transferring Iranian pilgrims.

UK launches climate-resilient food security program to aid Afghans

KABUL (Amu TV): The United Kingdom has unveiled a new food security and climate resilience initiative aimed at boosting self-sufficiency for half a million vulnerable Afghans, with a focus on empowering women and adapting to climate-driven challenges.

The initiative, announced by the UK government on Thursday, will deliver drought-resistant seeds, more nutritious crops, improved irrigation and water storage, and

training in sustainable farming techniques. Half of the program's recipients will be women, underscoring what officials described as a continued British commitment to the rights and livelihoods of Afghan women.

"The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is having a devastating impact on millions of people," said Hamish Falconer, the UK Minister for the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

"I am proud that the UK continues to play a leading role in supporting the country's people, with this new programme helping to boost nutrition and food security."

The PREVALE program will be implemented in partnership with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the British NGO Afghanaid. It represents a shift toward long-term development solutions over emergency aid, as

Afghanistan faces worsening food insecurity fueled by repeated droughts and economic instability.

With more than 23 million Afghans currently in need of humanitarian assistance, the UK said its efforts aim to bolster local resilience and reduce long-term dependency. Officials also framed the support as part of a broader strategy to contribute to global security and align with the UK government's "Plan for Change."

Japan won't reduce aid to Afghans



KABUL (Pajhwok): Japan's Ambassador in Kabul Takayoshi Kormaya says his country's assistance to Afghans will continue as before, with no reduction in aid.

He said this at a meeting with Minister of Refugee and Repatriation Maulvi Abdul Kabir, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said in a statement.

Kormaya said Japan allocated 7.5 million US dollars through United Nations agencies during the current fiscal year to address challenges faced by Afghan returnees from

other countries.

Referring to the global decline in humanitarian assistance, he assured that Japan's support for the Afghan people would remain steady and would not be reduced.

He also pointed out that following the ban on poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, many Afghan farmers encountered economic difficulties, as suitable alternative crops could be introduced as yet.

For his part, Maulvi Abdul Kabir welcomed the continuation of Japan's aid, calling it vital and stressed the importance of minimising unnecessary administrative costs in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

He also urged Japan's cooperation in the construction of residential townships for Afghan returnees.

Tajik forces demanding taxes at border market

BADAKHSHAN (TOLONews): Shopkeepers and residents of Khwahan district in Badakhshan province said that Tajik border forces have recently started imposing customs duties on goods they bring to sell at the joint border market.

The shopkeepers said this move has created challenges for them and are calling on the authorities to resolve the issue.

Sayed Najibullah, a shopkeeper in Badakhshan, told TOLONews: "There was no customs before. Now they say they will tax people's goods, like charging 49 somoni on a carton of cake, while Afghan traders only earn 7 to 10 somoni profit on each carton." Meanwhile, the Department of Customs in Badakhshan said efforts are underway to address the issue.

Ruhullah Rohani, head of customs in Badakhshan, told TOLONews: "We are working on this issue and have already spoken with the Tajik side. God willing, the matter has been partially resolved and will be fully resolved soon."

Hashmatullah, resident of Badakhshan, said: "This market helps meet both our needs and those of the Tajik people. We ask the Islamic Emirate to open the market for two days and ensure that the goods going to the other side do not face problems."

China to build cold storage facilities in Kabul, Balkh



KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan has reached an agreement with China to construct three cold storages in capital Kabul and Balkh, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MoAIL) announced on Thursday.

Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Maulvi Sadr Azam Usmani met with Ma Chang Wang, Economic and Trade Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Kabul and Shu Changzhi, the Embassy's Economic Secretary, MoAIL said.

A statement from the ministry said both sides agreed to build three cold storage units in Kabul and Balkh to support fruit preservation.

Usmani emphasised the urgent need to expand cold storage infrastructure nationwide and called for increased cooperation from

China in the agriculture and livestock sectors.

The Chinese delegation reaffirmed their country's commitment to supporting the development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector.

They expressed readiness to build standard cold storage facilities aimed at reducing post-harvest losses

and enhancing the export process.

According to the ministry, the projects will be implemented in coordination with China, with the goal of improving farmers' economic conditions, safeguarding agricultural products and boosting Afghanistan's export markets.

Afghan MMA fighter Hotak set to return to ring

KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghan Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighter Ahmad Wali Hotak is set to return to the ring after a long hiatus, facing a Dagestani opponent on June 27. In a post on his official Facebook page, Hotak wrote: "After a long pause, I am returning to the ring. Representing proud Afghanistan, I'm ready to compete in an international MMA event against a strong opponent from Dagestan. Your support and prayers will make this journey to victory easier for me." He added that the fight will be held in Belarus. According to reports, Hotak has fought 11 matches to date, winning 10 and losing only one. He has not competed in any international events since 2022.

Pakistan flays Israeli aggression against Iran

— urges int’l community, UN to hold Israel accountable

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Strongly condemning the unjustified and illegitimate aggression by Israel against Iran, Pakistan on Thursday urged the international community and the United Nations to bear the responsibility to uphold international law, stop this aggression immediately, and hold the aggressor accountable for its actions.

“The Israeli military strikes violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran and clearly contravene the UN Charter and fundamental principles of international law. Iran has a right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in his weekly press briefing.

He said Pakistan stood in resolute solidarity with the people of Iran and unequivocally denounced these blatant provocations, which constituted a grave danger and a serious threat to the peace, security, and stability of the entire region and beyond, with serious implications. The FO Spokesperson highlighted that in light of the rapidly evolving regional developments and the unprecedented escalation of tensions in the Middle East, particularly owing to the ongoing military aggression of Israel against Iran, the foreign ministers of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Kingdom of Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of Chad, the Union of the Comoros, the Republic of Djibouti, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Iraq, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the State of Kuwait, the State of Libya, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the State of Qatar, the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Sudan, the Republic of Turkey, the Sultanate of Oman, and the United Arab Emirates categorically rejected and condemned Israel’s recent attacks on Iran since June 13, 2025, while emphasizing the necessity of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, adhering to principles of good neighborliness, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

He said that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held telephonic conversations with the foreign ministers of Iran, Sayyid Abbas Araghchi; Turkiye, Hakan Fidan; Egypt; Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan; and UK Foreign Secretary, David Lammy.

The leaders expressed deep concern over the deteriorating regional situation. They reaffirmed their commitment to work closely for maintaining peace and stability in the region and beyond. The deputy PM highlighted the serious threats to peace and stability in the region stemming from Israel’s unjustified attacks on Iran. Leaders stressed the need to defuse tensions and prevent further escalation.

Meanwhile, Shafqat Ali Khan informed that Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch inaugurated the regional consultations on responsible AI in the military domain in Islamabad on June 17, 2025. In her keynote remarks, the Foreign Secretary, inter alia, underscored that military AI is transforming warfare, but legal and political frameworks are lagging behind. This transformation

is unfolding in a deeply fragile international landscape and is lowering the threshold for the use of force.

Further he added that the deputy PM Ishaq Dar chaired a high-level meeting to review the status of ongoing assistance provided by Pakistan to the Palestinian people on June 14, 2025. The DPM/FM expressed deep concern over the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank resulting from Israel’s blatant violation of human rights. Furthermore, he added Ishaq Dar chaired another high-level meeting on June 13, 2025, to review preparations for the forthcoming 12th session of the Pakistan-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission, to be held in Abu Dhabi on June 24, 2025.

The fifth round of the Pakistan-European Union dialogue on non-proliferation and disarmament was held in Islamabad on June 12, 2025. The spokesperson added that both sides engaged in a comprehensive exchange of views on issues related to international and regional peace, security, and strategic stability.

He emphasized that the Indian authorities continue to impose different curbs in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir which they carried on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha. The local people were not allowed to congregate at Srinagar’s historic Jama Masjid and Eidgah for Eid prayers. The prayer leader and prominent Kashmiri leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, was also placed under house arrest. “We urge the Indian authorities to respect the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people and grant them their inalienable right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions,” he added.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari called on Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

Senate passes Civil Servants (Amend) Bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Thursday passed the Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2025, aimed at enhancing transparency and enabling public access to the asset declarations of senior government officials.

The bill, moved by Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on behalf of Senator Ahmed Khan Cheema, Minister for Establishment, seeks to amend the Civil Servants Act, 1973, as reported by the Standing Committee.

The legislation is intended to further operationalize the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1964 specifically Rules 12, 13, and 13-A and align them with the provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2017.

Under the proposed framework, asset declarations of officers in Basic Pay Scale (BPS) 17 to 22 including assets beneficially owned domestically or abroad by the officials or their family members will be filed digitally and made publicly accessible.

The bill provides that sufficient safeguards will be ensured to protect sensitive personal information, such as national identity numbers, residential addresses, and bank or bond account numbers.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) will maintain the digital platform, while the Establishment Division will be equipped with a robust framework, resources, and tools to conduct risk-based verifications of the submitted declarations. The move is aimed at promoting transparency, strengthening public trust, and enhancing accountability across the federal bureaucracy.

Aseefa hails hike in BISP budget

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on Thursday called for a national education emergency, highlighting the critical need for greater investment in health, education, and human capital in light of escalating public hardships.

Participating in the ongoing budget debate in the National Assembly, she underscored the importance of a pro-poor and pro-women budget, advocating for meaningful measures to empower women across the country.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari stressed that Pakistan needs a budget that is progressive, centered on the people, and safeguards the most vulnerable segments of society. She voiced strong opposition to the proposed General Sales Tax (GST) on solar panels, warning that it could hamper efforts to tackle the country’s worsening energy crisis.

Citing statistics, she noted that 56 million Pakistanis still lack access to electricity, while residents in her own constituency endure up to 15 hours of loadshedding daily. Aseefa Bhutto Zardari welcomed the 21% increase in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) budget, calling for its expansion to include female literacy and health insurance. She described BISP as Asia’s largest social safety net, supporting nearly half of Pakistan’s population.

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also praised PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for effectively advocating Pakistan’s interests on the international stage and lauded the Sindh government for constructing 2.1 million flood-resistant houses across the province.

Israeli attacks kill 84 people in Gaza

GAZA: At least 84 people have been killed in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip as desperate Palestinians continue to seek food amid an ongoing hunger crisis. Among those killed since dawn on Thursday, 59 were in Gaza City and the north and 16 others were waiting for aid assistance near the Netzarim Corridor, which splits north and south Gaza.

Starving Palestinians have gathered in the area daily to receive packages from the United States- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which the United Nations has condemned for its “weaponisation” of aid. Bassam Abu Shaar, who witnessed the Israeli attack at the aid site, told the AFP news agency that people had gathered overnight in the hope of receiving food.

“Around 1am [22:00 GMT Wednesday], they started shooting at us. The gunfire intensified from tanks, aircraft and quadcopter bombs,” he told AFP by phone. “We couldn’t help them or even escape ourselves,” he said, adding that the size of the crowd had made it impossible for people to flee Israeli fire near the Shuhada Junction. In recent weeks, Israeli attacks on Palestinians attempting to receive food aid have

increased, killing dozens of people.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera’s Tareq Abu Azzoum said the attacks on people at aid sites are becoming a “daily routine”. “More than three months of full [Israeli] blockade on border crossings has turned Gaza into a hunger point where people have run out of all kinds of humanitarian supplies and now found themselves to be forced to move to these designated centres to get bags of flour, bottles of water and alongside food boxes that, according to nutritional experts, contain low nutritional value,” Azzoum explained.

“These attacks are still unfolding, turning all humanitarian corridors into killing grounds,” he said. According to the Reuters news agency, the Israeli military claimed, without providing evidence, that there were attempts by “suspects” to approach forces in the area of Netzarim in a way that had endangered them.

The army added that forces fired warning shots to prevent suspects from approaching them, and it was currently unaware of injuries in the incident. Separately, an Israeli drone attack on a makeshift tent

where Palestinians were charging their electrical devices in Al Shati Refugee Camp, killed 13 people, while an Israeli aircraft also launched intensive air strikes and bombed several homes in Jabalia, northern Gaza.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah, Al Jazeera’s Hind Khoudary said Israel’s attack on the charging point at the Al Shati camp came after “more than a year-and-a-half” without electricity in the enclave. At the same time, the attacks on aid distribution centres are a testament to the “deteriorating” situation in Gaza that has forced Palestinians to put “their lives at risk for food”, Khoudary added. “Only a limited, very limited number of trucks coming in [to Gaza] every single day and people are very desperate; they’re being killed as they try to take whatever is on the trucks,” she added.

Over the past 24 hours, 69 bodies, including two that were recovered after an attack, and 221 wounded people were admitted to hospitals in the besieged enclave, medical sources said. Since the war began in October 2023, at least 55,706 people have been killed and 130,101 wounded, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. — Aljazeera

South Africa flooding death toll rises to 92

JOHANNESBURG (AP): South Africa was under a declared state of national disaster on Thursday as the death toll from floods caused by severe rains in the Eastern Cape region rose to 92. The Eastern Cape government honored the victims of last week’s floods with a provincial Day of Mourning and a memorial service at King Sabatha Dalindyebo Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College in Mthatha, one of the few schools whose infrastructure remained intact.

Speaking at the public memorial service, Zolile Williams, a member of the executive council, said the people of the coastal province have not been the same since the disaster hit, and many are now faced with the challenging task of rebuilding. “Since June 9, this province has been hit hard by unprecedented, catastrophic and unimaginable disasters, where in the whole of the province, about 92 people have perished,” said Williams.

“Since that day, the Eastern Cape has not been the same. It is the first time we have experienced so many dead bodies, some of whom have not yet been found.” An extreme weather front brought heavy rain, strong winds and snow to parts of the province caused flooding in one of South Africa’s poorest provinces last week, leaving dozens dead and roads, houses, schools and other infrastructure damaged.

At least two school children who were washed away in a bus are among the unverified number of missing persons according to local media reports, while thousands have since been displaced. Authorities have appealed for residents to report missing people so rescuers could better understand how many people they were still looking for.

Religious leaders from different Christian religions were among the hundreds of mourners who attended the memorial ceremony, lighting candles as a symbolic expression of remembering the 92 people who died in the floods. In a government notice on

Wednesday, Elias Sithole, director of the National Disaster Management Center, said severe weather had caused property damage, and the disruption of vital services in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape, and the Free State, which prompted South Africa to declare a national state of disaster.

The declaration allows the government to release funding for relief and rehabilitation and will remain in place until it lapses or until the conditions can no longer be categorized as such and is revoked by the head of the center. President Cyril Ramaphosa recently visited the town of Mthatha, in Eastern Cape province, where the floods hit hardest.

Many of the Eastern Cape flood victims lived on floodplains close to rivers. Government officials said poor neighborhoods with informal dwellings were most severely impacted. Authorities have been criticized for the rescue response but also for the state of the infrastructure in the area.

Senate panel rejects carbon tax on petroleum products

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Finance Thursday rejected two key budget proposals for the fiscal year 2025-26 — the imposition of a carbon levy on petroleum products and a tax on small cars.

Initially, the proposal was unveiled by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb during his budget speech on June 10, 2025. Under the proposed amendments to the Ordinance of 1961 — already incorporated into the draft Finance Bill 2025-26 — the government had aimed to phase in a carbon levy of Rs5 per litre on petrol and diesel over two years, starting with Rs2.5 per litre in FY2025-26, and to apply both carbon and petroleum levies on furnace oil.

The meeting, chaired by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, turned down the finance ministry’s proposal to introduce a carbon levy of Rs2.50 per litre

on petroleum products in fiscal year 2025-26, with a planned increase to Rs5.00 per litre in the following year. The finance ministry officials informed the committee that the proposed levy was expected to generate Rs45 billion in annual revenue.

During the session, Senator Sherry Rehman termed the carbon levy a burden on the common man and argued that it could not be introduced through the Finance Bill 2025-26. She added that such taxes should target industries with high carbon emissions and must be part of a broader climate strategy.

Senator Shibli Faraz also criticised the government for proposing levy on petrol and diesel in the budget 2025-26. In a separate development, the committee rejected a proposal to impose a 1%, 2%, or 3% levy on small vehicles. Senator Sherry Rehman pointed out that vehicle regis-

tration and taxation are provincial matters and warned that federal intervention in this domain could raise legal and administrative complications.

Earlier this week, the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) sent a summary to the federal cabinet, seeking approval to amend the Petroleum Products (Petroleum Levy) Ordinance, 1961, to introduce new levies on petrol, diesel, and furnace oil in line with Pakistan’s commitments under the IMF’s Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). The summary states that the petroleum levy on furnace oil will be imposed at Rs77 per litre (Rs82,077/MT) effective July 1, 2025, contingent on the enactment of the amended ordinance through the upcoming Finance Act. A carbon levy of Rs2.5/litre (Rs2,665/MT) on furnace oil will also be introduced in FY26 and doubled in FY27.

PHC seeks report on SOPs for social media usage by officers

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshed Iqbal has sought a response from the Director of the Performance Management and Reforms Unit (PMRU) regarding a petition filed against the Deputy Commissioner of Swabi for sharing a video of a ceremony at the Women University Swabi on social media. The court has directed the PMRU to submit a report within 10 days and adjourned the hearing until 10th July, on Thursday.

The petition was filed by Muhammad Hamdan advocate, who alleged that the Deputy Commissioner of Swabi had shared videos of various programs on TikTok without permission.

The lawyer argued that the Deputy Commissioner and other government officials are only authorized to use official websites, not personal social media accounts, and that sharing videos on TikTok without permission is a violation of privacy.

Justice Syed Arshad Ali observed that government officials are creating their own pages for promotion and sharing everything on social media, which is not appropriate.

The court directed the PMRU to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the use of social media by government officials and to submit a detailed report. The court directed the PMRU to submit a report within 10 days, outlining the SOPs for social media use by government officials.

Congo virus claims another life in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A 26-year-old man from Karachi’s Ibrahim Hyderi area died of Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF), commonly known as Congo virus, on Thursday, marking the second confirmed death from the virus in Sindh this year, according to a provincial health department report.

CCHF is a tick-borne viral disease with a case fatality rate ranging from 10% to 40%, according to the World Health Organisation. The virus can be transmitted through tick bites or through contact with the blood or tissues of infected animals, particularly during slaughter. There is currently no vaccine available.

The patient, identified as Zubair, was admitted to the emergency ward at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and was diagnosed as a suspected CCHF case.

Pakistan always prioritised peace over war: ISPR DG

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhary has said that the success of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos is a victory for peace, and that Pakistan has always prioritised peace over war.

According to the ISPR, the ISPR DG held a special interactive session with students of the Saylani IT Program in Karachi, where he received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from the students. During the

session, students asked a range of questions on various topics, including Pakistan’s internal and external security situation.

The military spokesperson praised the students, saying, “You have played the role of a frontline force in the information war.” He emphasised that Pakistan’s armed forces are disciplined and professional, fulfilling their duties efficiently in accordance with the Constitution and directives of the state. He further stated that Pakistan will continue to act as a net regional stabiliser in the

region.

The students expressed their willingness to make every sacrifice for the defense of their homeland, saying they are ready to stand with the Pakistan Army on any front. They added that the armed forces are their pride, and the people are the true source of the military’s strength. The students appreciated the session with the DG ISPR, thanked him for the opportunity, and expressed hope for similar interactions in the future. They concluded with a patriotic cheer: “Long live Pakistan!”



QUETTA: Pakistani students and devotees arrived from Tehran after tension between Iran and Israel.

Budget 2025-26: MPs call for solar tax repeal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Lawmakers in the Upper House on Thursday strongly condemned Israel’s recent aggression against Iran, and expressed grave concerns over the country’s fiscal policies, particularly the imposition of taxes on essential sectors and the economic hardships facing ordinary citizens.

While participating in the general discussion on Budget 2025-26, Senator Dost Ali Jeoor condemned the Israeli attack on Iran and praised Pakistan’s principled stance and the adoption of a resolution condemning the aggression. He said the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should convene an emergency session, or alternatively, a conference of Muslim foreign ministers should be called in these testing times.

The Senator commended Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s recent diplomatic endeavors that have successfully shaped a positive global narrative. Jeoor criticized the 18 percent solar tax, calling it unfair and burdensome on low-income families who invest in solar panels and batteries.

He called for the total elimination of the tax,

asserting that the recent cut—lowering the GST on solar panels by more than 10 percent from the previous 18 percent—remains insufficient. Senator Muhammad Abdul Qadir presented an overview of the federal budget, said that we would need more loans to finance ongoing development projects, pension disbursements, and social welfare programs like BISP.

He cautioned that Pakistan’s debt servicing costs are alarmingly high, with interest payments consuming 30 to 35 percent of loans taken by successive governments. Abdul Qadir advocated for an export-led growth model to stabilize the economy, reduce dependence on imports, and ease pressure on the currency. He urged government support for the burgeoning IT sector, lamenting the imposition of taxes on e-commerce businesses, which could stifle growth.

Senator Jam Saifullah Khan strongly condemned Israel’s “war crimes” against civilians in Iran and criticized Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. The lawmaker appreciated the efforts of the high-level peace delegation led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and acknowledged his role in raising Pakistan’s

voice for peace on international forums.

Jam Saifullah pressed for the commencement of the long-delayed M-6 Motorway project, criticizing insufficient PSDP allocations. He also raised environmental concerns, opposing taxes on electric and hybrid vehicles, which he said undermine national climate goals. Furthermore, he called for increased support for salary earners and pensioners to fight inflation. Senator Haji Hidayatullah Khan highlighted the disproportionate tax burden on the poor, deeming the 10 percent pay raise for government employees inadequate in the prevailing economic crisis. He warned of declining agricultural productivity and stressed urgent government intervention to revive the sector.

Calling solar energy a vital resource for Pakistan’s future, Hidayatullah demanded the removal of taxes on solar panels to encourage wider adoption. Citing a World Health Organization report, he stressed that 45 percent of people live below the poverty line and over 270 million children remain out of school, underscoring the urgent need to prioritize education and healthcare.