

BB Shaheed remembered
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Former two-time elected first women PM of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, was remembered on her 72nd Birth anniversary across the country. All the Electronic, Radio and social/digital media platforms paid highest homage to her dedication and her efforts for the restoration of a true democratic and progressive state of Pakistan in line with the vision of the founding father, Quaid-e-Azam.

ATC grants bail to Qureshi
F.P. Report
LAHORE: Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court has granted bail to PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the May 9 Shadman arson case. The decision was announced by Lahore ATC Judge Manzar Ali Gill during a court session held at Kot Lakhpat Jail. The verdict followed detailed arguments presented a day earlier by Qureshi's legal counsels, Rana Muddasir Umar and Barrister Taimoor Malik.

Israel launches more strikes on Iran

— president says no halt to nuclear activities

JERUSALEM/WASHINGTON: Iran and Israel exchanged fresh attacks early on Saturday, a day after Tehran said it would not negotiate over its nuclear program while under threat and Europe tried to keep peace talks alive.

Shortly after 2:30 a.m. in Israel (2330 GMT on Friday), the Israeli military warned of an incoming missile barrage from Iran, triggering air raid sirens across parts of central Israel, including Tel Aviv, as well as in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Interceptions were visible in the sky over Tel Aviv, with explosions echoing across the metropolitan area as Israel's air defense systems responded.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said Saturday his country will not halt nuclear activity "under any circumstances" amid ongoing fighting with Israel which hit nuclear sites. "We are ready to discuss and cooperate to build confidence in the field of peaceful nuclear activities, however, we do not agree to reduce nuclear activities to zero under any circumstances," said Pezeshkian during a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, according to the official IRNA news agency.

Cyprus police said they arrested an individual on espionage and terror charges on Saturday, with local media reporting the suspect had ties to Iran. Police declined to provide extensive details, citing "national security," but local media said the suspect was seen acting suspiciously near a British air force base at Akrotiri, outside the southern coastal city of Limassol.

Cypriot news outlet Philenews reported the man had links to "Iranian operatives" and had arrived on the Mediterranean island last month posing as a British tourist. US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said on Saturday that the State Department has started assisted departure flights from Israel amid its conflict with Iran.

He encouraged US citizens and lawful permanent residents in Israel and the West Bank, who want government assistance to depart, to complete a form on the department's website. Yemen's Houthis will target US ships in the Red Sea if Washington becomes involved in Israeli attacks on Iran, the group's military spokesperson said on Saturday.

In May, the US and the Houthis agreed to a ceasefire under which neither side would target the other. The United Nations said on Saturday the Iran-Israel war must not be allowed to trigger another refugee crisis in the Middle East, saying once people fled there was no quick way back.

"This region has already endured more than its share of war, loss and displacement. We cannot allow another refugee crisis to take root," said Filippo Grandi, the UN high commissioner for refugees. "The time to de-escalate is right now. Once people are forced to flee, there's no quick way back — and all too often, the consequences last for generations."

Israel's military said Saturday it was conducting strikes on "military infrastructure" in Iran's southwest, on the ninth day of the war sparked by Israel's attack on the Islamic republic. "Fighter jets are currently striking military infrastructure in southwestern Iran," the military said in a statement.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday that Israel's attacks on Iran right before a new round of nuclear talks with the United States aimed to sabotage the negotiations, and it showed Israel did not want to resolve issues through diplomacy. He also called on Muslim countries to increase their efforts to impose punitive measures against Israel on the basis of international law and United Nations' resolutions.

Russia has repeatedly told Israel that there is no evidence Iran is aiming to get nuclear weapons. Sky News Arabia on Saturday quoted Russian President Vladimir Putin as saying in an interview. Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Saturday that the military had killed a veteran commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' overseas arm, in a strike in an apartment in Iran's Qom province.

The commander, Saeed Izadi, led the Palestine Corps of the overseas arm, or Quds Force, Katz said in a statement. The Israeli military later said that it killed a second commander of the Guards' overseas arm, who it identified as Benham Shariyari, during a strike on his vehicle overnight in western Tehran.

It said the commander "was responsible for all weapons transfers from the Iranian regime to its proxies across the Middle East." Shariyari supplied missiles and rockets launched at Israel to Hezbollah, Hamas and Yemen's Houthis, according to the Israeli military.

There was no confirmation from the IIRGC on the killing of the two commanders. Police in Iran's Qom province said Saturday that 22 people "linked to Israeli spy services" had been arrested since June 13, Fars news agency reported. "22 people were identified and arrested on charges of being linked to the Zionist regime's spy services, disturbing public opinion, and supporting the criminal regime," the agency stated, citing the head of police intelligence in Iran's Qom province.

Iran's Isfahan nuclear site was targeted by Israel, Iran's Fars news agency reported on Saturday, adding that there was no leakage of hazardous materials. At the same time, Israel launched a new wave of attacks against missile storage and launch infrastructure sites in Iran, the Israeli military said.

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President launches Benazir Skills Programme

F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari formally launched the Benazir Hunarmand Programme at a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the President underscored the importance of education and skill development, stating that every household should be equipped with the tools of learning and education.

He said that BISP was based on the philosophy of Zulfikar Bhutto Shaheed whose legacy was carried forward by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who believed in inclusive prosperity and education for all. "We are determined to realize her vision for the uplift of marginalized segments of society," the President said. First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was also present at the launch of the programme.

Highlighting the importance of the Benazir Hunarmand Programme, President Zardari noted that skills development was crucial not only for national progress but also for preparing a skilled workforce to meet the growing demand in international markets. "We should equip our youth with modern technical skills needed globally," he remarked.

He particularly stressed the significance of the nursing profession, calling it one of the most sought-after fields internationally, and urged that special priority should be given to training in this area. President Zardari also underlined the importance of learning foreign languages alongside modern skills to enable our youth to get jobs in foreign markets.

Referring to his previous tenure, the President recalled that he had launched the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), which became a cornerstone of social protection in Pakistan. He expressed gratitude to former Finance Minister Naveed Qamar, acknowledging his valuable role in the launch and implementation of BISP. He said, "Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will be improved further and more programmes will be added."

The President said that the Benazir Hunarmand Programme is a continuation of that legacy, aimed at uplifting communities through empowerment and opportunity. He reiterated his resolve to ensure that the youth of Pakistan are provided with the skills, education, and opportunities necessary to build a prosperous country. The President said June 21 was an important day for Pakistan People's Party as it was the birthday of Benazir Bhutto Shaheed. "It is also a day of sorrow as we lost Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who guided us with her wisdom and farsightedness," he added.

Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme Senator Rubina Khalid said Benazir Income Support (BISP), since its inception 17 years ago, had become the largest social protection programme. Under the programme, women were declared head of the household and received financial help for their 10 million families, she added.

BISP was also in the forefront to disburse timely financial assistance to flood affectees in 2022 and during the COVID pandemic, she noted. She said BISP had always been more than a safety net, it was a commitment to inclusion, dignity and transformation of people especially women. Benazir Hunarmand Programme, while using the database of BISP will create an empowered and self-reliant citizenry, which will be capable of participating productively in economic endeavours, she explained.

The programme, she said, would offer practical and demand-driven training in multiple fields enabling critical economic and social change and causing poverty alleviation. She said BISP was a globally acknowledged social protection model, which other countries wanted to emulate. She thanked the partners of BISP including the German government for extending valuable support for different development initiatives. Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider, ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats and high-ranking officers attended the event. A cake was also cut on the occasion to celebrate the birthday of Benazir Bhutto Shaheed.

India will never restore Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI: Indian Home Minister Amit Shah has declared that the Indus Waters Treaty will never be restored, adding that the water currently flowing to Pakistan will be diverted via canals to Rajasthan. "Pakistan will no longer receive the water it has been getting," he stated.

Amit Shah said that New Delhi will never reinstate the Indus Waters Treaty with Islamabad and that water destined for Pakistan will be redirected for domestic use. In an interview with the Times of India, Shah claimed that Pakistan was receiving water "illegitimately", and that it would never get that water again.

It is important to note that internationally recognised laws grant downstream countries the right to river water, meaning Pakistan has a legitimate claim over these rivers, which flow through its territory.

FO slams Indian claims of ceasefire request by Pakistan

F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Office has categorically rejected claims made by Indian media that Islamabad requested a ceasefire during the recent bout of heightened tensions between Pakistan and India. In an official statement, the Foreign Office spokesperson strongly denied reports circulated by Indian outlets suggesting that Pakistan had sought a ceasefire following alleged Indian aggression. "The claims made by Indian media last night are baseless and categorically denied," the spokesperson stated, emphasising that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar had already clarified in various interviews and statements that Pakistan's response to Indian aggression was firm and decisive—an exercise of its legitimate right to self-defence.

Pakistan has repeatedly stated that the Indus Waters Treaty does not allow unilateral withdrawal, and any attempt to stop river water flowing to Pakistan will be considered an act of war. The Punjab government in Pakistan is also exploring legal options under international law to challenge India's decision to suspend the treaty. — Agencies



ISTANBUL: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Ishaq Dar, along with Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, called on President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Pak-Türkiye reiterate support for Iran sovereignty

ISTANBUL (APP): Pakistan and Türkiye on Saturday reiterated their support for Iran's sovereignty, territorial integrity and its right to self-defence under the UN Charter.

During a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of 51st Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers here, the two leaders agreed to continue diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation, urging the international community to play its part in restoring peace and stability in the region.

The leaders expressed strong condemnation of the continued Israeli attacks in blatant violation of fundamental principles of international law. Both sides emphasized the urgency of galvanizing efforts to bring an immediate halt to the Israeli aggression in Gaza and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance to the besieged people of Gaza.

The deputy prime minister conveyed the warm greetings of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to President Erdogan, and underscored the profound importance that Pakistan accorded to its enduring bilateral relations with Türkiye. Both the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further deepen and diversify the longstanding brotherly cooperation between the two countries.

DPM Dar also congratulated President Erdogan on the Award conferred by the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum in recognition of his leadership as well as successful holding of the OIC CFM session.

Pak proposes Trump for Peace Prize

F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan in a post on X stated that the decision has been taken in view of President Trump's decisive diplomatic intervention during the recent Pakistan-India standoff, which prevented a potential full-scale war between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. The post further stated that the international community witnessed India's unprovoked and unlawful aggression, which constituted a grave violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and regional integrity. The Indian assault resulted in the loss of innocent lives, including women and children.

In response, and while exercising its inherent right to self-defence, Pakistan launched Operation Bunyanum Marsoos, a measured, resolute military action aimed at restoring the balance of power and safeguarding regional stability.

OIC FMs condemn Israeli aggression

ISTANBUL: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers convened in Istanbul on Saturday, with participating states unanimously condemning Israeli aggression in Gaza and Iran, while calling for immediate ceasefire and diplomatic solutions.

OIC Chairperson Hissein Brahim Taha, in his opening address, strongly denounced Israeli military operations, stating, "Since June 13, the Middle East has been plunged into a new wave of conflict. We urge an end to hostilities between Iran and Israel and call for dialogue as the path to resolution." He also emphasised the need for implementation of OIC resolutions regarding Israel.

Representatives from over 40 member states are attending the session, including Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar. During the session, Türkiye formally assumed the OIC chairmanship for the next three years.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is attending the summit, along with more than 40 diplomats from various countries. At the OIC meeting, Ishaq Dar and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were seated together. The conference is reviewing the current situation in Iran, and Ishaq Dar is expected to present Pakistan's stance on the matter.

The OIC session will also feature special discussions on Israeli attacks on Gaza and the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict, while the President of Türkiye is scheduled to address the foreign ministers.

PM directs to formulate action plan for Hajj

F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday directed the Ministry of Religious Affairs to formulate a detailed action plan with timeline for the next year's Hajj without any delay.

The prime minister, chairing a review meeting on preparations for next year's Hajj, directed the Ministry to start preparations from now. He said that the action plan should be formulated based on the Hajj policy issued by Saudi government.

"No laxity in serving Hajj pilgrims next year will be tolerated," Prime Minister Shehbaz said and also directed to regularize the private Hajj scheme. Federal ministers Musadik Malik, Sardar Muhammad Yusuf and concerned senior officials attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Saturday strongly condemned the firing incident on police personnel in Swabi and expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of the officers. The prime minister paid tribute to the police personnel who embraced martyrdom and prayed for grant of fortitude to the bereaved families, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He further directed a thorough investigation into the incident and exemplary punishment to those responsible after their identification. "We will continue our fight against terrorism until this menace is completely eradicated from the country," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying. The prime minister said the officers and personnel of the police force were making efforts day and night to rid the beloved homeland of this scourge of terrorism.

"We, along with the entire nation, are proud of our police officers and personnel who are foiling the nefarious designs of terrorists against our beloved country," he added.

KP budget won't pass sans Imran's approval: Saif

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information, Barrister Dr. Saif has said that the provincial budget will be approved only after consultation with Imran Khan.

He emphasized that since the public voted for Imran Khan's ideology, the approval of the budget is also conditional upon his consultation. The advisor said that public will not tolerate any disrespect to their mandate under any circumstances. If any attempt is made to impose any kind of emergency in the province, the so-called fake government will not last even a single day. He made it clear that the authority to dissolve the provincial assembly lies solely with the Chief Minister.

Barrister Saif asserted that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the only province where a government truly representative of the public has been formed based on Form 45, whereas the federal and other provincial governments are relying on fake foundation of Form 47. He claimed that these governments are so weak that even a slight push would be enough to bring them down.

He further stated that since the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa voted for Imran Khan's ideology, all important decisions will be made only with his consultation. He warned the federal government to refrain from using cheap tactics and to arrange a meeting with Imran Khan as soon as possible.

Barrister Dr. Saif accused the federal government of hatching plans to weaken the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, which is tantamount to weakening Pakistan itself. He said the people are being punished for voting for Imran Khan, despite the fact that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a vital part of the federation.

He warned that any conspiracy by the federal government against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would lead to serious consequences. He said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, and according to Imran Khan's vision, the development process in the province is progressing rapidly—something the federal government cannot digest. That is why new conspiracies are being hatched every day.

He concluded by saying that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the stronghold of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and that the movement for Imran Khan's release will also be led from here in full force. He said that false cases were filed to imprison Imran Khan, but soon all these fabricated cases will be dismissed and Imran Khan's release will be ensured.



LAHORE: A young man rides his motorcycle in the Provincial Capital, wearing a scarf to shield him from the scorching sun. —APP Photo

42 million trees to be planted on over 50,000 acres: Punjab CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the provincial budget strongly reflects her government's eco-friendly vision, with landmark initiatives being launched under the Punjab Green Program to combat climate change and promote sustainable development.

In a statement on Saturday, the CM, highlighting key features of the Chief Minister's Plan for Pakistan Initiative, revealed that a large-scale tree plantation campaign has been launched, aiming to plant 42 million trees across 50,869 acres. Under the CM Agroforestry Initiative, 1.375 million trees are being planted over 3,790 acres of forest wasteland.

The CM announced the expansion of the Green Pakistan Program, under which the plantation of 466,463 million trees over 251,000 acres is underway. Additionally, a separate drive to plant 5 million trees in rows along 10,223 avenue miles in canal areas of Punjab has also been activated.

CM Maryam Nawaz added that

steps are being taken to provide world-class facilities for the promotion of eco-tourism in Lal Suhanra National Park and the Salt Range. These include deployment of wireless networks, GPS devices, CCTV cameras, and digital monitoring tools.

To preserve natural landscapes and biodiversity, she noted that work has begun on a LEED-certified eco-friendly multi-storey building for the establishment of a protected nature zone, equipped with modern facilities for staff and researchers.

She highlighted the launch of the Shielding Summits Program in the hilly areas of Murree and Kahuta, which includes the recruitment of 600 fire watchers, provision of firefighting vehicles, watch towers, and disaster prevention mechanisms. Restoration of forest tracks and the construction of water tanks for spring preservation are also integral components of the program.

The CM pointed out the introduction of a modern GIS-based forest protection system, enabling real-time

detection of forest fires and encroachments using drones, satellites, and LIDAR technology.

A Digital Communication Cell has been established within the Forest Department, along with the provision of modern monitoring equipment and additional staff for its Monitoring & Evaluation Wing. In addition, digital tree enumeration and GIS-based tree surveys have been initiated for better forest management and transparency.

The CM also shared that modern forestry machinery has been procured to accelerate plantation and field operations. She added that the establishment of 104 Forest Command & Control Centers across the province will ensure round-the-clock forest monitoring, significantly strengthening Punjab's forest protection infrastructure.

These wide-ranging green initiatives, she said, clearly reflect the government's commitment to climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and a cleaner, greener future for Punjab.

Governor lauds PPP's historical role in strengthening country's defence

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, on Saturday paid tribute to Pakistan People Party (PPP) leadership's pivot role in fortifying the country's defence, hailing Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's stance for the country's nuclear program and Shaheed Benazir who laid the foundation of Pakistan missile technology which has granted success in recent war.

He also praised Bilawal Bhutto's successful diplomatic efforts which dominated the Pakistan narrative over that of Indian. The Punjab Governor expressed these views while addressing the ceremony held in connection with 72nd birthday celebration of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto at the National Press Club,

Islamabad.

Apart from him, Advisor to the Prime Minister and senior party leader Qamar Zaman Kaira, General Secretary of PPP Central Punjab Syed Hassan Murtaza, General Secretary of Women's Wing Punjab and Member of Provincial Assembly Nargis Faiz Malik, President of PPP Attock Ashar Hayat Khan and a large number of party workers attended the ceremony, said a press release.

The governor further said that the recent victory in the Indo-Pak war was the result of the PPP leadership's efforts, they made for nuclear program and missile technology.

The entire nation, including the armed forces of Pakistan, deserves congratulations on this victory, he added. Zulfiqar Ali

Bhutto laid the foundation of Pakistan nuclear program, when the economic and political challenges were at their peak, Governor recalled, highlighting the stance of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, remembering stood true to his words.

Similarly, he said, Bibi Shaheed acquisition of missile technology further enhanced the country's capability, which the world recognizes today.

President Asaf Ali Zardari is the king of reconciliation, he said and added, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has fulfilled his right to be the heir of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Due to his successful diplomacy, the whole world has supported Pakistan's position while rejecting the Indian statement.

Meanwhile, Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) Qamar Zaman Kaira said PPP leaders are remembered in history for their steadfast commitment to the nation, adding that both President Zardari and Chairman Bilawal are currently playing key roles in strengthening democracy for developed and prosperous Pakistan. Other speakers also addressed the event.

A documentary highlighting the life and services of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto was also screened at the event. The ceremony was organized by Sadia Hayat Khan, who joined the party. On this occasion, a cake was also cut for Bibi Shaheed. In his speech, the Governor of Punjab welcomed Sadia Hayat Khan on joining the party.

Govt focuses on improving healthcare facilities: Mustafa

KARACHI (APP): Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Saturday said that the government was prioritizing the improvement of healthcare facilities across the country, emphasizing the need to focus more on disease prevention than on merely establishing hospitals. He expressed these views while addressing industrialists at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI).

The minister highlighted that nearly 70 percent of the population still lacks access to Basic Health Units (BHUs). He warned that the increasing number of patients were straining the operational capacity of existing hospitals.

"While polio has been eradicated in most parts of the world, it still persists in Pakistan," Kamal remarked. "It is unfortunate that Pakistan ranks among the top countries for diseases like polio and hepatitis."

The minister urged the business community, particularly those associated with the pharmaceutical industry, to support efforts in disease prevention to reduce the dependency on medicines. "We are con-



suming more medicines than the value of loans we receive from the IMF," he said.

Kamal stressed the need to shift the national health policy from curative to preventive care, stressing that focusing on public health awareness and prevention could reduce the burden on healthcare infrastructure.

Emphasizing the role of technology, the health minister announced that reforms in the health sector would be introduced through a public-philanthropic partnership model. "The telemedicine service introduced during COVID-19 will now be expanded to ensure medicines and doc-

tor consultations are delivered at the doorstep," he stated.

Additionally, Kamal revealed that a collaboration with NADRA is underway to convert national identity card numbers into Medical Record Numbers (MRN), with legislation for this initiative expected soon.

Highlighting the shortage of nursing staff in Pakistan, the minister said, "We have only 170,000 nurses, but we need at least 900,000. While Globally, there is demand for 2.5 million Pakistani nurses, potentially turning this sector into a multi-billion-dollar foreign exchange earner

for Pakistan."

The event was attended by KATI President Junaid Naqi, Deputy Patron-in-Chief Zubair Chhaya, Senior Vice President Ejaz Ahmed Sheikh, Vice President Syed Tariq Hussain, Standing Chairman Saleem-uz-Zaman, MPA Najm Mirza, former Chairman's and Presidents Masood Naqi, Gulzar Feroz, Sheikh Umer Rehman and other notable members of the business community.

Earlier, the federal minister visited the KATI office and met with its office bearers to discuss mutual cooperation in improving healthcare initiatives.

Shujaat meets PML-Q leaders

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Q leaders on Saturday met with party head Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

The meeting was attended by Q-League's central general secretary Tariq Hassan, general secretary Lahore, Nadeem Pahlawan and others.

Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain was also present on the occasion.

The party's organisational issues were discussed during the meeting. Nadeem Pahlawan briefed Chaudhry Shujaat regarding his recent overseas visits.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain issued instructions to complete all the party's organisational wings as soon as possible.

Senior minister visits LGH

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Senior Minister Maryam Aurangzeb paid a surprise visit to Lahore's General Hospital on the special instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Saturday, aiming to independently assess the quality of healthcare services.

Disguised as an ordinary citizen and wearing a mask, the minister inspected various departments including the emergency ward, medical ward, gynecology ward, and labor room. She interacted directly with patients and their attendants to gather first-hand feedback on medical facilities, staff behavior, and availability of medicines.

According to initial findings, the emergency department was found to be in satisfactory condition in terms of cleanliness and service delivery. The free provision of medicines was ongoing, and patients were informed through audio messages from CM Maryam Nawaz, broadcast over the hospital's sound system.

The hospital administration was also observed making public announcements urging patients to report any issues regarding free medicines via the designated helpline.

It is noteworthy that Maryam Aurangzeb had previously conducted similar surprise visits to Jinnah Hospital and Children's Hospital Lahore on March 30, reaffirming the provincial government's commitment to healthcare reforms and transparency in service delivery. The minister emphasized that such unannounced visits would continue to ensure accountability and improve the standard of care in public hospitals across Punjab.

DC orders immediate improvements in sanitation

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza has expressed serious dissatisfaction over poor sanitation and inadequate sewerage arrangements in various parts of Tehsil City during an extensive field visit on Saturday.

Accompanied by Chief Officer Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) Shahid Abbas Kathia, Assistant Commissioner City Saadia, and other senior officials, the Deputy Commissioner visited various areas including Bedian Road, Babu Mehar Town, and surrounding neighborhoods. The visit was aimed at assessing the on-ground situation regarding cleanliness and the performance of civic agencies responsible for sanitation and drainage.

During the visit, Assistant Commissioner City Saadia gave a detailed briefing to the Deputy Commissioner on the ongoing efforts and challenges related to sanitation and administrative affairs in Tehsil City.

The DC took serious note of the unsatisfactory state of cleanliness and sewerage in the area and issued strict instructions to Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) and Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA). He directed LWMC to ensure consistent and comprehensive cleaning operations across the district and instructed WASA to urgently improve the condition of sewerage and drainage systems, especially in low-lying and densely populated areas.

Punjab govt imposes Section 144 for Muharram security

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has imposed Section 144 across the province from 1st to 10th Muharram in view of security concerns during Muharram-ul-Haram.

The move is aimed at ensuring public safety, maintaining religious harmony, and preventing any untoward incidents during the observance of Muharram.

According to a notification, only already-approved processions and religious gatherings (majalis) will be allowed during this period. No new events or modifications to existing processions will be permitted without prior authorization from the competent authority.

Under the order, the display of weapons and flammable materials in public

spaces is strictly banned without official approval.

The government has also prohibited provocative slogans, gestures, and any statements, verbal, written, or digital, that may incite sectarian or communal hatred. Any attempt to spread religious or ethnic intolerance through speeches, media, or social platforms will be dealt with under the provisions of Section 144.

To strengthen public safety measures, the construction of makeshift structures or watch posts on rooftops along procession routes has been prohibited. Similarly, storing items such as bricks, stones, bottles, or garbage on rooftops of buildings along procession routes is not allowed. The presence of spectators

on rooftops or on shopfront ledges during processions is also banned.

In addition to these restrictions, pillion riding (double riding) will be prohibited on 9th and 10th Muharram, with exemptions granted to women, senior citizens, and law enforcement officials. All other restrictions will remain in force from 1st to 10th Muharram across Punjab.

The Home Department has officially issued the notification and has directed that its contents be widely publicized to ensure public awareness. Citizens are urged to fully cooperate with the district administration and law enforcement agencies to ensure a peaceful and secure environment during Muharram.

Sindh Assembly celebrate birth anniversary of Shaheed BB

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Assembly on Saturday passed a resolution to pay rich tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto on the occasion of her 72nd birth anniversary.

The resolution was moved by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Sindh President and Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Nisar Khuhro. He requested the acting Speaker, Naveed Anthony, to relax the house rules to allow him to table the resolution. The acting Speaker granted the request and permitted the

resolution to be presented.

However, the session witnessed a protest walkout by members of the opposition, including lawmakers from MQM-Pakistan. Speaking on the matter, Opposition Leader Ali Khursheed said that while Shaheed Benazir Bhutto is a respected figure, no agenda item other than the budget should be discussed during a budget session.

Responding to the objection, Nisar Khuhro asserted that the Speaker holds the authority to relax rules and allow resolutions to be tabled. With the act-

ing Speaker's permission, the resolution was formally introduced and subsequently passed.

According to the text of the resolution, the House paid tribute to the first elected female Prime Minister of the Muslim world, calling Shaheed Benazir Bhutto a symbol of democracy. It lauded her courage, vision, and unwavering commitment to democratic values, highlighting how her legacy continues to inspire generations and guide the nation toward peace, progress, and prosperity.

PA Speaker criticizes opposition's conduct

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has strongly criticized the behavior of a particular political party, accusing it of adopting a narrative that aligns with India's stance, against the national interest.

Talking to a seminar held in connection with World Environment Day, here on Saturday, the Speaker said that the opposition's conduct during the ongoing budget session is marked by sloganeering, superficial speeches, and a complete lack of seriousness. The behavior being presented in the name of protest is nothing short of hooliganism, he said, adding that the nation is closely observing the opposition's inability to differentiate between genuine democratic protest and disruptive antics. It was clearly explained on the Assembly floor yesterday that protest has its place, but it must not cross into chaos, he remarked.

Turning to environmental issues, Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan expressed deep concern over the growing impact

of climate change. He stated that over the last four decades, once fertile agricultural lands have deteriorated, especially in rural areas, due to unregulated use of plastic and lack of awareness about its harmful effects. In villages, people routinely carry milk, yogurt, and groceries in plastic bags without knowing how severely it damages the environment and health, he said.

Citing Kasur as an example, the Speaker noted that in a 50-kilometer radius, vegetation has nearly vanished, groundwater levels have plummeted, and young individuals are increasingly falling prey to chronic diseases such as cancer. "People lack the financial means to take corrective actions on their own," he emphasized, "which is why it is imperative for the government to take bold and decisive steps."

He expressed optimism that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif would impose a complete ban on plastic, recalling her record of making firm and effective decisions for public welfare.

In response to a question regarding the Assembly proceedings, the Speaker reiterated that none of the budget session speeches by the opposition held any substance, and that the platform was being misused for political point-scoring rather than meaningful legislation. "The Assembly should serve as a forum for law-making, not slogan shouting," he stressed.

He praised the Clean Punjab Program as a visionary initiative that would benefit both rural and urban communities, drawing parallels with Beijing's long-term success in improving urban cleanliness. "It took Beijing ten years to become a clean city. With consistency and commitment, we can also bring significant change," he asserted.

On national matters, the Speaker welcomed the appointment of General Syed Asim Munir as Field Marshal, stating that it is a commendable decision by the government and Prime Minister of Pakistan, and one that has been widely acknowledged both at home and internationally.

Secretary reviews Lahore Development Programme

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Secretary for Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering Noor-ul-Amin Mengal on Saturday conducted an extensive field review of the Lahore Development Programme (LDP), inspecting ongoing schemes in Saggian, Shahdara and adjoining localities.

Accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza, Lahore Development Authority (LDA) Director General Tahir Farooq, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Managing Director Gufran Ahmad, and other senior officials, the Secretary examined road, drainage and municipal-services upgrades designed to relieve congestion and improve living standards on the city's northern fringe.

"The LDP is the bedrock of Lahore's sustainable growth," he said. "We will not compromise on pace or quality. Each scheme must deliver transparent, high-standard

results that directly benefit the public" he added.

The secretary received detailed briefings on various infrastructure initiatives, particularly those related to water supply and sanitation. He directed all departments concerned to accelerate the pace of work while maintaining high standards, transparency, and a focus on public welfare.

WASA Managing Director Gufran Ahmad highlighted that various water and sanitation projects under the LDP are being fast-tracked to address urban service needs. He emphasized WASA's commitment to ensuring timely and efficient delivery of essential public services.

Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza described the Lahore Development Programme as a reflection of the government's focus on citizen welfare. He assured that all development schemes will be completed transparently and to the highest quality

standards. He also emphasized the removal of obstacles to ensure the swift completion of projects, calling the LDP a cornerstone of Lahore's long-term development.

LDA Director General Tahir Farooq reiterated the department's commitment to strengthening urban infrastructure, adding that modern urban planning is a major component of the LDP to meet the evolving needs of the city.

Secretary Noor-ul-Amin Mengal made it clear that there will be no compromise on the speed or quality of development work. He stressed the importance of completing all projects under the LDP on time. He further stated that the continued support of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif is crucial to the programme's success. He added that the Lahore Development Programme plays a vital role in ensuring the city's sustainability and economic progress.

Governor pays tribute to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday paid rich tribute to Pakistan's first woman Prime Minister, Shaheed Mohdarma Benazir Bhutto, on her birth anniversary, calling her a symbol of democracy and a beacon of hope for the people.

In his message, Governor Kundi said that Benazir Bhutto was not only the first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan but also the first in the Muslim world to lead a democratic country, thereby empowering women with identity, courage, and dignity.

He praised her political vision, unwavering commitment to democracy, and lifelong passion for public service, saying that these continue to serve as a guiding light for the nation.

"Shaheed Benazir Bhutto earned her place as a true people's leader by standing firmly against dictatorship, advocating for constitutional supremacy, and becoming the voice of the marginalized," he said.

"Her mission was to create a peaceful, prosperous, democratic, and developed Pakistan, a dream for which she sacrificed her life."

Reaffirming his commitment to her legacy, Governor Kundi vowed to carry forward her vision by adhering to the principles of democracy, constitutional rule, and public service.

He concluded that today's remembrance is not just a tribute to a remarkable individual but a reminder that her mission is a collective future for the entire nation.

He also emphasized that the Pakistan Peoples Party, under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, continues the struggle to realize Benazir Bhutto's dream for Pakistan.

From the shadows of conflict to the light of knowledge: The remarkable journey of a young educator from Pakistan's tribal belt

Naseem Shakir

For over a decade, the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan have been tragically synonymous with terrorism, witnessing the loss of more than eighty thousand lives in various acts of violence. Amidst this grim backdrop, emerges an extraordinary story - one that defies all odds and paints a different, hopeful narrative of the region.

Meet Oman (name changed for privacy), a brilliant young man from one of the most remote and underdeveloped corners of the tribal districts. While his homeland grapples with turmoil and marginalization, Oman has quietly captured the attention of the global academic community through the sheer power of education - and YouTube.

Through his self-created educational YouTube channel, Oman has delivered modern, scientifically grounded lectures that have captivated audiences around the world. With



PESHAWAR: A view of child labour busy in work on local bricks factory.

over one million followers, most of whom hail from the United States, Australia, and various European countries, his impact is nothing short of revolutionary.

YouTube itself has recognized his contributions by offering translation services for his 3D animated videos in ten major world languages. Moreover, the United Nations is now working in collaboration with his platform to broadcast these videos in underprivileged schools across impoverished nations. Yet, paradoxically, Oman remains virtually unknown in his own village.

When asked why he keeps his face hidden from the screen, Oman humbly explains that there are multiple reasons - the volatile regional circumstances and concerns about personal safety being chief among them.

Despite these challenges, Oman has produced and uploaded over 450 educational videos focused on scientific learning. Collectively, these videos have amassed nearly 100 million views, predominantly by students and educators seeking high-quality, accessible education.

That such a remarkable digital educator has emerged from a region long overshadowed by conflict and neglect is, indeed, astonishing. His journey is not only inspiring - it is a powerful reminder that even in the most unlikely of places, brilliance can bloom and change the world.

A proud daughter of Waziristan: Anila Masood earns PhD in English Literature

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Anila Masood, a native of South Waziristan's Mehsud tribe and daughter of respected tribal elder Malik Masood Ahmad Khan Mahsud, has achieved a historic academic milestone by earning a PhD in English Literature — a feat believed to be the first for a woman from the region.

Anila Masood successfully defended her PhD dissertation at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar.

Dr. Anila Masood, who currently serves as Assistant Professor at Government Girls Degree College, Tank, was officially awarded the PhD degree in English Literature following her successful defense.

Her dissertation, titled "Desire, Love and Deprivation in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and The House of Clay and Water," examines the themes of longing, romantic love, and social deprivation as portrayed in the two novels by Arundhati Roy and Feryal Ali Gauhar. The research was supervised by Prof. Dr. Samina Ashfaq of Qurtuba University, while Prof. Dr. Mustanir Ahmad of Hazara University, Mansehra, served as the external examiner.

With this accomplishment, Dr. Anila Masood becomes one of the first women from South Waziristan's Mehsud tribe to earn a PhD in English Literature. Observers note that her success is especially significant considering the limited educational opportunities historically available in the region. Her achievement has been widely hailed as an inspiration for young women across the tribal areas who are pursuing higher education.

Educators described her as a diligent and passionate scholar who consistently excelled in her studies.

"I was determined to prove that girls from our region can achieve great things," said Dr. Anila Masood, reflecting on years of perseverance and academic dedication.

Her father, Malik Masood Ahmad Khan Mahsud, praised his daughter's unwavering resolve, saying her achievement is "a dream come true and a beacon of hope for the girls of Waziristan."

Academic leaders at Qurtuba University and across the academic community congratulated Dr. Anila Masood on her outstanding accomplishment.

Vice Chancellor Dr. Hameedullah Khan Alizai, in an official statement, described her achievement as "inspirational," adding that Dr. Anila's research



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Several com-

petitions have concluded in the 31st National Karate Championship and the 17th

National Women's Karate Championship currently underway in Abbottabad

The growing climate crisis in Pakistan

Darain Zainab

Climate change is no longer a distant or future threat for Pakistan-it has become a daily reality. The country now faces rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, melting glaciers, and extreme weather events with increasing frequency. These challenges are already disrupting lives, damaging the economy, and threatening long-term sustainability.

Unprecedented heat and temperature surges

In April 2025, the city of Shaheed Benazir Abad recorded an alarming 50°C, while Karachi endured multiple deadly heatwaves. These are not isolated incidents but alarming indicators of a broader pattern that endangers public health, food security, and infrastructure stability.

Unpredictable rainfall and urban flooding

Rainfall patterns have also grown increasingly unpredictable. Lahore witnessed record-breaking rainfall in July 2024, which caused widespread urban flooding. Meanwhile, the winter of 2024-25 experienced a 40% decline in rainfall, leading to significantly lowered dam levels. These shifts pose serious risks to water availability and agricultural productivity.

Melting glaciers and the threat of glacial lake outbursts

Pakistan is home to the largest number of glaciers outside the polar regions, and these glaciers are melting at alarming rates. According to a 2025 UNDP report, 33 of the country's 3,044 glacial lakes are at imminent risk of bursting. This not only increases the

danger of flash floods but also threatens to reduce river flow in the long term affecting drinking water supply and hydropower generation.

Coastal erosion and displacement

Coastal regions such as Karachi and Ketu Bander face rising sea levels, salt-water intrusion, and accelerated erosion. These effects have already displaced over one million people and rendered thousands of acres of fertile land unusable.

Pakistan's global position and regional lag



PESHAWAR: Former City president of PPP Zulfiqar Afghani with other party workers cutting a cake to celebrate 72nd birth anniversary of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.

DC vows peace, services for upcoming Muharram

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner, Sarmad Saleem Akram, affirmed district administration's commitment to ensuring peace, order and public facilities during the upcoming holy month of Muharram. He emphasized Muharram as a month of respect and mutual tolerance.

Akram made these remarks while chairing a meeting focused on Muharram arrangements, where detailed discussions were held on maintaining law and order and fostering interfaith harmony.

He stated that special provisions would be made for cleanliness, lighting, water supply, and traffic management.

The DC urged religious scholars and leaders to propagate messages of peace, love, and brotherhood, stressing that everyone must play their part in upholding sanctity of Muharram.

Trump-Asim Munir meeting focuses on regional conflicts

Shamim Shahid

Meanwhile, Pakistan remains an important player in Afghanistan.

Why the Army Chief Was Invited? Field Marshal Asim Munir was invited to meet Trump to discuss issues like foreign affairs and security. After tensions with India, he was given the title of Field Marshal. His meeting with Trump is seen as a sign of his importance in both Pakistani and international politics.

According to the Pakistan Army's media wing (ISPR): Field Marshal Asim Munir thanked President Trump for helping to ease recent tensions between Pakistan and India. Trump praised Pakistan's role in fighting terrorism. Both agreed to work together in the future, especially in: Trade, Technology, Minerals and energy, Artificial intelligence, Crypto currency and regional peace efforts as well.

President Trump also appreciated General Munir's leadership during difficult times. Munir invited Trump to visit Pakistan, and Trump reportedly accepted the offer in principle.

Former US diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad said that Field Marshal Munir may be trying to get US support for his interests in Afghanistan, which he believes could be risky for America.

What Comes Next? This meeting could mark the beginning of a new phase in US-Pakistan relations. In the past, Pakistan helped the US during the Soviet-Afghan War and after 9/11. Now, with tensions involving Iran, India, and Afghanistan-and China expanding its role-the US may again be looking to Pakistan as a key partner in the region. Time will tell whether this leads to a long-term partnership or just another temporary agreement based on short-term goals.



PESHAWAR: Children enjoying bathing during hot temperature.

Multiple events decided in national karate championship



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Several com-

petitions have concluded in the 31st National Karate Championship and the 17th

National Women's Karate Championship currently underway in Abbottabad

under the auspices of the Pakistan Karate Federation. The event is being held in collaboration with the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Karate Association. Provincial Minister for Sports Syed Fakhar-e-Jehan distributed prizes among the medal-winning athletes.

According to the results of the men's events In the 84 kg category, Muhammad Asim (Army) won the gold medal, Muhammad Asad (Railways) claimed silver while Zahid Rasool (Punjab) and Moiz Ali (Sindh) shared bronze In

the above 84 kg category Mirza Zubair Ahmed (Punjab) secured gold, Adnan Ahmed (Army) won silver and Farooq Ahmed (Sindh) along with Baz Muhammad (WAPDA) earned bronze medals.

In individual kata Irshad Ali (Army) won gold, Muhammad Shehbaz (WAPDA) took silver while Syed Kabir Ali (Sindh) and Shehram Hussain (Balochistan) earned bronze medals.

In the team kata event the Army team comprising Irshad Ali, Saifullah, Waheedullah and Muhammad Faiz won gold, WAPDA's team of

Muhammad Shehbaz, Shehbaz Ahmed, Haris Nadeem and Gul Zaman won silver while bronze medals were awarded to the Balochistan team (Shah Waiz, Ghulam Mustafa Kasi and Shehryar) and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team (Haris Habib, Waris Habib, Misbahullah and Abdullah).

In 17th National Women's Karate Championship under 68 kg category Mehar-un-Nisa (WAPDA) won gold, Maryam (Sindh) secured silver and Jaweria Fatima (HEC) won bronze.

In the above 68 kg category Fakhar-un-Nisa (WAPDA) claimed gold, Arzoo (Army) secured sil-

ver while Ayesha Tariq (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Zainab Jamshed (Punjab) earned bronze medals. Individual kata, Farishta (Army) won gold, Shazia (WAPDA) secured silver while Mehreen Sarwar (Punjab) and Saumiya Rafiqat (HEC) earned bronze medals.

In team kata, the Army team comprising Farishta, Nazish, Aiman, and Zehra won gold. WAPDA's team (Shazia, Razia, Salima and Shakira) took silver, while bronze medals were awarded to Balochistan (Umm-ul-Baneen, Mehbooba, Batool, and Khateema) and Punjab (Mehreen Sarwar, Zehra Batool, Hafiza

Fasihah Saleem and Nazish Nadeem).

So far in the women's events, Army has won 2 gold and 2 silver medals, WAPDA has also won 2 gold and 2 silver medals, Punjab has secured 3 bronze, HEC 2 bronze while Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh have each earned 1 bronze medal.

In the men's events, Army leads with 3 gold and 1 silver medal, Punjab has 1 gold and 1 bronze, WAPDA has 2 silver and 1 bronze, Railways has 1 silver, Sindh has 3 bronze, Balochistan 2 bronze and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1 bronze medal.



In brief

Two killed in road mishap
F.P. Report

SHANGLA: A devastating road accident occurred in Shangla's Martung area, resulting in the deaths of two individuals and injuring three others. The incident took place when a jeep lost control and plunged into a deep gorge at Koli Pals, Batera. According to Rescue 1122 Shangla, the accident occurred when the driver lost control of the vehicle, causing it to veer off the road and fall into the gorge. The rescue team quickly responded to the scene, providing medical aid to the injured and transporting them to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Besham. The deceased individuals have been identified as a child and a woman, while the injured include a man and a woman. The rescue team provided prompt medical attention to the injured, stabilizing their condition before transferring them to the hospital for further treatment. Rescue 1122 Shangla swift response and medical team's professionalism played a crucial role in saving the lives of the injured. The authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the accident, with factors such as reckless driving, poor road conditions, or vehicle malfunction being considered.

Award ceremony held
F.P. Report

MARDAN: Scholarship Award Ceremony 2024-2025, held in Women University Mardan wherein about 9.0 million rupees were distributed among 90 deserving students through four key scholarship programs. The event was graced by chief guest Prof. Dr. Qibla Ayaz, former Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology, who highlighted the critical role of women's education in national development and other related fields. On the occasion, vice chancellor of Women University Mardan Prof. Dr. Razia Sultana praised students' achievements and acknowledged the support of donors and faculty. As per details provided by the university relevant officials, the four key Scholarship programs were included, Scotland Pakistan Scholarship, PKR 6.13 million to 37 BS and MPhil students. The amount of Rs.1.26 million of District Zakat Office Scholarship were distributed among 21 students. Under the Momina Cheema Foundation Scholarship, PKR 330,000 initially disbursed to 11 students, with a pledged total of PKR 1.32 million.

DC reviews projects
F.P. Report

JAMSHORO: Deputy Commissioner Jamshoro Ghazanfar Ali Qadri, along with the concerned officers and engineers of Highway, Public Health Engineering, Municipal Committee, visited Sehwan to review the new development projects of Taluka Sehwan Town. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Jamshoro said that on the instructions of Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, we have reached Sehwan along with the concerned officers. He said that to restore the beauty of Sehwan city, under the 'Sehwan Development Plan', the roads of the city will be widened, encroachments will be removed, water supply lines and drainage system will be repaired. A double road will be constructed from College Road to Bodli Bhar, encroachments from Bodli Bhar to Sehwan Dargah will be removed and paved roads and marble will be laid.

Search for drowning victim continues in Swat River

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The joint search and rescue operation by Rescue 1122 teams from Lower Dir and Malakand entered its second day on Friday, as efforts continued to locate a missing person who drowned in the Swat River near Ghora Ghat.

According to officials, two individuals drowned in the river on Thursday. The body of one of them, identified as 32-year-old Aleem, a resident of Chakdara Gul Maqam, was recovered the same day. Rescue teams, including professional divers, are using scuba diving, boats, line search, and other techniques to trace the second missing person. The water rescue and search operation is ongoing with full intensity.

Meanwhile, A 20-year-old man died after being struck by lightning in the Rani area on Friday. Rescue 1122 officials confirmed. According to the emergency service, Rescue 1122 Lower Dir's medical team reached the site promptly and provided initial medical assistance. CPR was administered on the spot before the victim was shifted to the hospital, where doctors confirmed his death.

The deceased was identified as Mirza Gul, son of Khasta Gul, a resident of Khall. Police in Samar Bagh have arrested a man accused of shooting and killing his son over a minor dispute in the Jazo area. The suspect, Abdul Latif, allegedly opened fire on his young son, Shahid Khan, following a verbal altercation.

The case was registered under Section 302 on the complaint of the victim's widow. Acting on the directives of DPO Abdul Salam Khalid, a police team led by DSP Jandol Aleem Khan traced and arrested the accused. The murder weapon—a Kalashnikov—was also recovered. The suspect confessed to the crime during interrogation. DPO Khalid praised the police team's swift and professional response and vowed continued action against crime.

Prayer leaders in Dir laud Iran's response to Israeli aggression: Prayer leaders across Lower Dir strongly condemned Israel's aggression against Iran and hailed what they termed as Iran's "courageous and befitting response" to Israeli hostilities.

Addressing in Timergara, Engineer Hafiz Yaqoob-ur-Rehman, Information

Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (North), praised Iran for "crushing Israel's arrogance and tyranny." He said Iran's retaliation had sent a clear message to the world and avenged the oppression of the innocent Palestinian people.

The JI leader lamented the disunity among Muslim nations, stating that Israel had become a regional bully due to the silence and support of global powers, particularly the United States. "A handful of Israelis have destroyed peace in the region," he said, adding that over 65,000 Muslims had been martyred and millions injured in Israeli operations, while Palestinian towns were reduced to rubble.

He criticized the presence of over 40,000 US troops in Gulf countries and the use of military bases in Muslim states to launch attacks on Palestine and Iran, calling it a tragic betrayal. "It is a double standard that while the US and Israel possess nuclear weapons, they oppose Pakistan, Iran, and other Muslim countries developing such deterrents," he remarked.

Yaqoob-ur-Rehman urged Muslim countries to unite against what he described as the nefarious designs of the US, Israel, and India. "If the Muslim Ummah fails to unite even now, it will face more destruction and disgrace," he warned. The Friday sermons across the district echoed similar sentiments, calling for Muslim solidarity and support for oppressed nations, particularly Palestine.

Power outages protested: Residents of Lower Dir staged a protest at Danwa on the Dir-Chitral Road against prolonged power outages and low voltage in the area. The protesters blocked the road for several hours, disrupting traffic and demanding immediate action from the authorities to resolve the electricity crisis. They chanted slogans against Pesco and criticized the unannounced and excessive loadshedding that has made daily life miserable.

Speaking to the protesters, XEN Pesco Lower Dir, Abdul Rauf, acknowledged the severity of the issue and assured the public that the department would take steps to improve the situation. He said efforts were underway to address both the prolonged outages and the low-voltage problem. Local elders and political activists warned of intensified protests if authorities failed to take tangible measures in the coming days.

District admn hold Ulema conference

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The District Administration Kohat has on Saturday organized an Ulema Conference to promote national unity, inter-faith and religious harmony.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram was the chief guest of the event while the conference beside others, was also attended by the officers of the District Administration, Chairman Islamic Studies Kohat University Qaiser Bilal, District Khatib Mufti Shafiuallah and large number of eminent scholars and imams of Kohat.

Addressing the Conference, Deputy Commissioner termed national unity and religious tolerance as the need of the hour and said that the district administration is taking practical steps to bring together scholars of all schools of thought on one platform. He while appreciating the role of Ulema, said that they are the main pillar in promoting religious and social harmony.

He added that Ulema are the strong pillars of the society who are called the Heirs of the Prophets and their role is not limited to mosques but also has a central position in national intellectual guidance. He emphasized that solutions to religious and social problems should be sought in

the light of the Quran and Sunnah and not through social media or unreliable sources.

Deputy Commissioner said that it is important to take minor temptations seriously in the beginning because these small temptations lead to big losses. The Quran commands us to research and verify every news and this awareness is most necessary in today's era. He clarified that Islam is a complete code of life which is not limited to worship only but also emphasizes justice, honesty, family responsibilities and social justice.

Referring to the words of Hazrat Ali (RA), he said that worship is not only prayer or fasting but also fulfilling responsibilities and rights of the people are also part of worship. He regretted that we have limited the Quran to rituals only, while the need is for us to understand the Quran, act upon it and make it a part of our lives. He said that the only way to national salvation and unity lies in adherence to the Quran and Sunnah and unless we act upon it, success cannot be imagined.

The Ulema participating in the conference, highlighted the issues of inter-faith Muslim unity, tolerance, forbearance and religious harmony and appreciated this positive step of the district administration.

The Ulema reiterated the resolve through mutual consultation that all schools of thought will demonstrate cooperation and solidarity with each other so that peace, brotherhood and religious harmony can be further strengthened in Kohat district.

Larkana Bar observes strike
F.P. Report

LARKANA: The District Bar Association in Larkana boycotted court proceedings for the ninth day in protest against the increasing unrest in Larkana division. Lawyers prevented the police from entering the court premises and staged a sit-in at McGate against the increasing unrest in Larkana division.

On this occasion, District Bar Association President Advocate Muhammad Ismail Abro, Vice President Advocate Javed Buledi, General Secretary Advocate Ghulam Mustafa Magasi and others addressed the gathering and said that due to the increasing unrest in Larkana division, criminal incidents including thefts, robberies, street crimes are increasing on a daily basis.



BUNER: Federal Minister for States and Frontier and Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs Engr Amir Muqam addressing Tehsil Bar Association Totali.

Peace to be maintained at all costs: RPO
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Kohat Abbas Majid Marwat and Commissioner Kohat Moatasim Billah have reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining religious harmony and sustainable peace across the Kohat region at all costs.

Addressing separate meetings of Shia and Sunni scholars as well as members of the Peace Committee at the DPO Office Hangu, they said that extraordinary security measures are being ensured during Muharram, with a strict ban on provocative speeches and hate slogans.

The meetings were attended by DPO Hangu Khalid Khan, Deputy Commissioner Gohar Wazir, MNA Yousuf Khan, MPA Shah Turab Khan, Tehsil Chairman Amir Ghani, members of the Peace Committee, and senior journalists.

The RPO praised the positive role of Hangu's elders in resolving past issues in Kurram, Orakzai, and other areas, and emphasized that scholars, civil society, and the business community continue to strive together for peace. Commissioner Moatasim Billah stated that inter-sectarian harmony is vital for the region's peace and progress, and responsible use of social media is equally important. Local elders assured full cooperation with the administration and expressed their resolve to keep a strict watch on miscreants. Earlier, upon their arrival at the DPO Office, the RPO and Commissioner were presented with a guard of honour, and they also inaugurated the newly built conference room.

Admn briefs VC about Buner Varsity
F.P. Report

BUNER: The academic departments and administrative sections of the University of Buner presented detailed briefings to the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Jamshaid Ali Khan, highlighting their key functions, ongoing initiatives, challenges, and strategic plans for institutional development.

During these presentations, heads of departments and section in-charges provided insights into the academic progress, research activities, student support services, infrastructural needs, and administrative performance of their respective units. The Vice Chancellor attentively reviewed the reports and engaged in discussions aimed at strengthening transparency, improving academic quality, and enhancing service delivery across the university.

Minister awards sanitation workers

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: A grand ceremony was held in a local marquee in Toba Tek Singh to distribute cash rewards among sanitation workers in recognition of their dedicated services during Eid-ul-Azha under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision of the "Suthra Punjab" programme.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry was the chief guest on the occasion, accompanied by PML-N leaders Chaudhry Haris Amjad and Sardar Masood Khan Gadhi. The event was also attended by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu, District Police Officer Ibadat Nisar, Assistant Commissioner Manwar Hussain Kamalana Siyal, officers of local government departments and elected representatives.

Addressing the ceremony, the federal minister lauded the efforts of sanitation workers, stating that their commitment ensured a clean and hygienic environment for citizens even during the busy days of Eid. "These are the real heroes who worked tirelessly to keep the city clean," he said. He further revealed that he had an important meeting with the Prime Minister of Pakistan scheduled for today but chose to cancel it to attend this event and pay tribute to the dignity of the workers.

He also remarked that while the Suthra Punjab programme initially faced criticism, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's dedication and sincerity turned it into a remarkable success. "This cleanliness initiative is laying the foundation for a healthier and more prosperous life even in rural areas," he said. The minister also announced

that progress will soon be made on the dual carriage-way project and the establishment of a university in Toba Tek Singh. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu said the field workers played a vital role in executing the Chief Minister's vision.

"During Eid-ul-Adha, the workers ensured timely removal of animal waste, providing a clean environment to the citizens," he stated. He added that to encourage and appreciate their efforts, each sanitation worker is being awarded a cash prize of Rs. 10,000, disbursed transparently through bank drafts. The ceremony concluded with a tribute to the unwavering dedication of the Suthra Punjab sanitation workers and a reaffirmation of the government's resolve to continue the mission of making Punjab a cleaner and healthier province.

Probe into illegal cutting of trees demanded

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Press Club has condemned the illegal cutting of trees in Nowshera Cantonment, terming it as environmental terrorism and a serious violation of international environmental laws. The press club has demanded an audit of the tree cutting in Nowshera Cantonment and has announced plans to stage a protest against the elements responsible for environmental destruction.

The Nowshera Press Club passed a resolution condemning the illegal cutting of trees in Nowshera Cantonment and demanding an audit of the tree cutting. The meeting was attended by office bearers and members of the press club, including Haji Zahoor Ahmad, Wajid Ali, Bakht Siyar, Muhammad Shahid, Syed Waliullah Shah and others.

The press club has demanded an audit of the tree cutting in Nowshera Cantonment to determine the extent of the damage and identify those responsible. The press club has called for stern action against those responsible

for the environmental destruction. The Provincial Aman Jirga, a social organization, has expressed solidarity with the journalists who exposed the tree cutting scandal and has announced plans to stage a protest against the Cantonment Board authorities. Other social and religious organizations, including the Nowshera Traders Association, have also expressed support for the journalists and condemned the Cantonment Board authorities' attempts to cover up the scandal.

Promoting patriotism responsibility of teachers

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner has emphasized that character building, fostering patriotism, and promoting responsible citizenship among students are fundamental responsibilities of teachers, alongside delivering quality academic instruction. He stated that only through well-rounded education and ethical training can students grow into successful individuals and useful citizens who contribute positively to national development.

He was addressing a meeting of officers from the Higher and School Education Departments held at the District Education Complex. The meeting was attended by Chief Executive Officer Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf, Deputy Director Colleges

Muhammad Azhar Janjua, District Education Officer Secondary Muhammad Anwar Javed, as well as principals and senior officers from schools and colleges across the district.

DC Razzaq highlighted that no nation can achieve sustainable progress and prosperity without investing in quality education and comprehensive training. He urged teachers to integrate modern educational practices and values-based learning into their curriculum to prepare students for the challenges of the future. He further directed heads of educational institutions to organize awareness lectures during morning assemblies and other school functions to educate students on key social issues such as traffic laws, civic responsibilities, and the importance of

cleanliness.

Meanwhile, while presiding over a meeting of the District Coordination Committee Hafizabad, DC Abdul Razzaq reiterated the district administration's commitment to implementing people-friendly government projects, in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. He instructed all relevant departmental officers to accelerate the implementation of government initiatives designed to improve public welfare and enhance service delivery.

Superintendent at Education Dept retired: Muhammad Nazir, Superintendent in the office of the District Education Officer (Secondary), Hafizabad, retired from government service after completing 40 years of dedicated service in the Education Department.

AI reshaping future innovation beyond imagination



Hamza Imtiaz

FROM clerks to content writers, artificial intelligence (AI) is automating everyday work at an astonishing pace. The rapid advancement of AI technologies is reshaping the labor market globally, sparking concerns about job displacement. However, experts emphasize that the real challenge is not simply job loss but job transformation.

For Canada's youth and workers worldwide, the focus is shifting toward acquiring skills that AI cannot replicate: creativity, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking.

According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, nearly 40% of employers expect to reduce their workforce where AI can automate tasks, potentially affecting up to 50 million jobs in the United States alone. Similarly, a Goldman Sachs report forecasts that AI could replace the equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs globally by the mid-2030s, with up to 30% of jobs being automatable.

Yet, the same reports highlight a silver lining: AI is also projected to create 11 million new jobs, fueling a productivity boom and increasing the global value of goods and services by 7%. This dual nature means that while some roles will diminish, others will evolve or emerge,

demanding new skills and expertise.

Jobs Most at Risk and Those That Will Evolve: Roles heavily reliant on repetitive, rule-based tasks are most vulnerable. Customer service representatives, receptionists, bookkeepers, and data entry clerks are increasingly replaced by AI-driven chatbots, virtual assistants, and automation tools. For example, AI-powered bookkeeping services reduce the need for human accountants to perform routine data entry and analysis.

Conversely, jobs requiring creativity, complex problem-solving, and emotional intelligence are less likely to be fully automated. Research analysts, content creators, and graphic designers see AI tools augment their work rather than replace it outright.

Freelancers and remote workers, in particular, are embracing AI to boost productivity, with 44% already using AI tools for

their projects and 60% reporting increased efficiency.

The Human Edge, Creativity, Critical Thinking, and Emotional Intelligence: Career counselors and HR experts agree that the future workforce must cultivate uniquely human skills. "Critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence are irreplaceable by AI," says a career counselor interviewed for this article. AI can process data and generate content based on patterns but lacks true understanding, empathy, and original thought.

Educational experts emphasize that creativity and imagination fuel innovation and progress. AI may assist in brainstorming or drafting, but the spontaneous and intuitive nature of human creativity remains beyond its reach. Emotional intelligence enables workers to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, a skill vital in leadership, negotiation, and customer relations.

AI as a Career Coach and

Productivity

Interestingly, AI is also transforming career coaching. AI-powered career coaches provide personalized feedback and help individuals identify new job opportunities aligned with emerging market trends. This technology supports workers navigating career transitions in an evolving labor market. In remote work environments, AI tools enhance communication, automate administrative tasks, and optimize project management, allowing employees to focus on strategic and creative activities. Freelancers report that AI helps minimize errors and handle repetitive tasks, making them more productive and competitive.

Preparing for the Jobs of Tomorrow: The consensus among HR professionals is that AI will not simply take jobs but transform them. Jeanne Meister, a global HR consultant, notes, "It won't be a zero-sum game.

Partner: Some occupations will shrink, some will grow, and others will evolve with new roles, reskilling, and job redesign".

For Canada's youth and workers worldwide, this means investing in skills that AI cannot replace. Creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and technology literacy will be the cornerstones of future employability. Educational programs and career development initiatives must pivot to emphasize these competencies.

AI's impact on the workforce is profound and multifaceted. While automation threatens certain jobs, it also opens doors to new opportunities and enhanced productivity. The key to thriving in the jobs of tomorrow lies in embracing lifelong learning and developing the human skills that AI cannot replicate. As AI reshapes the labor market, workers who adapt and innovate will find not just jobs but better, more fulfilling careers.



Syrians watch Iran-Israel crossfire as govt stays silent

DAMASCUS (AFP): For days, Syrians have watched as Iranian missiles and Israeli interceptors light up the skies over their territory, but the new government in Damascus has so far remained officially silent on the unprecedented conflict.

Iran was one of former ruler Bashar al-Assad's biggest backers, playing a crucial role in propping up his government by providing military advisers and the support of affiliated armed groups throughout the 14-year Syrian civil war. Israel, meanwhile, has occupied the Golan Heights since seizing it from Syria in 1967, and has kept troops in a UN-patrolled buffer zone there since December, when the fall of Assad at the hands of an Islamist-led coalition sparked a wave of Israeli air strikes on military targets.

But despite both countries looming large in Syrian affairs over the years, Damascus -- and everyday Syrians -- appear eager to keep the current crisis at arm's length. "From my balcony at night, I watch the missiles going towards Israel and the anti-missile systems, and I observe the explosions in the sky," said surgeon Mohammed Khayr al-Jirudi.

"The people are fed up with everything related to killing and destruction, we've had enough. Therefore, we are currently in the position of spectators to both sides, and will not gloat over either of them." Israel launched an unprecedented campaign against Iran, saying it aimed to stop the country from obtaining the nuclear bomb -- an ambition Tehran denies. Iran has responded with barrages of ballistic mis-

siles targeting Israeli cities, with the exchanges of fire sparking fears of regional spillover.

Unlike most Arab countries, which issued strong condemnations of Israel's strikes, Syria's new government has not commented on the war, potentially signalling a shift in the country's regional posture. "It is very difficult for us to take a stand," Jirudi said, with many war-weary Syrians seeming to share the government's reluctance. Sitting with his wife in Damascus' famous Rawda cafe, 42-year-old actor Ahmad Malas said he hoped to "be rid of both the Iranian and Israeli regimes, as they are both dictatorial systems (and) Syrian people have been paying the price for their actions".

However, he added, "I have an emotional connection with the Iranian people, and with the Palestinian people, as their cause has been ours for a long time". Iran's support for Assad following his violent repression of peaceful protests in 2011 created strong animosity towards Tehran among many Syrians.

Thousands of Iranians left Syria after the fall of Assad, and Tehran's embassy was subjected to looting and vandalism. The walls surrounding the embassy in Damascus still bear the spray-painted slogans "curse Iran" and "free Iran". Since becoming Syria's interim president, former rebel leader Ahmed al-Sharaa has repeatedly criticised Iran's role in his country during the civil war, stating that restoring relations with Tehran will require respect for Syria's "sovereignty" and "non-interference" in its affairs.

Iran has said it is "not in a hurry" to establish ties

with the new Syrian authorities. Israel has conducted hundreds of strikes on Syria since Assad's fall, saying it aimed to stop advanced weapons from reaching the new rulers, whom it considers jihadists. Israeli troops in the UN-patrolled buffer zone between Syria and the Golan Heights have also regularly carried out ground incursions, condemned by Damascus.

Syria admitted to holding indirect talks with Israel seeking de-escalation, and the United States has called for it to normalise ties with its southern neighbour. Amid the breaches of Syria's airspace, at least one civilian has been killed and several others injured by fallen debris from intercepted projectiles.

The Syrian foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the war. "Damascus adheres to a policy of neutrality... It tries to completely distance itself from the war and any mention of it, because Syria has no interest in getting involved," said Bassam al-Suleiman, a political analyst close to the new authorities.

As the government tries to kickstart post-war economic recovery and reconstruction, Syria's primary battle is "internal", according to Suleiman. He added that while "both Israel and Iran are a source of danger, we have no stake in this war", which he said Syria should "avoid".

From a rooftop nightclub overlooking Damascus, a 27-year-old doctor who gave her name as Sarah watched the flash of missiles in the sky. "We try to forget the atmosphere of war by spending time here with friends," she said. "However, I still fear that some effects of the war will reach us."

Japan's royal couple mourn A-bomb victims

TOKYO (AP): Japan's Emperor Naruhito paid respects to atomic bombing victims in Hiroshima as the city marks the 80th anniversary of the tragedy later this year. Naruhito, accompanied by his wife, Empress Masako, bowed deeply at the cenotaph for the atomic bombing victims and offered bouquets of white flowers.

The atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, destroyed the city, killing 140,000 people. A second bomb dropped three days later on Nagasaki killed 70,000 more. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, ending World War II and its nearly half-century aggression in Asia. Naruhito has repeatedly stressed the importance to remember and keep telling the tragedy of the war to younger generations.

Naruhito and Masako were also to visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum to observe exhibits, including those featuring Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots organization awarded last year's Nobel Peace Prize. The couple were to meet atomic bombing survivors, or hibakusha, and those born after the war and trained to tell the stories on behalf of those who can no longer do so.

Naruhito is making his third trip to mourn the war dead this year. In April, the couple visited Iwo Jima to pay tribute to about 20,000 Japanese and nearly 7,000 US Marines killed in the Battle of Iwo Jima, fought from Feb. 19 to March 26, 1945. Earlier this month, Naruhito also visited Okinawa to mourn about 188,000 Japanese, half of them Okinawan civilians, and about 12,000 Americans, killed in the Battle of Okinawa. Naruhito accompanied his daughter, Princess Aiko, underscoring his wish that she would learn the hardships of the Okinawan people and share their stories with younger generations.



TEHRAN: A view of damaged headquarters of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Iranian state television.

Taiwan pursues homegrown Chinese spies as Beijing's influence grows

BEIJING (AFP): Taiwan is vetting hundreds of thousands of military service members, public school teachers and civil servants in a bid to root out potential homegrown Chinese sympathisers, as Beijing intensifies espionage on the island.

Alarm is growing in Taiwan over the extent of China's infiltration on the self-ruled island, which Beijing claims is part of its territory and has threatened to seize by force. Prosecutors last week charged four recently expelled members of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party -- including a former staffer in President Lai Ching-te's office -- for sharing state secrets with Beijing.

While Taipei and Beijing have spied on each other for decades, analysts warn the threat to Taiwan is more serious given the risk of a Chinese attack. The main targets of Chinese infiltration have been retired and active members of the military, persuaded by money, blackmail or pro-China ideology.

Lai, an outspoken defender of Taiwan's sovereignty and loathed by Beijing, has branded China a "foreign hostile force" and sought to raise public awareness about Chinese actions he says threaten national security. After a sharp rise in the number of people prosecuted for spying for China in recent years, the government

is trying to identify people within its own departments, military and public schools with a possible allegiance to Beijing. Anyone on the public service payroll found with Chinese residence or other identification cards risks losing their Taiwanese household registration, effectively their citizenship.

"The reason we started to survey (for Chinese IDs) is because China uses this way to coerce Taiwanese people, to penetrate our system, especially the public service," DPP lawmaker Wang Ting-yu told AFP.

"The threat is getting worse and worse and we have to deal with that." In the first round held recently, 371,203 people, or nearly all of those surveyed, signed statements declaring they did not hold any Chinese ID documents prohibited by Taiwanese law.

Two people admitted having Chinese ID cards and 75 having residence permits, which were annulled, Taiwan's top policy body on China, the Mainland Affairs Council, said. The second round of vetting is underway, but the government has said the general public will not be targeted. Concern over Taiwanese people holding Chinese ID documents flared after a YouTube video last year alleged there were tens of thousands of cases.

A senior Taiwanese security official said recently China was issuing

ID papers to a growing number of people from Taiwan, but it was "difficult to estimate" how many or track down offenders without Beijing's cooperation. "The idea is to define Taiwanese citizens as Chinese citizens under their legal framework," the official said.

Legal scholar Su Yen-tu said there were limits on the government's "investigatory power" to find out who held Chinese ID cards in Taiwan. If Taiwanese people did not voluntarily disclose the information, "there's not much the government can do," said Su, a research professor at Academia Sinica.

Collecting records was still "potentially useful", Jamestown Foundation president Peter Mattis told AFP, particularly if someone under investigation in the future is found to have lied about their documents. Taiwan has also asked around 10,000 Chinese spouses and their China-born children for proof they have given up their Chinese household registration, a decades-old requirement under Taiwanese law. The notices sparked criticism that the government was being heavyhanded, but Wang said stricter enforcement was needed because some "new immigrants" from China had spied for Beijing and interfered in Taiwan's elections.

Hurricane Erick strengthens as it barrels toward Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AFP): Hurricane Erick strengthened to an "extremely dangerous" Category 4 as it barreled toward Mexico's Pacific coast, the US National Hurricane Center said, warning of potentially deadly floods.

Erick is expected to make landfall bringing "life-threatening flooding and mudslides, especially in areas of steep terrain", the center's latest bulletin said. By 0500 GMT, Erick was moving northwest at a speed of nearly nine miles (15 kilometers) per hour with maximum sustained winds increasing to 145 mph (230 km/h) and higher gusts.

The hurricane could strengthen further before making landfall in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero before weakening as it moves inland, forecasters warned. Mexican authorities said they were also expecting heavy rain in Chiapas state.

President Claudia

Sheinbaum urged people to avoid going out and advised those living in low-lying areas or near rivers to move to shelters. In Acapulco, a major port and resort city famous for its nightlife, police with bullhorns walked the beach and drove around town warning residents and holidaymakers of the storm's arrival. Some shops boarded up their windows and operators of tourist boats brought their vessels ashore.

Rainfall began in the late afternoon after a sunny day. About 250 miles (400 kilometers) south of Acapulco, the city of Puerto Escondido and its 30,000 inhabitants braced for the hurricane's effects. Restaurants were already closed despite tourists unwilling to give up their vacations, an AFP journalist noted from the scene. "They say it's going to hit this side of the coast, so we're taking precautions to avoid having any regrets later," Adalberto Ruiz, a

55-year-old fisherman sheltering his boat, told AFP.

Laura Velazquez, national coordinator of civil protection, said the government was using patrols and social media to warn people. Some 2,000 temporary shelters have been set up in Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca, and hundreds of troops and electricity workers have been deployed to help with any clean-up efforts. Local authorities have suspended classes and closed ports along the coast, including the port of Acapulco, to shipping.

Mexico sees major storms every year, usually between May and November, on both its Pacific and Atlantic coasts. In October 2023, Acapulco was pummeled by Hurricane Otis, a powerful Category 5 storm that killed at least 50 people. Hurricane John, another Category 3 storm that hit Acapulco in September last year, caused about 15 deaths.

Syria completes first global swift transfer since war

DAMASCUS (Reuters): Syria has carried out its first international bank transaction via the SWIFT system since the outbreak of its 14-year civil war, its central bank governor said, a milestone in Syria's push to reintegrate into the global financial system.

Central bank governor Abdelkader Husriyeh told Reuters in Damascus that a direct commercial transaction had been carried out from a Syrian to an Italian bank, and that transactions with US banks could begin within weeks. "The door is now open to more such transactions," he said. Syrian banks were largely cut off from the world during the civil war after a crackdown by Bashar al-Assad on anti-government protests in 2011 led Western states to impose sanctions, including on Syria's central bank.

Assad was ousted as president in a lightning offensive by Islamist-led rebels last year and Syria has since taken steps to re-establish international ties, culminating in a May meeting between interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and US President Donald Trump in Riyadh. The US then significantly eased its sanctions and some in Congress are pushing for them to be totally repealed. Europe has announced the end of its economic sanctions regime.

Syria needs to make transfers with Western financial institutions in order to bring in huge sums for reconstruction and to kickstart a war-ravaged economy that has left nine out of 10 people poor, according to the United Nations. Husriyeh chaired a high-level virtual meeting bringing together Syrian banks, several US banks and US officials, including Washington's Syria envoy Thomas Barrack.

The aim of the meeting was to accelerate the reconnection of Syria's banking system to the global financial system and Husriyeh extended a formal invitation to US banks to re-establish correspondent banking ties.

SEOUL (AFP): The Czech Republic signed a contract earlier this month with South Korea's KHNP to build two nuclear reactors, but experts question its future over complaints raised by KHNP's French rival EDF.

The deal is crucial for the EU member country of 10.9 million people, relying on nuclear power produced by the southern Dukovany and Temelin plants for 40 percent of its electricity consumption. KHNP beat EDF in a tender last year to supply the two units for Dukovany, and Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala insisted its bid was "better in all criteria assessed".

Prague expects construction to begin in 2029 and the first new reactor launched in trial operation in 2036. But the biggest contract signed by a Czech state company since the country became independent in 1993 is currently under the scrutiny of both a Czech court and the European Commission. EDF delayed the deal by months as it questioned the transparency of the tender in a complaint at the Czech

antitrust office and later in court.

The deal was signed in great haste and online, just hours after a court rejected the EDF complaint and returned it to a lower-instance court which is due to pass its verdict on June 25. But EDF has also contested alleged state support for KHNP, illegal in the EU, in a complaint to the European Commission. "Chances that KHNP will not build the units in the end are still considerable, despite the signature," Petr Barton, a data economist at the Datarun analytical platform, told AFP.

"The European Commission is investigating the Korean bid. The Czech government knows about it... and yet it has signed," Barton said, labelling the Czech side's decision to sign as "most daring". EDF declined to comment on its chances to thwart the deal. The crucial argument for Prague was the low price offered by KHNP -- some 200 billion Czech koruna (\$9 billion) per unit, but Barton said the EU is worried it was reduced by a Korean state

subsidy.

"A Czech consumer would be happy to have electricity subsidised by a foreign country, but the European Union forbids this," Barton said. "So we are in for lengthy proceedings, shame over the signature which took place after the EU's warning, and in the end the deal may not materialise at all," he added. A day after the signature, Czech Industry and Trade Minister Lukas Vlecek told Czech Radio there were "several potential risks" to the deal.

"Let's not be naive. We have to overcome the obstacles systematically, patiently, step by step," said Vlecek, adding he was in "close contact" with the European Commission. He added however that the EDF complaints cannot affect the contract between Prague and KHNP, which "is simply valid". But Jiri Gavor, who leads the Association of Independent Energy Suppliers, voiced doubts.

"From the Czech point of view, it is a done deal. But unfortunately for the Czech side or the construc-

tion itself, I don't think it will resolve all problems," Gavor told AFP. He said the EU probe posed a much bigger threat than the Czech court dealings which will hardly overthrow the signature. "There are legal doubts... what will happen if the European authorities decide EDF is right, and on the other hand you have a signed contract?" he added.

"I don't dare estimate the legal impact on the project. I think it will constitute a rather complex legal problem. And certainly a most unpleasant one," said Gavor. Barton said Prague will also have to ask the EU for a go-ahead on a Czech government subsidy for the construction in a so-called notification. The EU has already approved this, but the government then changed the financing model and has had to ask for the permit again.

"And it's not certain if they will get it, especially as the Korean bid is under scrutiny. And you can't pay for the construction without a notification and you can't expect the Koreans to build it for free," Barton said.

Belgrade show plots path out of Balkan labyrinth of pain

BELGRADE (AFP): Life in 1990s former Yugoslavia was a nightmare of war, economic collapse and an all-powerful mafia. But a new exhibition in Belgrade hopes plunging visitors back into this labyrinth of trauma and suffering may actually help the Balkans find a way to escape its troubled past.

The show tells how a once-prosperous country was ripped apart by rampant nationalism and devastating violence as much of the rest of Europe basked in post-Cold War optimism and the beginning of the digital revolution. "I feel like crying," Vesna Latinovic, a 63-year-old from Belgrade told AFP as she toured the exhibition, visibly shaken.

"Labyrinth of the Nineties" opens with a video collage of popular television intros and music videos, followed by a speech from Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, who ended his days in prison being tried for war crimes. Deeper

into the maze, as the multi-ethnic state begins to crumble, nationalist street signs replace socialist ones, inflammatory newspaper headlines hang from walls, and infamous Serbian warlord Arkan even croons an Elvis tune on late-night TV.

"We've forgotten so much -- how intense and dramatic it was, how deeply human lives were affected, and how many were tragically cut short," visitor Latinovic said. At least 130,000 were killed -- with 11,000 still missing -- as Yugoslavia spiralled into the worst war in Europe since 1945. Millions more were displaced as neighbour turned on neighbour. The exhibition features haunting images of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo under siege, civilians under sniper fire, refugees and concentration camps.

Those of strikes, worthless, hyper-inflated banknotes and descriptions of the rise of a new class of tycoons and oligarchs

reveal a society imploding. The labyrinth in the show is meant to be a "powerful metaphor to show that we entered the maze of the 1990s and we still haven't found the way out," said historian Dubravka Stojanovic, who co-curated the show. At the labyrinth's heart is 1995 -- a year when over 8,000 Muslim men and boys were massacred by Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica, and 200,000 Serbs were displaced from Croatia in the fall of the Republic of Serbian Krajina.

That year the Schengen Agreement removed borders within the European Union, but at the same time new borders were being thrown up between the former Yugoslav republics. "It was all completely absurd... The wars only brought suffering to innocents, while those responsible were never truly held accountable," said a visitor called Cedimir, 39, as he left the exhibition.

SK drafts second extra budget as new leader seeks to spur growth

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea's new administration proposed \$14.7 billion of extra government spending to support sluggish domestic demand, as President Lee Jae Myung makes economic recovery his top policy agenda.

The supplementary budget plan totalling 30.5 trillion won announced by the finance ministry includes 20.2 trillion won (\$14.7 billion) of new spending to spur economic growth and support vulnerable sectors, while it will also make up for 10.3 trillion won from an expected shortfall in tax revenue.

The second extra budget of the year comes two weeks after Lee, who has vowed expansionary fiscal policy,

won a snap presidential election on June 3 and less than two months since the first supplementary budget of 13.8 trillion passed in May.

"The economic downturn is very serious, and it is time for the government to play a role," Lee said. South Korea's central bank last month slashed its economic growth forecast for this year to 0.8% from 1.5%, citing heightened uncertainty over US tariffs, as it lowered interest rates for a fourth time in its current easing cycle and signaled more rate cuts.

Asia's fourth-largest economy unexpectedly contracted in the first quarter amid US President

Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs and domestic political turmoil sparked by former President Yoon Suk Yeol's martial law decree in December. The biggest spending will be Lee's flagship policy of a universal cash handout scheme for consumers, providing 150,000-500,000 won in vouchers to every citizen and totalling 10.3 trillion won.

Most people, or 84% of some 51 million eligible recipients, will be offered 250,000 won (about \$180), while others will be given more or less depending on how much income they make. Lee was one of the first to introduce a cash handout scheme in South Korea when he was mayor

of Seongnam City, which was adopted nationwide several times during the COVID-19 pandemic under the previous liberal administration of Moon Jae-in, even as critics questioned the effectiveness of the policy.

Other spending plans include financial support for the construction sector, investment in artificial intelligence as well as small and medium-sized enterprises, and debt restructuring programmes for small businesses. Out of the combined total of 30.5 trillion won, 19.8 trillion won will be financed by issuing additional treasury bonds, according to the finance ministry.

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Death of US democracy

CONTRARY to general belief, Weimar democracy did not die when Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany in January 1933. It died the year before under Franz von Papen, a national conservative with social-Darwinist views and a visceral hatred of liberal modernist "filth" in all its forms. One of his first actions was to end execution by the guillotine - deemed too Jacobin - and return to the ancient Prussian practice of death by the axe.

Von Papen exploited a street clash between Communist Red Front dockers and Nazi Brownshirts on Prussian territory to carry out a constitutional coup against the elected Social Democrat government of Prussia, by far the biggest and most important of Germany's self-governing states. He seized control of policing and state security on the pretext that the Social Democrats were failing to uphold law and order. Historian Sir Richard Evans says this Preußenschlag (Prussian coup) of July 1932 was the critical moment in inter-war Germany, opening the door for much that followed.

What Donald Trump has done by activating the California National Guard against the protest of the governor, and then bringing in US Marines - both of which his critics argue are unconstitutional - is a very light version of Preußenschlag, but in some ways it is worse. The street protests in Los Angeles were the result of his own theatrical stunt. You could be forgiven for thinking he deliberately provoked the alleged "rebellion" in order to set this precedent. One can see now why Trump moved so fast to purge the top echelons of the US defence department, including the three judge advocates general. These officials rule on whether military orders are legal, and when they should be disobeyed. They are legally independent by Congressional statute.

Pete Hegseth, the defence secretary, told us why they had been sacked: it was to stop them posing any "road-blocks to orders given by the commander-in-chief". Did Trump mean it when he told his generals to "just shoot" American protesters during the Black Lives Matter riots in 2020? We may find out. He also fired the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff and others deemed symbols of "diversity, equity, and inclusion", although one might suspect another motive. An earlier chairman - General Mark Milley - refused to ratify the Putsch of Jan 6 2021, and therefore stopped it stone dead. "We don't take an oath to a king, or to a tyrant or dictator. We take an oath to the Constitution," he said. Trump is attacking California on several fronts at once, shrewdly judging that Governor Gavin Newsom is the perfect foil. He is stripping the state of its powers under the Clean Power Act to impose tougher pollution rules than federal levels. He has signed an order blocking California's plan to phase out petrol cars by 2035, and another stopping it capping nitrogen oxide emissions. He now is threatening to withhold federal disaster aid for wildfires.

Trump called him "Governor Newsom" and added in his inimitable style: "You know, hatred is never a good thing in politics. When you don't like somebody, you don't respect somebody, it's harder for that person to get money if you're on top." Forgive me for sounding jaundiced, but decades ago I covered the Republican crusade under Speaker Newt Gingrich to restore states rights and check the usurpations of federal power. Gingrich and his party are now egging on the federal military occupation of states that stand in Trump's way.

James Carville, veteran Democratic strategist and Clinton-fixer, says the Democrats should hide their time and "play possum", betting that Trump will self-destruct under the contradictions of his own policies. The bond markets will do the job for them. Congress will drop back into Democrat hands like a ripe fruit in the 2026 midterms. I never expected to find myself impugning the ruthless Mr Carville for credulous naivety. Declaration of interest: he once carried out a black ops campaign against me personally from an office in the White House, which I no doubt deserved, all is forgiven anyway. Playing possum is what the German Social Democrats did in the early 1930s. Reading the first two volumes of Sir Richard Evans's magisterial trilogy, The Coming of the Third Reich and The Third Reich in Power, I am struck again and again by the refusal of the moderate middle to face up to what was happening. They had a touching faith that the courts would save them.

The strongman glow will open the window further for Trump's takeover of the deep state. He has already fired the heads of the FBI's intelligence, counterterrorism, criminal investigations, as well as the heads of the Washington and New York offices. He has purged the justice department, now run by a Lord High Executioner from The Mikado, openly touting an enemies list of "conspirators". He has forced private law firms to bend the knee. He has put in a loyalist in charge of the CIA, who inconveniently reported in March that Iran was not building a nuclear weapon. But that was then, when Trump stood for America First, and staying out of forever wars was policy. He has fired the head of the eaves-dropping National Security Agency and its top officials. He has purged the head of the Federal Trade Commission, who is independent by law, like the chairman of the Federal Reserve.

But it is not the same America that was my home for long stretches of the late 20th century. Over the last few days alone: a Democratic US senator was manhandled to the floor, handcuffed and dragged away for asking a question; the Democrat comptroller of New York was seized and handcuffed by masked federal agents after demanding to see a judicial warrant; a Democratic state legislator in Minnesota was murdered with her husband at home, and a state senator was shot and badly wounded, both by an assassin with a hit list of 45 officials. Judges have so far issued more than 60 rulings that curb or restrain Trump's legal overreach. A shocking number have either been threatened, directly or through their families, or face calls for impeachment. "Our constitutional system depends on judges who can make decisions free from threats and intimidation," warned judge Robert Conrad, director of the administrative office of the US courts, in testimony to Congress. To no avail: the House judiciary committee shrugged it off, more or less blaming the victims. The drift of events was disturbing even before Iran offered Trump a fresh gift from Mars. I fear that many more lines in the sand will be crossed in the heady aftermath of a surgical video war on the Ayatollah, if that is where we are headed. Play possum if you want. Trump will eat your lunch.

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Heat wave...!



PukhTeoh@gmail.com

UK, US and Türkiye: Evolving landscape in Europe and Mideast

Muhammed Utku Asker

IN an interview with Anadolu's Strategic Analysis Department, former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy Rachel Ellehuus, currently director general at London-based think tank the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), assessed Britain's evolving defense posture, strategic alignment between the US and the EU, the impact of regional crises in the Middle East on UK foreign policy, and the critical role of Türkiye in shaping European security and regional cooperation.

Q: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has voiced support for a defense pact with the European Union. So, what is the UK's stance on deeper European defense integration, including the proposals for a unified European army?

Ellehuus: I've been pleasantly surprised at Prime Minister Starmer's leadership, both on Ukraine and in trying to create a closer relationship, with continental Europe. I think both on the European continent and in the United Kingdom, people understand that you cannot have a meaningful European defense or strong relationship with Ukraine without the United Kingdom. When he talks about a defense pact with Europe, I believe that he is thinking about everything from cooperation in terms of coordinating assistance to Ukraine and integrating their forces and capabilities more closely into European ones, to defense, industrial cooperation.

If you look at the United Kingdom's defense industry, they have close relationships with US companies, but they also have very close and integrated relationships with continental European defense companies. If you take a capability, for example, like the A400M transport aircraft, that has a Rolls-Royce engine, so there are a lot of dependencies and cooperative partnerships on the industrial side. Though leadership capabilities and industrial cooperation is what Prime Minister Starmer has in mind.

Q: There is a rise in transatlantic trade tension and the risk of new US tariffs on European countries as well. In this environment, how is the United Kingdom navigating its strategic balance between the United States and EU?

Ellehuus: Well, I hope that someone is explaining

to President (Donald) Trump that tariffs on Europe and the UK actually increase the price of US defense equipment for those countries, making it less affordable. So, in effect, we're actually not supporting our own ambition of having Europeans step up on defense while also remaining close to the United States and buying into the US defense-industrial complex. So I hope that will change, because certainly tariffs will make the defense spending of the euro or pound go less far.

Q: Including Syria and the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza, how the UK is responding and to what extent are their responses interconnected with the United States' strategic priorities in the region?

Ellehuus: My impression is that most countries' (in Europe) response to what's going on in the Middle East is partly a reflection of their foreign policy vision, but to some extent, it's also a reflection of their domestic policies. So countries, for example, who have a close relationship with Israel tend to be more careful on their language criticizing Israel. Conversely, countries who have, you know, a large Palestinian population tend to be a little bit more sympathetic to the Palestinians' cause, and the UK is probably somewhere in between. They have a close relationship with Israel, but the Labour Party government has been quite critical of the human rights abuses that are going on there and joined with other European countries - including a former Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert - to criticize what are perceived war crimes in the region by Israel. But at the same time, despite that close relationship with Israel, the UK has had a strong moral voice. The Labour Party government feels very strongly that there are certain rules and norms that have been disrespected and has not been afraid to speak out on that.

On Syria, I believe the UK government is quite hopeful that there is an opportunity here for Syria to normalize and reestablish itself as an independent country in the region. They were very supportive of the Trump administration's decision to lift the sanctions and will probably follow suit. So I believe the UK is more aligned with the US position on Syria and probably less aligned, with the US course of action when it comes to balancing views

on Israel and Gaza.

Q: On May 20, the United Kingdom suspended talks on a trade deal with Israel and summoned the country's ambassador, also imposing new sanctions on Israeli West Bank settlers. So in light of these developments, how is the UK balancing its diplomatic relations with Israel, the countries of the Middle East, and its commitments to international law and human rights?

Ellehuus: Well, you've focused in on the right thing, which is democracy and respect for human rights and I believe that's where the United Kingdom's focus has been. On the one hand, they support Israel's right to exist as an independent state. But they want to see an Israel that is a democracy and does respect human rights. And I think the sanctions that you mentioned are a recognition that they believe Israel is currently moving in the wrong direction and they want to compel a change in behavior by sending a signal, that that is not the direction or the behavior that they would expect of Israel.

The United Kingdom sees Türkiye as a very important partner in the region, and is quite comfortable with Türkiye taking a leading role in terms of reconciliation and redevelopment in Syria. And really providing a bit of guidance on the strategic direction, that Syria should take and how the Middle East could come together in a more cohesive way, given all of these various changes. And so I think it's a real asset for the UK over the decades to have had a very close relationship with Türkiye. I think they can really work together, to understand the region, to listen to voices in the region and come up with some solutions that are not imposed from the outside, but are really reflective of the views of, of Türkiye, Jordan, and others in the region.

Q: We're witnessing a redefinition of security in both Europe and the Middle East. In this evolving landscape, how could Türkiye contribute to shaping a new vision of European security as well as advancing European-Turkish cooperation in the Middle East? What frameworks or mechanisms might underpin such a cooperation?

Ellehuus: Türkiye is one of the strongest NATO allies, especially in terms of the size and capability of its

land forces. Its geographic position on the alliance's easternmost flank gives it strategic importance, especially in terms of military reach and the basing opportunities it offers to NATO. The Turkish defense industry has been instrumental in resupplying Ukraine, (as) from the US perspective, Türkiye was the only country that had the capability and the production capacity to produce the 155-mm munitions that Ukraine needed. The United States saw that and partnered with Turkish industry to really ramp up production on that ammunition's supply chain. So I think there's real value there.

I don't believe any sort of viable European defense can be achieved without countries who are not members of the European Union. In fact, if you look at NATO, 80% of the defense spending and capability in the alliance is provided by countries who are not members of the European Union. The US, Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, Türkiye, all of those countries have the bulk of the capability and the spending. If we really are talking about continuing to help Ukraine, rearming Europe, Türkiye has to be a central part of that. I would like to see this happen in NATO, because I think NATO has important structures in terms of command and control planning, capability development, command structure, that need to be leveraged.

But because of some of the difficulties among allies within that NATO context and some of the disagreements and barriers to NATO-EU cooperation, we might have to take that cooperation outside of NATO and work with like-minded allies, in order to drive that partnership with Türkiye and then bring those ideas back into the European Union or NATO. So I could see the EU working very closely again with the United Kingdom and Norway. And in the early days of the (second) Trump administration, when the United States created doubts about its commitment to Ukraine, it was really powerful to see President Erdogan standing alongside Prime Minister Starmer, and the Norwegian prime minister in London presenting a united front with regard to European security and helping Ukraine. I think these smaller regional groupings can help drive progress within the bigger organizations.

Con Coughlin

boost Iran's air defences and air forces. This has clearly failed to deter Israel from launching its military offensive.

The partnership also includes a vague commitment for both sides to provide military assistance in the event of either side being invaded or attacked. Putin is unlikely to fulfil this because of his close ties with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Putin's primary concern, though, will be the impact that Israel's continuing assault on Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure will have on Tehran's ability to continue its support for Russia's war effort in Ukraine.

From the start of Israel's attack last week, the Israel Defence Forces have deliberately targeted Iran's drone and missile production facilities, as well as their launch systems, to limit Iran's ability to target Israel. The strategy appears to have paid divi-

dends. The number of Iranian drones and missiles being reportedly fired at Israel has fallen significantly. If the Iranians are unable to provide sufficient weaponry for their own military campaign against Israel, they will be in no position to support Russia's offensive in Ukraine. Another consideration that will be weighing heavily on Putin's mind is the prospect of losing another important ally in the Middle East, so soon after the collapse of the Assad regime in Syria at the end of last year.

A key factor in Putin's effort to rebuild Russia's global stature has been to increase its influence in this region, with the Kremlin making a concerted effort to demonstrate that it is a more reliable ally, especially for the Arab world, than the US. In this respect Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015 to prevent Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad from

Democrats looking for answers

Nikki Budzinski

ON the campaign trail, President Trump made a lot of promises. He promised to strengthen our economy. He promised to make our government more efficient. He promised to bring down costs. But after more than 100 days in, our economy is not strengthened, our government is certainly not more efficient, and costs are not down.

The president has entangled us in trade wars with some of our closest trading partners - wars that erased \$10 trillion from the stock market this spring and threaten to decimate family farms in my district and across the country. And with the help of the Department of Government Efficiency, he has waged an all-out assault on the federal government in an effort to weed out "waste, fraud, and abuse."

I believe the American people elected Trump because they wanted solutions to pocketbook issues and a government that took action to get things done. But the president's agenda isn't working, and Democrats need to deliver. That's where the New Dem Coalition comes in. Before I explain why, I want to acknowledge that Democrats haven't always gotten everything right. During the election, we saw many working class voters drift away from the party.

At times, our emphasis on identity politics or concepts like "saving democracy" - while undeniably important - overshadowed the core economic issues that affect people's everyday lives. Instead of meeting voters where they are, we sometimes come across as telling them where they should be. That approach can feel out of touch and give the impression that the party is elitist, disconnected from the realities of everyday people. Working class voters are focused on how they'll afford their mortgage, put food on the table, or save for their kids' college - not necessarily on abstract debates about the soul of the nation.

Don't get me wrong: the threat to democracy is real and urgent, especially with a president who shows little respect for courts or the Constitution. But if we're truly going to save democracy, we must build a broader coalition and bring more voters along. That means meeting people where they are, rather than telling them what should matter most. We need to address the tangible, kitchen-table issues that keep folks up at night.

The New Dem Coalition has always done this. We have prioritized the needs of hard working Americans over the politics of D.C. We understand that we should be finding ways to make our government more efficient. We understand that we have to work across the aisle when we can - without compromising our values.

That's why New Dems are crafting a proactive agenda - not only to win the House majority in 2026, but to maintain it for the long term. So, we're getting out of the D.C. bubble for a new series known as "New Dems On the Road." We'll be engaging with communities across the country, and gathering the critical feedback we need to guide our work. We're tackling every issue - from improving education outcomes to bolstering our national security - and working to find practical,

lasting solutions that reflect the values and priorities of the American people.

For our first stop, we zeroed in on immigration. Immigration isn't a problem we're going to solve overnight, but it's one that is consistently top of mind for the American people. We've come close to bipartisan solutions, only for selfish interests to squash our efforts in the 11th hour. That's why New Dem Immigration and Border Security Working Group members Greg Stanton (D-Ariz.) and Lou Correa (D-Calif.) sat down with Arizona leaders to talk about immigration. They met with industry and union representatives, members of the Arizona business community, and DACA recipients to discuss the importance of immigrants to Arizona's economy. The panel addressed the need to secure our border and pass a long-lasting immigration reform policy.

It was instructive. And it showed the folks in these communities that we are listening to them. We know we don't have it all figured out - that's why we need real, local voices to help guide our work. Voices on the ground who are living and breathing these problems every single day. Then, it was my turn. I joined my friends Reps. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) and Wesley Bell (D-Mo.) for a conversation around clean energy and potential opportunities for bipartisan cooperation.

We discussed the actions the Trump administration has taken to gut clean energy tax credits. There is no way around it - this is going to have a negative impact on people's utility bills. They will feel this. We also discussed what's ahead - like permitting reform, carbon capture and ultimately ways we can lower costs for people trying to keep the lights on, not raise them. Last month, Reps. Sarah McBride (D-Del.), Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.) and Katherine Clark (D-Mass.) got together to talk one-on-one with Delawareans about paid family and medical leave for working families.

This is just the beginning. In total, we'll be conducting at least nine New Dems On the Road events - across the country. We need to come together, share ideas and forge a new path forward. A path that can address the issues that demand our attention: whether it's a single mom struggling to afford child care, a farmer looking to break into new markets, or a family who wants a good, public school education for their kids.

We should all be committed to finding effective ways to achieve our shared goals and ensure that the government serves the people better. This isn't a partisan objective; it's a matter of common sense. However, real progress requires thoughtful strategy and careful action, not reckless cuts. Simply slashing budgets without consideration doesn't eliminate waste - it erodes the very foundation of what our government is meant to do: serve its citizens.

New Democrats understand this deeply. We recognize that this moment calls for a meaningful response and an agenda that inspires - not the status quo. Our communities have elected us to take action, to solve problems and to improve lives. Now, more than ever, Democrats need to prove we can deliver.

The Telegraph

G7 leaders are paralysed by their fear of upsetting Donald Trump

Rafael Behr

There is no founding charter or admissions process to the self-selecting group of "leading" economic powers that currently numbers seven. It was the G8 from 1997 to March 2014. Then Russia annexed Crimea and had its membership suspended, establishing the rule that participating nations should not seize their neighbours' land.

The White House used to condemn that sort of thing on the grounds that "it violates the principles upon which the international system is built". These days, not so much. On Sunday, shortly after arriving for a G7 meeting in the Kananaskis resort in Alberta, Donald Trump told his host, the Canadian prime minister, Mark Carney, that Vladimir Putin's expulsion from the club had been a "big mistake".

Within 24 hours Trump was back in Washington. There is precedent for the early departure. In June 2018, during his first term, Trump bailed on a G7 summit to meet North Korea's supreme leader, Kim Jong-un. This time he cited the escalating Israel-Iran conflict.

That crisis is serious enough to justify the president clearing his diary of extraneous commitments. But it is revealing that dialogue with the US's closest allies is a disposable engagement. Arrogant unilateralism is an old feature of US foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. It is the prerogative of a superpower to disregard input from its strategic dependents. But Trump's G7 snub is not just a crass exaggeration of the usual American style. Sympathy with dictators and discomfort in the company of democrats express Trump's governing ethos.

"America First" is a doctrine that cannot conceive of mutual obligation between nations. There can be no G7, only the G1 and clients. Leaders who

operate in deference to law and independent institutions are weak and contemptible. Strongmen who recognise no legitimate brake on their actions, who have folded the national interest into a personality cult, are admirable. To say that Trump indulges Putin misconstrues the balance of power. The US is vastly stronger than Russia, but its presidency, bound by fussy checks and balances, lacks the despotic agency of the Kremlin. Trump is envious.

He claims simply to want deals with dictators, but he seems also to crave validation from them. By contrast, he thinks it is humiliating for the US commander-in-chief to be seated at a round table as the peer of a German chancellor or the prime minister of Canada - barely a proper country. The idea of coordinating foreign and trade policy on the basis of shared respect for political pluralism and the rule of law is an idea Trump finds absurd, if he even understands it. His agenda is dissolution of the west. The US's former allies need to recognise the magnitude of that ambition. Even when it is acknowledged, the scale of the challenge poses paralyzing dilemmas. Layers of economic and military dependency are not easily peeled back. That is true for all of Europe, but especially Britain, where servicing the "special" transatlantic relationship has been the axiomatic priority for decades. The road to a different strategic configuration, closer to allies on our own continent, is made rockier by Brexit.

British audiences watching Trump defile the US constitution might wish Keir Starmer would give voice to their dismay. But there will be no "Love Actually moment" - the term used derisively by diplomats for a fantasy re-enactment of Hugh Grant's cinematic rebuke to a swaggering,

lecherous bully from the White House. Seasoned Trump handlers warn that disagreeing with the vindictive, thin-skinned president is best done behind closed doors. The art is not to challenge his view, but dress up dissent as a smarter way to satisfy his interests. Contradicting him in public is an act of self-injuring futility. Confrontation is not Starmer's style and his method is not fruitless. Trump found time on his curtailed trip to Canada to sign the executive order implementing a milder regime of punitive tariffs on Britain than is faced by most other countries. "I like them," Trump said in explanation of relative leniency for British exporters. (The compliment was confounded by his mistakenly describing it as a deal with the EU.)

Being liked by Trump is a transient condition. His deals are perishable. The ones signed with Canada and China in his first term were discarded. There are short-term commercial gains to be made by playing along with this capricious game, but the cost is accepting that the old rules no longer apply. That is bad for free trade and cataclysmic for democracy and international law. Over time, reluctance to say aloud that Trump is an authoritarian menace to the US's constitutional republic becomes complicity in the assault.

The justification for silence is realpolitik - the argument that foreign policy should be moulded to the world as it is, not brandished as a demand that it be something else. But Trump inhabits a world fashioned around his own narcissistic delusions, populated by corrupt sycophants and far-right ideologues. Realpolitik in Trumpland is not an accommodation with reality but its willful negation. It means normalising a project to hollow out US democra-

cy, fill the shell with tyranny and call it freedom. Solidarity with Americans who are resisting that process is one reason for leaders in other countries to talk about it more candidly. Another is to anticipate and contain the risk of contagion.

The Maga movement is indigenous to US politics, and not all of its culture-war obsessions resonate across the Atlantic. But it is also an ideological mothership supporting a flotilla of extreme nationalist parties, campaigns and digital influencers in the EU and the UK. Nigel Farage sails in that slipstream. The Conservatives drift aimlessly alongside. Trump himself is deeply unpopular in Britain, ranked unfavourably even by Reform UK supporters. Hence Farage is not as quick as he once was to boast of chumminess with the Mar-a-Lago crew. He also bristles when reminded that he once spoke of admiration for Putin. It is one of few lines of questioning that unsettles the mask of amiable composure.

In the coming years, Farage has a balancing act to perform, fellow-travelling with a global consortium of far-right provocateurs and Kremlin apologists, while cultivating the aura of mainstream respectability required of a potential prime minister. He is well practised at the trick. It might be harder if the dark nature of his politics, the reliance on division, the cynical stirring of conflict, could be exposed by association with Trump; the British franchise of a toxic brand. That argument is harder to make as long as the reality of what is happening in the US is smothered in a gloss of realpolitik. Fear of provoking the tyrant keeps democratic leaders from telling the unvarnished truth about his regime. It is a risk. But a more insidious danger grows in silence, and there is no method for countering tyranny that leaves the truth unspoken.

Chinese leaders have a long history of strategic deception

In September 2015, President Xi Jinping stood in the Rose Garden next to President Barack Obama and made an unambiguous commitment: China had "no intention to militarize" the artificial islands it was building in the South China Sea. The statement carried the solemn authority of a great power - a promise between world leaders, witnessed by the international community.

Yet within three years, satellite imagery revealed military-grade airstrips stretching across previously submerged reefs. Hardened missile shelters dotted landscapes that had once been underwater and advanced radar installations scanned surrounding seas. The "civilian outposts" had transformed into forward military bases projecting power across one of the world's most critical waterways. This dramatic reversal, from public commitment to calculated breach, exemplifies a pattern that has defined China's international relations for seven decades. The Chinese Communist Party has perfected strategic deception - the art of making promises it never intends to keep when the calculus favors breaking them.

This isn't merely diplomatic inconsistency but a deliberate strategy that has yielded extraordinary dividends across decades of patient execution. As the Trump administration resumes trade talks with China, American representatives would do well to keep this history in mind. The seeds were planted during China's civil war, when the Communist Party's survival depended on strategic misrepresentation. In the 1940s, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai presented themselves to US diplomats not as hardened revolutionaries but as moderate "agrarian reformers" seeking democratic change. This calculated deception yielded tangible benefits: diminished American support for the Nationalists and, ultimately, a Communist victory in 1949. The pattern continued with deadly consequences just a year later. The resulting conflict cost millions of lives and cemented the Cold War division of Asia that persists to this day.

By the 1970s, as geopolitical calculations shifted, party leaders recognized the value of rapprochement with the US. During President Richard Nixon's landmark visit, Mao and Zhou downplayed their revolutionary

ideology and the ongoing brutality of the Cultural Revolution, strategically masking their domestic repression to secure diplomatic recognition and economic benefits. China also signed the Sino-U.K. Joint Declaration on Hong Kong in 1984, promising to keep the status quo for 50 years - before violating that agreement when the Communist Party cracked down on protests in 2019. By the late 1980s, China had learned that Americans suffer from political amnesia. By offering the appearance of cooperation and reform today, they could make Americans forget the deceptions of yesterday.

This approach produced remarkable dividends. Within a decade, Western companies were investing billions in China, transferring technology and expertise that would become the foundation for China's economic miracle. The 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre briefly disrupted this process, but Western businesses soon returned, teaching Chinese leaders that the consequences of broken promises are temporary, while the benefits often prove permanent.

Yet this hasn't deterred American policymakers from signing more unenforceable deals with Beijing, as when China pledged to President Trump to increase purchases of US manufactured goods during 2020 and 2021 - failing to honor its commitment a year into the agreement. This pattern found yet another expression during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite international commitments, Chinese officials delayed informing the World Health Organization about human-to-human transmission, silenced whistleblowers and restricted information-sharing. China, while implementing strict containment domestically, simultaneously opposed international travel restrictions and pressured against declaring a global emergency. Once again, a commitment to international norms - in this case, obligations under International Health Regulations - was subordinated to domestic political imperatives.

Understanding this pattern requires seeing the strategic logic behind it. As a Leninist party-state primarily committed to self-preservation, the Chinese Communist Party approaches international commitments instru-

mentally, evaluating them on the sole basis of utility. The "century of humiliation" trained Chinese leaders to distrust outsiders and use deception when necessary. As Deng Xiaoping put it in a famous speech, "hide capacity and bide time."

Moreover, China has learned that the costs of breaking its commitments are often low. International outrage fades, economic penalties are absorbed by a massive domestic market and Western companies and governments - driven by greed or naivete - remain eager to access Chinese consumers despite repeated disappointments. The Chinese Communist Party has mastered what might be called the "liar's dividend": violating commitments often carries fewer costs than honoring them, especially when enforcement mechanisms are weak and other parties have short memories.

Understanding this pattern doesn't mean abandoning engagement with China, it means approaching engagement with clear-eyed realism. Future agreements must include robust verification mechanisms, specific timelines and meaningful safeguards lifted upon compliance. American policymakers must also recognize their own role in enabling this pattern by repeatedly downplaying violations in pursuit of market access. Breaking this cycle requires institutional memory and consistent enforcement across administrations. Perhaps most importantly, US strategy must acknowledge that some aspects of the Chinese system are inherently incompatible with many international norms. No amount of diplomatic pressure will convince the Chinese Communist Party to embrace values that threaten its monopoly on power. Rather than expecting transformative change through engagement, US policy should focus on specific, verifiable actions that serve mutual interests, particularly amidst competition between the two great powers.

After seven decades of strategic commitment-breaking, perhaps the most dangerous illusion is the belief that the next Chinese promise will somehow be different. As American representatives negotiate trade with Beijing, they would do well to secure not just the "best" trade deal for the US, but one that accounts for the possibility of deception.

The Hill

Reconciliation and rescissions roil Congress

The threat of being kept after school if you hadn't completed your homework was a motivator back in my high school days. Apparently, it doesn't work on adults in Congress. Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) threatened to keep the upper body in session on Juneteenth and through the weekend if necessary to complete action on President Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," also known as the fiscal 2025 reconciliation bill.

Senate Republicans emerged from their conference on Monday evening after being briefed on what changes the Finance Committee had made in the House-passed bill. They seemed just as divided as they were when they went into the meeting, primarily over cuts in Medicaid benefits, tax cut issues, and various smaller items tucked away in the 1,000 plus page measure (little jagged gems are still being discovered by close readers). The prospect of missing an extended weekend back home was not sufficient to spur immediate action.

The larger issue looming over both the House-passed and Senate-tweaked bills is whether they provide steep enough cuts to make a real difference in the deficit. Disgruntled House Republicans are outraged that the bill, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates, would actually increase the deficit over the next decade rather than reduce it.

The president's Office of Management and Budget disagrees with that assessment and scores the measure overall as a deficit reducer. The battle of the scorekeepers rages on with predictable arguments being made by both sides. Reconciliation is an

obscure term plucked by the drafters of the 1974 Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act to accomplish a very simple objective, at least on paper. The two houses adopt a budget resolution for the coming fiscal year. It is a concurrent resolution on the budget with no force or effect in law - an aspirational goal of Congress on what it wants the federal government's fiscal status to look like.

The congressional budget does have real consequences, though, once that framework is fleshed out. The regular appropriations process complies with the budget through caps on discretionary spending. In addition, reconciliation instructions to authorizing committees may direct changes in existing laws to either increase or reduce the amount of spending needed to achieve the budget resolution's goals, so-called mandatory spending, mainly in taxes and entitlements.

And therein lies the rub, since a handful of members in both chambers have strong objections to particular items in the House-passed bill. The original aim was to complete action on reconciliation by the July Fourth recess, but House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) thinks that deadline will now slip to later in the month.

The fourth leg of the budgetary process is rescission. In the 1974 Budget and Impoundment Control Act, rescissions became the impoundment tool of presidents. If the president wants to withhold or cancel appropriations that have been enacted, he must submit a rescission request to Congress. If it approves the request within 45 days, the spending is cancelled. If not, the spending goes forward.

President Trump, on May 30, submitted a \$9.4 billion

rescission request to the Hill. The House passed the rescission bill narrowly last week. The Senate will take it up after it completes action on reconciliation. In his first term, Trump proposed \$15 billion in rescissions. The Senate rejected the entire package.

The Government Accountability Office, the auditing arm of Congress, has just released a report finding the Trump administration has violated the law by rescinding funds for The Institute of Museums and Library Services without seeking the approval of Congress. Earlier this year, the agency made the same finding about the administration's cancellation of the \$5 billion program for electric vehicle charging stations, again without seeking Congress's go-ahead.

The Government Accountability Office indicated earlier this year that it is inquiring into over three dozen unilateral funding cuts by the administration, most of which originated with Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency or DOGE. There are those in the administration who do not think rescission bills are necessary because, they argue, the president already has unilateral authority to withhold funding as he sees fit without congressional approval. Moreover, they think the entire budget act is unconstitutional.

This underlying dispute ultimately will be resolved by the Supreme Court. Until then, the administration is considering whether and how to complete its homework assignment by trying to put as many DOGE cuts as it can on the right side of the law with additional rescission requests. And Congress should ensure it completes its fiscal 2025 budget process assignment before time runs out on Sept. 30.

I grew up on American food. Trust me, it's the last thing Europe needs

Alexander Hurst

All over European media, the take seems to be similar - that the EU is "under pressure" to conclude some sort of deal with the US in order to avoid Donald Trump's 9 July deadline for the unilateral imposition of broad tariffs. What might be on the table in the attempt to secure that? In early May, the EU trade commissioner, Maroš Šefčovič, was already suggesting that a deal to increase purchases from the US could include agricultural products - a possibility that seems to remain even though Šefčovič later clarified that the EU was not contemplating changing its health or safety standards.

Since I have failed to Abba ("Always be boldly acronyming") and don't have anything as good as Taco ("Trump always chickens out") - coined by the Financial Times columnist Robert Armstrong - at the ready, I'll simply reach for the easy line: opening the door even slightly to more US food imports into the EU would leave a bad taste in all our mouths. Trump's hostage-taking approach to trade should not be rewarded, certainly not with something that hits as close to home as food does. "The European Union won't take chicken from America. They won't take lobsters from America. They hate our beef because our beef is beautiful and theirs is weak," declared the US commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, in April. Laughter aside, every time I go back to the US I become a vegetarian for the duration of my trip - even though US grocery store vegetables are themselves generally big, blemish-free and bland. Why? Call me paranoid, but I simply don't want to ingest

the same growth hormones that Lutnick's "beautiful" meat probably contains traces of and that are banned in the EU.

Growing up in Ohio, I experienced the full force of US food culture. It was the 90s, which meant that margarine was most definitely in and butter was out; an example that highlights how processed everything took root, including - in my vegetarian family - highly processed meat alternatives. The people around me meant well, but how do you fight a system that, from top to bottom, was designed to push high fructose corn syrup into practically everything (and most worryingly into school lunches)? To be fair, all of this has since generated a domestic backlash, but there's an intense amount of momentum behind it still: almost without fail, I find that the standard sugar level in the US soars far beyond what I now find appealing. Even in places I wouldn't expect to find added sugar at all, like pizza. And why would the Trump administration's full-scale savaging of the US government's administrative and regulatory capacity, including the Food and Drug Administration, increase anyone's trust that what US regulation does exist is actually being followed?

Some of you are perhaps rolling your eyes, thinking: Alexander Hurst, a naturalised French citizen, has gone full "chauvin"; converts are the worst. Except it's not just me. There is an entire internet subgenre of content extolling the virtues of French butter, or involving Americans who come to France and realise that this is what peaches, or strawberries, really taste like.

Beyond the question of whether or not Europeans want to eat US agricultural output, a hypothetical trade deal would involve hugely negative climate impacts. The distance that food travels already accounts for 20% of global agriculture-related emissions pollution, and Europe's share in imported agriculture emissions is already high. We need to be reducing it, not adding to it through foodstuffs carted unnecessarily across the Atlantic.

How can we ask European farmers to accelerate their transition to regenerative agriculture (which offers the potential to drastically reduce agriculture emissions) if, at the same time, they are being undercut by US producers who face far lower regulatory standards?

Yannick Huang, who manages the Vietnamese restaurant Loan in Paris's Belleville neighbourhood, agrees. "At a time when we're trying to do organic, local, it's pointless to want to import anything from the US," he told me. Huang, who is obsessive about ingredient quality, only serves French beef. To him, US agriculture comes tainted with the connotation of "GMOs and other problems".

Hold on, you might say. Isn't it inconsistent to oppose Trump's tariffs while also promoting food protectionism? Fair point: it's hard to find a "one size fits all" approach to globalisation. It has harmed some workers in wealthy economies while also reducing the gap between low-income nations and high-income ones. No country on Earth has a fully self-contained advanced semiconductor manufacturing supply chain, and in sectors where globalisation

has become excessive, it might be even more economically harmful to roll back. None of that, though, means that things that have resisted becoming fully global should all of a sudden be opened up - food most of all.

Ramzi Saadé is a Lebanese-Canadian chef whose Paris restaurant, Atica, is dedicated to a fiercely regional approach to haute cuisine. But taking his diners on a voyage of discovery doesn't mean his food has to go on one too; despite focusing on first Basque, and now Corsican cuisine, he sources almost all of his ingredients from the area surrounding Paris. For a lamb dish involving 13 different elements, only the nepeta, a Corsican herb, had travelled, he said. "Is my role today to bring you Japanese culture via wasabi flown to Paris?" Saadé asked. "No, my role is to explain to you that it's grated this way and put on fish for this reason, and I can do that with wasabi from France." I couldn't help but think that it's actually far more interesting to do it his way - to interpret a cuisine rather than attempt to transpose it.

We are what we eat. A cuisine is a medium of communication; it is, indelibly, tied up with the stories we tell about who we are. Perhaps that's why it's so disturbing to see food held hostage, or weaponised, in the pursuit of economic or geostrategic goals.

Europe's intense and varied regionality is an enormous part of how it eats and therefore what it is. Opening the market to mass penetration by US agriculture would, little by little, nibble away at that richness. It's the kind of proposition that, if it ever makes it out of the kitchen, should be sent back straight away.

The Guardian

2025: A historic turning point for Türkiye's aerospace industry

Alfredo Nocera

The year 2025 is proving to be a landmark for the Turkish aerospace sector, with a series of high-profile announcements and international agreements that underscore the country's growing prominence in global defense and aviation markets.

May 14 - Madrid: Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), the Spanish Ministry of Defense, and Airbus signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the export (and joint manufacturing of selected subsystems) of the Hürjet, Türkiye's advanced jet trainer and light attack aircraft.

June 16 - Le Bourget: announcement at the Paris Airshow of the joint venture, named LBA Systems, between Baykar and the Italian conglomerate Leonardo for the design, development, manufacturing and technical support of unmanned aerial systems.

And, just a few days before, on June 11, at the INDO Defence 2025 exhibition in Jakarta, Türkiye and the Indonesian Air Force finalized a groundbreaking export agreement -- one of the most significant in Turkish aerospace history: the sale of 48 KAAAN fifth-generation fighter jets, currently under development by Turkish Aerospace Industries. The historic deal was first announced by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in a post on X, stating: "This agreement, which demonstrates the progress and current level of our national defense industry, will bring prosperity to both Türkiye and Indonesia" and

added: "Indonesia's local capabilities will also be utilized in the production of KAAAN."

The signing ceremony was attended by high-ranking officials from both countries. These included Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, Türkiye's Defense Industries President Haluk Gorgun, and TAI CEO Mehmet Demiroglu, among others. The agreement outlines strategic cooperation aimed at fostering knowledge exchange and strengthening local aerospace capabilities in both countries. With this first export success, Türkiye joins the exclusive group of nations capable not only of designing, developing, and producing fifth-generation fighter aircraft but also of securing export orders for them.

Formerly known as TF-X, the KAAAN represents the pinnacle of Turkish aerospace engineering. It is a fifth-generation, multi-role combat aircraft featuring high maneuverability, low radar visibility, AI-powered avionics, and advanced network-centric warfare capabilities. The aircraft completed its maiden flight on Feb. 21, 2024, followed by a second flight on May 6, 2024. It is expected to enter operational service by 2028. Deliveries to Indonesia are scheduled to begin in the early 2030s and are projected to be completed over a 10-year period. According to Turkish media, the deal with Indonesia is valued at \$15 billion. It is expected to accelerate produc-

tion, foster integration of a new engine, the TF-35000 by TUSAS Engine Industries (TED), and pave the way for economies of scale, potentially making KAAAN more competitive on the international market.

Indonesia, currently operating a mixed fleet of US-made F-16s and aging Russian Sukhoi jets, had initially partnered with South Korea on the KF-21 Boramae project, but economic constraints led Jakarta to reduce its participation, with additional concerns around technology transfer. Indonesia has also explored alternatives. In August 2023, it signed an MoU with Boeing for the F-15EX, although the agreement still awaits government approval and faces challenges such as the recently announced US tariffs. Indonesia is also reportedly considering acquiring additional Dassault Rafale jets, having already ordered 42 of them in 2022. The KAAAN deal further strengthens the growing defense ties between Türkiye and Indonesia. In February 2025, Baykar signed a joint venture agreement with Indonesian firm Republikorp to establish a drone manufacturing facility in the country.

Given the deepening economic and defense ties between Türkiye and Indonesia, both Muslim-majority nations, the question arises: could other ASEAN countries also consider the KAAAN for their defense needs? As a non-US plat-

form, KAAAN may avoid some of the geopolitical complications tied to US-made aircraft like the F-16 or F-35. It could also offer a more cost-effective alternative.

Initial ASEAN interest may remain focused on proven platforms such as the F-15EX or the Rafale. Wider adoption of KAAAN will likely depend on a mix of political relations with Türkiye, offset agreements, and how well the aircraft integrates with existing military systems. Malaysia appears to be the most likely next customer in the area, having been formally offered a partnership on KAAAN project by TAI. The Philippines and Vietnam may also express interest, but their decisions will hinge on cost, capabilities, and strategic considerations. Meanwhile, Singapore and Thailand are likely to remain cautious, balancing modernization needs with their existing interoperability with Western allies. For smaller nations like Myanmar, Cambodia, and Brunei, the cost of acquiring advanced fighters like the KAAAN may remain prohibitive due to limited defense budgets.

Türkiye's aerospace industry has taken a decisive step onto the world stage in 2025. The KAAAN's success in securing its first major export deal is a signal of Türkiye's ambition to become a global player in advanced defense technologies. The next few years will reveal whether this ambition can translate into broader international adoption and a redefined balance in global fighter jet markets.

Pollution-free transport being promoted: SAPM

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan said on Saturday that environmentally friendly and clean transport means green and lean future that is why the government is taking all possible steps to promote clean and pollution-free transport system such as Electric Vehicles (EVs).

He expressed these views while addressing a high-level Dissemination and Feedback Workshop on Pakistan's National Electric Vehicles (NEV) Policy 2025-30 here.

Tha SAPM highlighted Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's vision for a clean, smog-free, and pollution-free Pakistan, stating that the NEV Policy is not just a policy document but a roadmap for a greener and more sustainable future.

He explained that the NEV Policy sets a clear target: by 2030, 30 percent of all new vehicle sales in Pakistan will be electric. This ambitious transition is

expected to reduce carbon emissions by 4.5 million tons and save approximately 2 billion liters of oil. He stressed that this move would also help Pakistan address its growing air pollution crisis and reduce its dependence on imported petroleum, which currently costs the country billions of dollars each year. The policy is also designed to create 15,000 green jobs across the country, contributing to both environmental and economic development.

Haroon Akhtar Khan emphasized that the government is offering generous incentives to consumers. These include a subsidy of Rs. 65,000 for two-wheelers, Rs. 400,000 for three-wheelers, and Rs. 15,000 per kilowatt-hour for four-wheelers. In addition, electric vehicles eligible under the policy will receive free registration, making it easier and more affordable for citizens to make the switch to clean transport.

He also outlined the gov-

ernment's commitment to building EV infrastructure. Pakistan plans to establish 3,000 electric vehicle charging stations nationwide by 2030. Of these, 40 fast chargers will be installed on highways within the next six months. According to Mr. Khan, 61 licenses have already been issued to companies, and 90 percent localization for two- and three-wheeler electric vehicles is achievable within three years. He also noted that Pakistan has secured a grant from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to encourage private sector investment in this rapidly evolving sector.

The policy aligns with global standards and practices, drawing on successful models from countries like Norway, India, and various European nations. Pakistan has already aligned with international safety and performance frameworks through its participation in the UN 1958 and 1998 agreements since 2020. These standards will

ensure that Pakistani EVs meet rigorous global benchmarks while promoting consumer trust and market stability.

Haroon Akhtar Khan further announced that Islamabad will serve as a Model E-Mobility City by 2030, setting an example for provincial governments to follow through aligned incentives and coordinated policy reforms. The NEV Policy is backed by a strong governance structure, including a national steering committee, a dedicated NEV Center and NEV Fund, regular quarterly reviews, and comprehensive reforms in vehicle registration systems and workforce training programs.

Concluding his remarks, Haroon Akhtar Khan said, "This policy is not merely a statement of intent — it is the blueprint for Pakistan's clean energy revolution. We need vehicles that emit not pollution, but progress. Let us drive this transformation together. Pakistan Zindabad."



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan addressing to media on Pakistan's New Energy Vehicle Policy.

Idrees Chohan for lifting ban on plastic bags

HYDERABAD (APP): A delegation of the Hyderabad Plastic Bags Association Market Road Hyderabad, led by Patron Yousuf Dada and President Nadeem Nizamani, met with Ahmed Idrees Chohan, Acting President of Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI).

They expressed strong concerns regarding imposing a blanket ban on all types, sizes and weights of non-degradable and oxo-degradable plastic carrier bags across the province effective from June 15, 2025.

The delegation stated that while they fully support the government environmental protection initiatives and are willing to comply with the 2014 regulations, the sudden and unplanned enforcement of the ban without adequate preparation or consultation will prove devastating for small businesses, factory owners and thousands of laborers dependent on the industry.

HCSTSI Acting President Idrees Chohan, assured the delegation of Chamber's full support and noted that while the use of plastic bags is indeed harmful to the environment, the government must first establish a viable system for alternatives.

He emphasized the need for awareness campaigns and capacity building programs to enable local industries to transition toward environmentally friendly products. An abrupt ban, he warned, would lead to increased unemployment, factory closures and inflation. The government's role should not be limited to imposing bans. It must also provide practical alternatives, he said.

The HCSTSI demands that any such policy be implemented in phases, in consultation with the industry, and accompanied by public awareness efforts. Otherwise, instead of improving the environment, the move could result in serious economic consequences. The delegation concluded by affirming their commitment to supporting eco-friendly regulations, provided the government treats the trader and industrialist community with fairness and cooperation.

On this occasion, Sikandar Ali Rajput, Kishor Kumar Bhatia, Abdullah Memon, Noman, Aqil Naem, Saeed Gulshan, Jameel Naseer and Taimoor were also present.

PEA seeks LCCI help after new taxes

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan E-Commerce Association (PEA) has sought help of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) in mitigating the potential damage to the e-commerce ecosystem because of new taxation policies.

In a meeting with LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad here Saturday, a PEA delegation shared industry apprehensions and emphasized the urgent need for collaborative efforts to protect Pakistan's emerging digital economy.

Former LCCI President Muhammad Ali Mian, delegation members Shahbaz Siddique, Imran Haider also spoke on the occasion while LCCI Executive Committee members Khurram Lodhi, Amina Randhawa and Rana Muhammad Nisar were also present.

The PEA delegation apprised the LCCI President that the sudden introduction of taxation measures has caused unrest among stakeholders in the e-commerce industry. They said that the government's recent policy changes were implemented without prior consultation and have created confusion due to vague legal definitions. This has raised fears of operational uncertainty among online sellers and marketplaces.

They said that the requirement for mandatory registration for GST, Sales Tax and Income Tax, even for small and home-based businesses, will place an

undue compliance burden on micro-entrepreneurs and discourage new entrants from participating in the digital economy.

Moreover, the imposition of a higher withholding tax on Cash on Delivery (CoD) transactions, compared to digital payments, was described as discriminatory and counterproductive to the government's stated goal of promoting digital transactions and financial inclusion.

The delegation members said that the absence of stakeholder dialogue has left the industry unprepared to deal with these changes, which are being enforced without a clear roadmap. They also expressed concern over the lack of clarity in the definitions of key terms such as "platforms" and "intermediaries," which could result in inconsistent enforcement and further confusion in the market.

LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad assured full support to digital entrepreneurs and startups. He said that government policymaking must be inclusive, well-informed and designed in consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure fairness and sustainability. He stressed the need for urgent dialogue between tax authorities and the digital business community to resolve these issues amicably.

Mian Abuzar Shad proposed that clear and precise definitions should be introduced for terms like 'plat-

form, intermediary and seller' to eliminate ambiguity. He also called for the introduction of revenue-based exemption thresholds for small and home-based businesses so that they are not forced into unnecessary compliance. He emphasized that there should be a uniform tax treatment for CoD and digital payments to avoid disincentivizing digital adoption.

He further suggested that a transparent and efficient refund mechanism for advance tax deductions should be established to relieve financial pressure on businesses.

Mian Abuzar Shad also highlighted the importance of allowing a transition period of at least two to three months for the smooth implementation of any new taxation policy. He said that educational programs and awareness campaigns should be launched to help businesses understand their tax obligations and successfully adapt to digital systems.

Both LCCI and PEA agreed on the urgency of the matter and resolved to work collectively to ensure that government policies support the growth of e-commerce, encourage digital innovation and protect the interests of small businesses. The proposal to hold a joint press conference at the LCCI was welcomed by the Chamber, which reaffirmed its role as a bridge between the business community and policymakers.

ICCI stresses globally accredited training to boost skilled workforce

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has emphasised the urgent need for globally accredited vocational and technical training programs to enhance Pakistan's skilled workforce to increase its demand in international markets.

Talking to a delegation of visiting business leaders at the Chamber House on Saturday, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi underlined the importance of aligning all vocational and technical training initiatives across the country with international standards, said a

press release issued here.

The President ICCI said this alignment is vital for enhancing the global employability of Pakistan's youth and unlocking new avenues for foreign remittances.

He noted that by ensuring internationally recognized quality in training institutions, Pakistan can open up greater overseas opportunities for its young population, thereby contributing significantly to the national economy through an increase in foreign exchange inflows.

The ICCI President appreciated the efforts of the National Vocational and

Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) and the Prime Minister's initiative to bring all public sector training programs under a unified regulatory framework. He welcomed the move to standardize curricula as a meaningful step toward producing a competitive and competent workforce.

Highlighting the importance of a skilled youth population for the country's economic progress, Qureshi said, "A fully trained and internationally competitive workforce can not only uplift our economic indicators but also place Pakistan firmly on the road

to sustainable development."

He further stated that ICCI is fully committed to playing its part in this national goal. "We aim to promote entrepreneurship and support startups by strengthening collaboration with academic institutions, fostering innovation, and preparing youth to meet global market demands," he added.

The ICCI President reiterated that empowering youth with internationally accepted skills is a critical investment for ensuring long-term economic resilience and prosperity for Pakistan.

NIBAF Pakistan and Risk Associates ink MoU



F.P. Report

KARACHI: To strengthen the cyber security and compliance readiness of the financial sector in Pakistan, National Institute of Banking and Finance-Pakistan (NIBAF Pakistan) and Risk Associates have forged a partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU was signed by Co-CEO of NIBAF-Pakistan Lubna Farooq Malik and CEO of Risk Associates Dr Aftab Rizvi, in a ceremony here in Karachi in the presence of

senior leadership from both organizations, said a statement issued here on Saturday.

The MoU establishes a strategic framework through which both institutions will collaborate to develop and deliver advanced training programs, advisory services, and capacity-building initiatives focused on cyber risk, governance, digital forensics and compliance with international standards including PCI DSS and ISO/IEC 27001.

Lubna Malik while emphasizing the critical

significance of cyber risk for the financial industry observed that the financial industry stands at the forefront of profound digital transformation and, consequently, must also be at the very forefront of protecting itself.

In this context, she highlighted that the collaboration between NIBAF and Risk Associates would benefit industry professionals, especially in the banking sector, by enhancing their cyber-security skills and knowledge through capacity building.

Dr Aftab Rizvi remarked

that static defenses are no longer enough in today's regulatory climate. Through this partnership, both NIBAF Pakistan and Risk Associates aim to embed technically rigorous frameworks- such as PCI DSS and ISO/IEC 27001- alongside emerging domains like AI-driven threat modelling, automated GRC, and machine learning-based risk detection.

"Together with NIBAF-Pakistan, we are delivering forward-looking training that empowers banking professionals to anticipate, adapt, and respond to dynamic threats with operational precision and confidence," he noted.

The collaboration will focus on high-impact learning modules tailored to the needs of banking professionals, covering topics such as information security governance, cyber threat intelligence, PCI compliance, incident response, and digital transformation in financial institutions.

This strategic alliance marks a critical step towards bolstering cyber security maturity in Pakistan's financial services sector and advancing the professional excellence of its human capital.

Pink rock salt takes spotlight at Expo 2025

F.P. Report

OSAKA, Japan: Aligning with the Expo 2025 Osaka's "Health & Well-being Week," the Pakistan Pavilion hosted a panel discussion titled "Pink Rock Salt: Trade, Health & Investment Potential" on Friday, June 20, 2025 at the Theme Weeks Studio on the Expo site. Organized by Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), the event spotlighted the mineral legacy, health benefits and Pakistan's trade potential of the Pink Rock Salt.

"Our pink salt is not just

a mineral, it is a wellness product with global relevance," said Asad Ahmed. "From nutrition to therapeutic uses, it has the potential to become Pakistan's next major health brand. Japanese and international businesses can leverage this opportunity by partnering with Pakistan for its development and distribution."

The event also featured the official documentary film of Pakistan Pavilion, titled: 'The Universe in a Grain of Salt' depicting the visuals of the Salt Range and the interior of the magical Khewra Mine.

Focusing on export markets and branding initiatives, Mr. Muhammad

Naeem noted, "Pakistan's pink salt is internationally recognized, yet under-leveraged. With the right branding and protection under GI laws, we can transform it into a premium product on the world stage."

Discussions focused on building robust value chains, expanding product diversification, and forging international partnerships to unlock new markets. In addition, the panel stressed the importance of Geographical Indication protection to position pink rock salt as a premium, certified product on the world stage.

Muhammad Naseer, Project Director of the Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2025, added "At Expo

2025, we are not just showcasing natural resources, we are telling a story of global relevance. This event helped position pink rock salt as a wellness product, a trade asset, and a symbol of Pakistan's commitment to sustainable living and global well-being."

The event was held within the broader narrative of the Pakistan Pavilion, where the Pink Salt features the infrastructure and the core elements of the pavilion design. It further reinforced the pavilion's theme of balance between nature, wellness, and innovation, offering a compelling platform to translate heritage into opportunity and awareness into trade.

Global stocks mixed, oil lower

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Global equities were mixed on Friday, while oil prices retreated as markets weighed the latest developments in the war between Iran and Israel. The market rose. Both the S&P 500 and Nasdaq finished lower following a choppy session. Analysts pointed to broad investor unease.

"We have a situation in the Middle East where missiles are still firing, there's no ceasefire and there's a fear that the US may be involved," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments. In light of uncertainty on Iran, trade and other areas, "investors are de-risking, they're selling stocks ahead of the weekend," Sarhan said.

Admissions starts at Int'l University of Kyrgyzstan

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Admissions have begun at the International University of Kyrgyzstan. The Regional Head is touring various cities, and the process of collecting documents from students has also started. For the convenience of students and their parents, an office has been established in Karachi, where admission-related documents will be received.

According to the report, admissions to the International University of Kyrgyzstan have been initiated by the Educational Advisor. In this regard, the university's Regional Head, Dr. Ali Gulab Tunio, is visiting different cities and providing detailed briefings to male and female students about the university. In a statement issued to the media, Dr. Tunio said that they have introduced an

international program for the youth, enabling students from both modest and well-off families to easily pursue an MBBS degree.

Dr. Ali Gulab Tunio further stated that Kyrgyzstan is a Muslim country where, along with an excellent environment, halal food is provided three times a day, and education is delivered in the English language.

He also mentioned that the regional head office of the Kyrgyzstan university has been established in Karachi, where parents are given complete information about their children at all times.

Dr. Tunio said that if any student or their parents face any difficulty or need advice regarding admission, they can visit the office located in Defence Phase 2 Commercial Area, Karachi, to get complete information. The Regional Head urged parents to



enroll their children as soon as possible to save them from wasting a precious academic year.

Dr. Ali Gulab Tunio also released his schedule, stating that after visiting Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Matiari, Jamshoro, and Dadu, he will meet with schools, colleges, doctors, and students in Larkana on December 28, and provide them with complete information about the university. Following this, he will tour Sukkur, Ranipur, Nausahro Feroze, Nawabshah, and other cities to share details about the International University of Kyrgyzstan.

Batalvi chairs meeting

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Standing Committee on Export and Import Chairman Shoaib Batalvi has said that with the efforts of Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif and the Army Chief Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir, the real and positive face of Pakistan is becoming prominent all over the world.

Starting business with the US would help increase the country's exports. He expressed these views while presiding over

a meeting of the Export and Import Committee here at LCCI on Saturday. Batalvi said that urgent steps needed to increase the country's exports.

First of all, staff training of all export-related institutions will have to be provided so that exporters can send goods around the world on time and bring foreign exchange to the country, he added.

He said that after the formation of institutions like SIFC, Pakistan's exports have increased especially to Central Asian countries. The National Logistics

Council has created facilities for exporters and importers in Central Asia and China, he added.

He said that to increase the country's exports, training of trade counselors in eighteen related institutions and embassies abroad is very important. "I am here to provide my services free of charge in this regard," he vowed.

He said that the previous government acted against the country by banning PIA in Europe, due to which exporters had become dependent on foreign air companies.



In brief

Mbappe out of second Real Madrid clash

PALM BEACH GARDENS (AFP): Ill Real Madrid striker Kylian Mbappe will not travel to Charlotte for the team's Club World Cup match against Pachuca, a club source told AFP Saturday. The French superstar was taken to hospital on Thursday for tests and treatment after suffering gastroenteritis, before later being released. Mbappe is improving "bit by bit" said the club source, but he will not fly with his team-mates for Sunday's match against Mexican side Pachuca. The 26-year-old missed the opening game with the same illness as Madrid were held 1-1 by Al-Hilal in Xabi Alonso's debut as coach. Madrid B-team player Gonzalo Garcia, 21, started in Mbappe's stead and opened the scoring for Real Madrid against their Saudi Arabian opponents. Mbappe finished as the European Golden Shoe winner in his first season at Real Madrid with 31 goals in La Liga and 43 across all competitions, but Los Blancos finished the season without a major trophy.

McLauchlan dies at 83

LONDON (Agencies): Former Scotland captain and British and Irish Lions legend Ian McLauchlan has died at the age of 83. Capped 43 times for Scotland between 1969 and 1979, he was best known for his role in the victorious Lions tours of New Zealand and South Africa in 1971 and 1974. He was one of only five players to feature in all eight Test matches on both Tours and his only Test try came against New Zealand in 1971, when he famously charged down an attempted All Blacks clearance to touch down in a 9-3 win. Undersized at just over 14st (89 kilos) for a prop, McLauchlan earned the nickname "Mighty Mouse" for his ability to burrow under heavier opponents and give his team a set-piece advantage at a time when scrums were much more prevalent in the game. He later served as a member of the Scottish Rugby Board from 2010 to 2019 and was president of the Scottish Rugby Union between 2010 and 2012. "He was so tough, almost indestructible," his former Scotland and Lions team-mate Andy Irvine told scottishrugby.org. "What a fantastic career he had for Scotland and the Lions. It's very, very sad."

Jeenoo extends lead at PGA C'ship

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Jeeno Tikitul closed with back-to-back birdies in a two-under par 70 on Friday to stretch her lead to three strokes as sweltering heat and high winds again tested golfers at the Women's PGA Championship in Texas. Jeeno, the world number two from Thailand, started the day with a one-shot lead over Australia's Minjee Lee at Fields Ranch East at PGA Frisco north of Dallas. She teed off on the 10th hole and after a bogey at 12 was back in control with birdies at the 15th and third. She gave a stroke back at the par-three fourth, where she missed the green, but rolled in a 12-foot birdie at the eighth and a four-footer at the ninth to finish 36 holes on six-under 138. "The wind and the rough," the 22-year-old said of the toughest challenges on a day when only 14 players broke par. The 22-year-old, who has won already this year on both the Ladies European Tour and the LPGA Tour, is chasing her first major title. She was three strokes clear of Australian Minjee Lee and Japan's Rio Takeda.

New Zealand triumphs over Pakistan 6-2 to win FIH nations cup 2025

KUALA LUMPUR (Monitoring Desk): New Zealand emerged as the champions of the Nations Hockey Cup after a commanding 6-2 victory over Pakistan in the final held at the National Hockey Stadium. The match showcased New Zealand's tactical superiority and clinical finishing, leaving Pakistan struggling to keep pace. From the outset, the Kiwis asserted their dominance, scoring two quick goals in the opening quarter. New Zealand's fluid passing, sharp attacking moves, and strong defensive structure controlled the tempo throughout the game. Goal scorers included Scott Cosslett, Sam Hiha (who scored twice), Dylan Thomas, and Sean Findlay.

Pakistan managed to pull one goal back in the third quarter through Zikriya Hayat, but by then New Zealand had already built a comfortable 5-0 lead. The Pakistani defense was overwhelmed by New Zealand's relentless pressure, particularly during penalty corner situations where the Kiwis earned eight corners and converted one. This victory was especially signif-



icant given that Pakistan had defeated France in a tense semifinal decided by penalty shootouts, while New Zealand had secured their spot in the final by beating South Korea. Earlier in the tournament's group stage, New Zealand had also edged past Pakistan 4-3, underscoring their consistent edge over the Green Shirts. Pakistan's captain Ammad Butt and his teammates were unable to

break through New Zealand's tight defense and found very limited opportunities in attack, finishing the match with just one circle penetration. New Zealand's triumph caps off an impressive campaign marked by fast-paced hockey, solid team coordination, and clinical execution under pressure, making them deserving champions of the Nations Cup.

Army, WAPDA dominate second day of Karate Championship

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The 17th National Women's Karate Championship being held for the first time in the history of Abbottabad is underway in all its glory at the Government Postgraduate College No. 1 for Women. On the second day of the event on Saturday, contests in four categories concluded, with Pakistan WAPDA and Pakistan Army emerging as top contenders, each bagging two gold medals to jointly lead the points table. Punjab secured second position with three bronze medals, while the Higher Education Commission

(HEC) followed in third with two bronze medals. In the under-68 kg category, Pakistan WAPDA's Mehr-un-Nisa clinched the gold medal by defeating Hina Khan of Pakistan Army in the final. Hina Khan took home the silver, while Sindh's Maryam Khan and HEC's Jaweria Fatima secured bronze medals. In the above-68 kg category, Fakhar-un-Nisa of WAPDA showcased her dominance and was crowned national champion by winning gold. Arzoo of Pakistan Army claimed silver, while Ayesha Tariq

from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab's Zainab Jamshed took bronze. The individual kata event saw Pakistan Army's Farishta rise to the top, claiming the gold medal with an impressive performance. WAPDA's Shazia secured silver, while Punjab's Mehreen Sarwar and HEC's Sumaiya Rafiqat shared third place with bronze medals. In the team kata event, Pakistan Army once again demonstrated its superiority. The team—comprising Nazneen Fatima, Farishta, Aiman, and Zohra—deliv-

ered an outstanding performance to secure the gold medal. WAPDA's team of Shazia, Razia, Saleema, and Shakira earned silver. Bronze medals were awarded to two teams: Balochistan's Umm-ul-Baneen, Mahbooba Batool, and Khatima; and Punjab's Mehreen Sarwar, Zara Batool, Hafiza Fasihah Saleem, and Nazish Nadeem. The championship continues to draw attention with spirited competition and remarkable performances from women athletes across the country.

Lazzat denies Japan a first Royal Ascot winner in thrilling climax

ASCOT (AFP): Lazzat gave France their first winner of the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Stakes denying Japan their maiden win at Royal Ascot as the gallant Satono Reve finished second on Saturday, the final day of the meeting. Lazzat's victory rounded off a superb week for owner the Emir of Qatar's Wathnan Racing, a final day double -- both ridden by James Doyle -- taking their tally to five. Lazzat was France's last hope of salvaging something from the week -- indeed their other two runners in the race fared badly, Sajir being withdrawn and the other Topgear losing two of his horse shoes. The winner was still in feisty form post winning as he shed away from someone coming to him with a blanket like a matador and dumped Doyle on the turf. Doyle -- described as "world class and a brilliant guy" by Wathan's racing manager Richard Brown -- dusted himself down as his 26th Royal Ascot winner disappeared into the distance. "I cannot take any credit at all," he said modestly. "Jerome (Reynier the trainer) was very confident, I could tell Satono Reve was coming alright but you won't get a more genuine horse than this."

Satono Reve lost little in defeat under Joao Moreira -



- known as 'the Magic Man' -- and did better than the previous 10 Japanese runners at the meeting, all of whom had finished outside the first three. "We came in with a lot of confidence but unfortunately bumped into a very good horse. "I thought I had him but he had another gear. "My horse ran really well. "Best friend" Rebel's Romance is trainer Charlie Appleby's favourite horse and the two-time Breeder's Cup Turf winner endeared himself further when he won the Hardwicke Stakes. Described as an "absolute dude" by jockey William Buick Appleby's last runner of the week delivered the trainer's first win at Royal Ascot since a 1-2 three years ago to the day. "It is a huge honour to have a horse like this," said Appleby, whose winner was the first seven-year-old to win the race in 102 years.

"This was the horse we needed with the last roll of the dice, he is a battler. "He is more than our iron horse he has kept the yard afloat this week. "He is our stable's favourite and always will be," Appleby, who began the season with a bang winning both the English 1000 and 2000 Guineas, shrugged off the ending of the losing run. "Of course it is not a matter of life and death," said Appleby, who has taken his tally to 16 Royal Ascot winners. "If you look at the bigger picture and beyond racing you have got to take the losses and take positives out of it. "It is the equine Olympics." Appleby's mother Patricia was present and concurred with Buick that Rebel's Romance was a "dude of a horse". She also brought her son perhaps the required good omen.

"It has been a very long wait," she said. "Last time I wore this yellow dress was when Charlie won the Melbourne Cup (2018) and I have not worn it since." Buick has had a far better week than Appleby, landing amongst other races the Ascot Gold Cup for the same owners, Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum's Godolphin Operation. "He is a dream horse. Any jockey fortunate to have in his career a horse like this is blessed," said the 36-year-old Norwegian jockey. "We're best friends." Doyle had begun the day with a bang as Humidity emulated his full brother Holloway Boy in 2022 landing the Listed Chesham Stakes for Wathnan Racing. Qatar's joy was Godolphin's despair as hotly fancied favourite Treanmor -- who cost 2million euros (\$2.3 million) -- never threatened. A special day for the winners but also for Dean Sutherland, who has worked at Ascot since June 1981, firstly at the golf course then on the gardening team. More fortunate than many to be able to don a short sleeved shirt in the heat he was invited to line-up with other dignitaries and greet and chat with the avid gardening fan King Charles III and Queen Camilla on their arrival by carriage.

Pak volleyball team qualifies for AVC Nations Cup semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan National Senior Men's Volleyball Team has qualified for the semifinals of the AVC Nations Cup 2025 at Bahrain. Pakistan team continued its impressive run at the Nations Cup by defeating Indonesia in the quarterfinals. Pakistan triumphed with a solid 3-1 set win, securing a place in the semifinals of the tournament. The match began with a strong start from Indonesia, who claimed

the first set 25-20, putting early pressure on Pakistan. However, the Green Shirts quickly adjusted their strategy and bounced back with dominance, taking the next three sets with scores of 25-21, 25-20, and 25-17. The team's resilience, discipline, and tactical execution were evident throughout the match. Pakistan will face the winner of the quarterfinal match between Qatar and Vietnam. The outcome of that match will determine Pakistan's opponent in the

semifinal. In a statement issued here, Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) Chairman Ch Muqammad Yaqoob praised the team's determination saying, "Today's performance was a true testament to our players' fighting spirit and unity. Overcoming a strong team like Indonesia shows our readiness to compete at the highest level. We're proud of the boys and look forward to the semifinal with confidence."

Kane scores as Bayern are first team to progress at Club WC

LONDON (Agencies): England captain Harry Kane had a hand in both goals to help Bayern Munich beat Boca Juniors and reach the Club World Cup knockout stages. Striker Kane opened the scoring on 18 minutes by stroking home from 10 yards, before Miguel Merentiel converted a delightful equaliser in the second half. With six minutes remaining, Kane poked the ball into the path of former Crystal Palace winger Michael Olise, who netted the winner with a cool, side-footed finish from the edge of the area. A point for Vincent Kompany's side in the final group game against Benfica will guarantee top spot and a possible last-16 meeting with Chelsea - if the Blues progress in second place. Enzo Maresca's side are currently second after their 3-1 defeat by Flamengo on Friday.



"Big performance from the guys," superior player of the match Kane told Dazn. "We knew it wasn't going to be easy and we knew we were coming into a hostile environment. It is great to get the goal and qualify. "It is a massive tournament, playing against the best teams in the world, but it is us against us, that is the mindset and we have to compete at our best level. So far, so good." Bayern, however, will be concerned by an injury suffered by Germany international Jamal Musiala,

who limped off 25 minutes after appearing as a second-half substitute. Defeat for Boca ended a run of nine unbeaten games for South American sides in this revamped competition but the Argentine giants still have a chance of progressing if Benfica lose to Bayern and they overturn a seven-goal swing. In the group's other game on Friday, Portuguese side Benfica thrashed Auckland City 6-0 and the New Zealand part-timers are out after conceding 16 goals in their opening two games.

Vondrousova surprises Sabalenka to reach Berlin final



BERLIN (AFP): Marketa Vondrousova brushed aside world number one Aryna Sabalenka in Berlin on Saturday to reach her first final since lifting the Wimbledon title two years ago. The 25-year-old Czech, ranked 164 in the world rankings, dominated Sabalenka 6-2, 6-4, to set up a title clash on Sunday with Wang Xinyu after the Chinese qualifier downed Liudmila Samsonova 6-4, 6-1. Vondrousova plummeted down the rankings from sixth after missing several months with a left shoulder injury for which she underwent surgery last year. "I didn't play for a long time," said Vondrousova, who was appearing in her first WTA semi-final since April last year. "I'm just happy to be back healthy, and so grateful to play these matches. "When I saw the field here, I was like, 'OK, let's just try to win the first round,' and then, you know, now this is happening." Sabalenka's first serve let

her down in the opening set, but the Belarusian fought back to start the second with a break. Two games down Vondrousova levelled at 2-2, then broke to lead 5-4, wrapping up the win -- her first ever over a world number one -- but not before saving three consecutive break points, with an ace after one hour five minutes of play. Sabalenka, 27, was losing only her first semi-final in eight last four appearances in 2025. Wang, Vondrousova's Sunday rival on the grass in Berlin, continued her "dream" run, adding the scalp of Russian Samsonova to those already collected this week. "I including French Open champion Coco Gauff. For the 23-year-old, Sunday is a landmark moment - her first singles final on the WTA circuit. "This week has been a dream for me," Wang said. "I've been playing unbelievable tennis here. I don't know, it's something with Berlin, I guess! "Coming into this match here, coming into every match, I wasn't

expecting anything, you know. For me, it was really just to enjoy the stage." Vondrousova in contrast is appearing in her sixth final, winning in Bern (2017), Wimbledon (2023), and she was a losing finalist at Roland Garros and at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Alcaraz sets up Queen's final clash with Lehecka LONDON (AFP): Carlos Alcaraz reached the Queen's Club final for the second time as the world number two eased to a 6-4, 6-4 win over Roberto Bautista Agut on Saturday. Alcaraz extended his career-best winning streak to 17 matches in a semi-final played in sweltering conditions at the Wimbledon warm-up event in west London. The five-time Grand Slam champion hit 36 winners and 15 aces to dispatch his fellow Spaniard in 90 minutes. Top seeded Alcaraz will face Jiri Lehecka in Sunday's final after the Czech world number 30's shock 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 win against British star Jack Draper in the other semi-final. Playing his first tournament since his epic French Open victory against Jannik Sinner two weeks ago, the 22-year-old is through to his fifth successive final after lifting titles on clay in Paris, Rome, Barcelona and Monte Carlo.

BD draw first Test with SL after rain hampers play

GALLE (AFP): The first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka fizzled out into a damp draw on Saturday, with rain robbing the match in Galle of a proper climax. Sri Lanka were set a tall order of 296 in 37 overs and were tottering at 72-4 when stumps were drawn 9.5 overs into the final hour, with both captains shaking hands and accepting no result was possible. The day belonged to Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto, who scored centuries in both innings. "We were low on confidence coming into the series but this was a very good Test match," he said. "We wanted to declare

early but rain forced us to rethink." Shanto made an unbeaten 125 in the second innings after posting 148 in his first dig. It was the second time he had achieved the feat, scoring two centuries in a match against Afghanistan in 2023. However, questions will linger over his captaincy. In pursuit of his landmark, Shanto might have taken his eye off the larger prize. Bangladesh were 247 runs ahead when play resumed after a rain delay and, with 50 overs still to be bowled on the day, an earlier declaration could have forced a result. Instead, Bangladesh batted on for 12 more overs and, with the innings break

taken into account, more than an hour of potentially valuable time was lost on a wearing fifth-day pitch. The delay gave Sri Lanka some hope but their top order crumbled under pressure, Lahiru Udara was stumped off a cleverly flighted delivery by Tajul Islam, while Pathum Nissanka gifted his wicket to Nayeem Hasan by spooning one straight to short mid-wicket. Tajul struck two crucial blows, removing the experienced Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal in quick succession, but time ran out for Bangladesh. Mathews, playing his 119th and final Test, walked off to a standing

ovation as the crowd rose for one of Sri Lanka's greats. "I can't believe the love I have received," said Mathews. "It's now up to the younger players to carry the baton and run." There was a silver lining for Sri Lanka in the form of debutant Tharindu Rathnayake. A six-wicket haul from two innings on his debut was praiseworthy enough but Rathnayake also showcased his rare ambidextrous skills. He dismissed Mominul Haque with off-spin, then switched to left-arm orthodox to account for Litton Das and Jaker Ali. He also pulled off a sensational run out, firing a direct hit from mid-on



to catch Mushfiquur Rahman short of his ground on 49. The second Test will be played in Colombo next week. Brief scores: Bangladesh first innings: 495 all out (Mushfiquur Rahim 163,

Najmul Hossain Shanto 148, Litton Das 90; Asitha Fernando 4-86) Sri Lanka first innings: 485 all out (Pathum Nissanka 187, Kamindu Mendis 87, Dinesh Chandimal 54; Nayeem Hasan 5-121)

Bangladesh second innings: 285 for six declared (Najmul Hossain Shanto 125 not out, Shadman Islam 76; Tharindu Rathnayake 3-102) Sri Lanka second innings: 72 for four (Pathum Nissanka 24; Tajul Islam 3-23).



In brief

Police officers' performance reviewed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Investigation Saba Sattar on Saturday held a meeting at Police Lines Headquarters, attended by SP Pothohar, SDPO Taxila Circle, SHOs of Taxila Circle, NIU staff and other allied staff. During the meeting, the SSP Investigation reviewed the officers' performance and issued directives. She directed the senior police officials to personally oversee investigations of serious cases, including those related to narcotics. She emphasized accelerating the crackdown on drug trafficking and ensuring swift arrests in serious cases, resolving them on factual evidence basis. "Effective investigation, accurate evidence and diligent case follow-up can ensure convictions," the SSP said, adding that that Rawalpindi Police was taking all measures to provide justice and facilities to citizens.

Police arrested 7 with illegal arms

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police conducted operations against illegal arms possession, arresting seven individuals and recovering weapons along with ammunition. According to the details the operations took place in Pirwadhai, Bani, Naseerabad, Chaklala, Saddar Wah, and Rawat areas. Divisional SPs stated that crackdowns on illegal arms holders will persist to ensure public safety.

Two arrested in murder case

RAWALPINDI (APP): Wah Cantt Police have arrested two individuals involved in the murder of a citizen through firing. According to the police spokesman, the suspects, arrested during a targeted operation by the police, killed the victim due to personal enmity. The case was registered six days ago, and the suspects had been absconding since the incident. Through human intelligence and other resources, the police successfully arrested them during the operation. SP Pothohar, Talha Wali in a statement that the suspects will be presented in court with solid evidence.

Police arrest murder suspect

RAWALPINDI (APP): Kallar Syedan Police have arrested an individual accused of murdering a citizen with a knife attack. The suspect, along with accomplices, killed the victim for old enmity. The case was registered five days ago, and the suspect had gone into hiding since the incident. The police while using all available resources, arrested the accused. Efforts are underway to arrest the remaining accomplices. SP Sadder Muhammad Nabil Khokhar said that the arrested accused would be prosecuted with concrete evidence.

Seven arrested with drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police on Saturday conducted operations against drug trafficking, arresting three individuals and recovering over 3kg of hashish. According to the details, Rawat Police seized 1.68kg from one suspect, R.A. Bazar Police recovered 800 grams from another, and Naseerabad Police confiscated 537 grams from a third suspect. Separate cases have been registered. Senior Police officials have said that those poisoning the youth with drugs will face strict legal action. Police also arrested four individuals and recovered over 20 liters of liquor in multiple operations. Gujar Khan Police seized 10 liters and two bottles from two suspects, Waris Khan Police recovered 5 liters from one individual.

First congo case reported in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (INP): The first confirmed case of C r i m e a n - C o n g o Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) has been reported in Holy Family Hospital. Rashid Mumtaz, a 38-year-old tailor from Model Town, Wah Cantt, Taxila is currently stable and isolated in the hospital's Medical Intensive Care Unit (M-ICU) after being confirmed as the first CCHF case in Rawalpindi during the year 2025.

According to the details, the patient was admitted to the hospital on June 17, 2025, showing symptoms on June 15, including high-grade fever, body aches, gum bleeding, and hematemesis. Laboratory results revealed a white

blood cell count of 1,910, a platelet count of 4,100, and chest X-ray infiltrates.

Dr. Waqar, the spokesman District Health Authority (DHA) informed that investigations indicate that Rashid participated in the slaughter of four goats and two cows on Eid-ul-Azha day, along with his cousin, Junaid Khan.

He said that the preliminary contact tracing has identified two symptomatic individuals. Junaid Khan, a 19-year-old male from Mansehra, is experiencing fever and body pain and has been isolated at Holy Family Hospital whose PCR test results are awaited.

Ibrahim, a 14-year-old male from Wah Cantt, is

showing fever and signs of infection, and is isolated at Wah General Hospital, with blood samples sent to the National Institute of Health (NIH) for testing, also awaiting PCR results.

"All necessary barrier nursing controls have been strictly implemented for the affected individuals" said Dr. Waqar. The spokesman further informed that 18 other identified contacts remain asymptomatic and are under quarantine for fever surveillance.

"A joint response with the livestock department has been initiated, including indoor residual spraying (IRS) and vector surveillance in the affected areas to curb potential spread", he added.

People praise CM Maryum's initiative to empower laborers' children

ISLAMABAD (APP): The people of Punjab are applauding Chief Minister Maryum Nawaz for her pioneering initiative to provide free education to children of laborers, a landmark move that promises to empower the next generation and bridge the educational divide in the province.

While talking to PTV News channel, citizens expressed confidence in Chief Minister Maryum Nawaz's leadership and praised her initiative to provide free education, saying it will greatly benefit the children of laborers.

Prof. Dr. Sarfraz Ahmad from COMSATS University remarked that the Workers' Children Free Education Program will enable deserving stu-

dents to gain admission to any of the university's seven campuses, with the Punjab government fully covering their educational expenses and funding, thereby opening doors to quality education for underprivileged students.

He further added that a specific quota has also been allocated for the children of laborers, ensuring that a certain number of seats are reserved for them, providing equal opportunities for higher education and social mobility.

Firdous Jamal, a student, enthusiastically added that this initiative will be a game-changer for millions of poor labor children, who will now have the opportunity to receive free education, empowering them to

break the cycle of poverty and build a brighter future for themselves.

Abdul Jabbar, a laborer also expressed gratitude, saying that this initiative will be a blessing for him and his fellow workers, as their children will now have access to quality education without any financial burden, paving the way for a better future and brighter prospects for the next generation.

Ehtasham, another student, echoed similar sentiments, saying that this free education program will not only benefit the children of laborers but also bring about a positive change in the society, enabling the underprivileged to rise above their circumstances and contribute to the country's progress.

CPO hold open courts, swift action taken against domestic violence

RAWALPINDI (APP): In line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani conducted open court sessions at Ratta Amral and Gunjmandi police stations in Rawalpindi on Saturday, directly engaging with citizens to address their grievances promptly.

The open courts were attended by Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs), Station House Officers (SHOs), investigation officers, members of civil society, and representatives from the Traders' Association.

During the open courts, citizens raised various concerns, ranging from local disputes to serious complaints to which CPO issued immediate directives to ensure swift action on all applications. A notable case involved a woman who reported domestic violence. The CPO ordered prompt legal action, underscoring Rawalpindi Police's commitment to addressing gender-based issues. The complainant expressed satisfaction and gratitude over the swift response by the police.

"Rawalpindi Police takes swift action on women's complaints. As a woman, I thank the police and CPO for their support", she said. The open court sessions provided a platform for residents, civil society, and traders to register their concerns directly to senior police officials. Attendees praised the initiative for its accessibility and transparency. Local residents

highlighted Rawalpindi Police's "historic performance" in combating narcotics.

"We hope these operations continue with the same vigor", a citizen expressed. The traders' association representatives also commended the police's efforts in crime prevention, describing their performance as "exemplary."

CPO Hamdani emphasized the importance of community engagement in maintaining law and order, assuring attendees that Rawalpindi Police remains dedicated to serving the public.

He reiterated the force's zero-tolerance policy toward crime and urged citizens to cooperate with law enforcement to ensure a safer environment.

National player urged parents to vaccinate children

RAWALPINDI (APP): Parents across Pakistan have been urged to ensure their children receive polio drops in every campaign until the country is declared as polio-free.

The appeal was made by renowned Test cricketer Sajid Khan and District Health Officer, Dr. Ehsan Ghani during a public awareness event held here on Saturday.

They warned that polio is a dangerous disease that can permanently paralyze children, with no cure, only vaccination offers protection.

"I urge parents to administer polio vaccines every time. I will continue meeting my Pakistani brothers to remind them of their responsibility. My support will persist until polio is completely eradicated from Pakistan", he said.

Appreciating Polio workers for their hard work during the immunization drives, Sajid urged that citizens must cooperate with the polio field teams who come to their doorstep only to protect children from disability.

"If even one child misses the drops, it poses a risk to others. Parents must understand that vaccination is the only way to prevent polio", DHO Dr. Sajjad Ghani said while interacting with the citizens.

Dr. Sajjad highlighted that Pakistan remains one of the few countries where the polio virus still exists. Environmental samples and new cases in some areas indicate the ongoing

threat.

He reiterated that the government and its partners are committed to eradicating polio, and the support of national heroes like Sajid Khan is vital in building public trust and awareness.

During the campaign, people were aware that polio is a highly contagious virus that primarily affects children under five. It attacks the nervous system, causing permanent disability within hours and, in some cases, results fatal. There is no cure for polio, repeated vaccination is the only means of prevention.

Sajid Khan repeated that polio drops are safe, effective, and essential, requiring administration in every campaign for complete protection.



ISLAMABAD: People sitting under the shade of trees to find relief from the hot weather in the city. —APP Photo

Naqvi condemns attack on Police

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has strongly condemned the tragic incident of firing on police personnel in Swabi. In his statement, he paid rich tribute to the two martyred police officers, Jamaluddin and Zahid, who lost their lives in the attack.

Minister Naqvi expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the martyred officers, stating, "We stand shoulder to shoulder with the grieving families of Jamaluddin and Zahid."

He emphasized that the martyred officers attained the highest rank of sacrifice and that their bravery will always be remembered. "The brave sons of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police have made countless sacrifices in the fight against terrorism," he said. Mohsin Naqvi saluted the unparalleled courage of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and assured that the sacrifices of the martyred officers will not go in vain.

Rescue 1122 Station inaugurated at Jaurian

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) officially inaugurated its new Jaurian Rescue Station in Rawalpindi on Saturday. The ceremony was led by chief guest Chaudhry Naeem Ijaz, MPA. This new facility will enhance emergency response capabilities for residents in Chak Beli Khan and surrounding areas.

Speaking at the event, Chaudhry Naeem Ijaz appreciated Rescue 1122 for the professional preparedness and dedication.

"The services of Rescue 1122 are a model for Punjab. This new station will provide timely and high-quality emergency support to the local community, ensuring help reaches every citizen in times of need", he said.

Engr. Sibghatullah, District Emergency Officer Rawalpindi, highlighted the organization's commitment.

"Rescue 1122 has been tirelessly protecting lives and property across various regions", he said adding that the organization would extend the same swift and effective emergency services to Chak Beli Khan and its surrounding areas.

ANF arrests 8 smugglers with over 168 kg of drugs worth Rs 23.4 mln

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting seven operations across the country, recovered as many as 168.443 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 23.4 million and arrested eight suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Saturday.

He informed that 105 ecstasy pills weighing 55 grams were recovered from the possession of an accused near a school area, Marir Hassan, Rawalpindi.

The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to stu-

dents of educational institutions. In another operation, 988 grams of heroin were recovered from the luggage of a passenger going to Riyadh at Faisalabad International Airport.

As many as 5 kgs of heroin and 3 drones were recovered from 3 suspects near Kasur Road, Lahore.

Similarly, 3 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle near the courier office at Auto Bhan Road, Hyderabad, and 3 suspects were arrested.

As much as 3 kg of heroin and 14.4 kg of hashish

were recovered from a vehicle near University Road in Peshawar.

During another operation, 30 kg of opium and 30 kg of hashish hidden for smuggling were recovered near the Shahkas area of Khyber in Peshawar.

As much as 18 kg of hashish hidden for smuggling was recovered near Daudabad, Chagai area of Dalbandin. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Mustafa Shah pays tributes to PPP chief on his successful int'l visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah has paid a glowing tribute to Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari upon his return to the homeland after successfully completing a parliamentary diplomacy visit.

In a statement on Saturday, he said that Bilawal Bhutto has highlighted Pakistan's positive and real identity on the global stage. He described Bilawal Bhutto's recent international

visit as a significant milestone for Pakistan's parliamentary diplomacy.

Mushafa Shah said that Bilawal Bhutto presented Pakistan's case on the diplomatic front in an extremely effective manner, which is commendable and worthy of praise.

The Deputy Speaker said that Bilawal Bhutto courageously, wisely, and insightfully articulated Pakistan's stance on international forums, elevating the country's prestige and fostering a positive global

impression.

He said Bilawal's role has not only been pivotal in advancing Pakistan's foreign policy but also in representing the nation as a confident diplomat.

Mustafa Shah said that Pakistan takes pride in young leaders who carry out the responsibilities of representing the nation at the international level with great dedication. The Deputy Speaker expressed his best wishes for Bilawal Bhutto and prayed for the continuity of his successes.

Punjab's 15 call centre now meets int'l safety standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's directives, Punjab's 15 call centres have been upgraded to meet international safety standards, ensuring swift emergency response services. Led by the Punjab Police, this initiative enhances citizen safety and provides timely assistance.

Mubasher Hussain, Incharge of the Rescue 1122 Call Centre, stated during an interview with a local news channel that the Punjab government is upgrading the call centre to enhance citizen safety, ensuring rapid response and international-standard services.

He revealed that the Punjab government's initiative will leverage virtual

solutions to streamline emergency response, providing citizens with faster and more efficient services.

The upgraded Rescue 15 call centre will also introduce support in various languages to cater to a broader population, making emergency services more accessible and inclusive, he added.

Rescue 15 is a vital police helpline that provides swift assistance in emergencies, documenting crucial details such as caller's name, incident time and date, location, relevant police station, and nature of the emergency or crime, and shares this information with the Chief Minister's Complaint Cell, he mentioned. Notably, he mentioned that Rescue 15 has already seen a signifi-

cant impact, with a 30-40% decrease in fake calls, showcasing the effectiveness of their current initiatives.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has also launched Pakistan's first Virtual Blood Bank Centre, revolutionizing emergency blood availability in the province, he said, adding, this innovative center allows patients to access blood quickly by calling Emergency Helpline 15 and pressing option 4, connecting them to a Safe City officer who facilitates a conference call with registered donors in the vicinity. The Virtual Blood Bank Centre has registered around 30,000 donors, aiming to provide instant blood availability in emergencies, he highlighted.



ISLAMABAD: A gypsy man collects valuables from garbage near the Khanna Pul area. —APP Photo

Over 500 Afghans freed

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation says 520 more Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan. These individuals returned to the country on June 18 to 20, the ministry announced in a brief post on its X handle on Saturday. Citing Spin Boldak-based officials in Kandahar, the Ministry wrote the returnees had spent one to three days in jails and had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Zil Hajj 25, 1446 — Sunday, June 22, 2025

Five injured in Faryab

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): Five individuals have been injured as a result of an old DC artillery shell blast on Saturday. Director Maulvi Shamsddin said a teenager named Isa found the unexploded device and took it to a hardware store in the Haidari Khana area of Qaisar Bazaar for sale, but it exploded. Mohammadi asked the residents to immediately notify security forces if they see suspicious objects or ammunition left over from the past wars to prevent such tragic incidents from happening.

Siraj acknowledges internal rifts delaying infrastructure projects

KABUL (Amu TV): Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban's interior minister, acknowledged that internal rifts and financial difficulties have delayed infrastructure projects across eastern Afghanistan, including in Paktia Province.

Speaking at a public gathering in Paktia, Haqqani said that some development projects had been personally funded by him, but their implementation had been slowed or halted due to what he described as "internal and financial problems."

Without naming individuals or detailing the nature of the disputes, Haqqani stressed that efforts to con-

struct new roads and public buildings remain part of the administration's agenda. "I have personally provided funds for certain projects," he said. "But financial issues and differences among us have hindered progress on some of them."

He warned that continued infighting within the Taliban ranks could undermine public service delivery, urging internal unity. "We must overcome the mindset of tribal division," he said, referring to rising ethnic tensions. "Thinking one group is better than another must end. Success lies in supporting the system."

Haqqani also defended the Taliban's two-decade

insurgency, claiming it was not aimed at seizing power or oppressing people, but rather "a jihad to implement Islamic law." He reaffirmed that the group's survival hinges on obedience to its reclusive leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada.

Once a rare public presence, Haqqani has recently made more appearances among civilians in eastern provinces such as Khost, Paktia and Paktika, while remaining largely absent from official Taliban ceremonies in Kabul — a move some analysts interpret as part of his strategic positioning within the movement's internal power structure.

Afghanistan, China seek expanded cooperation



KABUL(BNA): During a recent visit to China, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, advocated for enhanced scientific and research collaboration between Afghanistan and China educational institutions.

The visit included meetings with several prominent university leaders, such as

Mao Yinghui, President of Yunnan University, and Yi Jianguang, President of Kunming University of Science and Technology. Discussions focused on establishing scientific ties, organizing seminars, and exchanging technological experiences.

Deputy PM Hanafi expressed appreciation for the warm reception from

Chinese officials and shared insights on Afghanistan's current situation, highlighting achievements in security, trade, investment, and anti-narcotics efforts.

He underscored the importance of learning from China's successful academic experiences, particularly in medicine, agriculture, engineering, and technology.

Hundreds of child laborers enroll in school

BAGHLAN (BNA): 400 child laborers have rejoined the country's educational system after completing a six-month training program at the Support Center of the Labor and Social Affairs Department.

The initiative, supported by the ACTED institute and in collaboration with the Education Department, aims to provide educational opportunities for children who have been deprived of

schooling due to economic hardships.

Qari Nasratullah Parsa, the Director of Labor and Social Affairs in Baghlan, announced this achievement to the Bakhtar News Agency.

He emphasized the program's dual focus on academic education and practical support, which included daily afternoon snacks and financial assistance to encourage continued atten-

dance. The cooperation between the ACTED institute and the Baghlan Education Department has been instrumental in supporting these vulnerable children, Parsa stated. He called for sustained and expanded partnerships between government and non-government organizations to further enhance educational access for child laborers in the province.

Turkmenistan, EU talk Afghan development



KABUL (Pajhwok): Turkmenistan and the European Union (EU) have reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development and joint infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan railway.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Ahmet Gurbanov met with Paola Pampaloni, Director of the European External Action Service for Asia, during the

17th Turkmenistan-EU Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels, the Caspian Post reports, citing the country's Foreign Ministry.

The discussion focused on regional security, particularly the situation in Afghanistan.

Gurbanov highlighted his country's policy of neutrality, good neighbourliness and respect for other states' sovereignty.

The Turkmen side

expressed ongoing support for peace initiatives and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, emphasizing sustainable development.

Key infrastructure projects, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan railway and new energy and transport corridors, were also discussed.

Both sides stressed the need for continued political dialogue and cooperation on mutual interests.

Minister of Agriculture Engages with Russian Counterpart at Economic Conference

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Ataullah Omari, the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, held a productive meeting with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Russia during the 2025 Russian Economic Conference in Saint Petersburg.

The Ministry of Agriculture announced that the discussions focused on expanding cooperation in agriculture, livestock, and irrigation. Key topics included the export and import of agricultural products such as wheat and oil, as well as improving irrigation systems and the integration of modern technologies in these sectors.

The visit presents a significant opportunity for Afghanistan to showcase its agricultural potential and attract new investments, which could bolster economic growth and enhance food self-sufficiency.

Accompanying Minister Omari was a high-ranking delegation that included representatives from the Ministries of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Economy, and the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, alongside several traders and investors.

Afghanistan turns to Russia for food imports: Omari

KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan is holding talks with Russia to expand food imports—particularly wheat and other essential commodities—as concerns grow that the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict could disrupt trade routes with Tehran, officials said.

Participating at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Acting Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Ataullah Omari said Kabul is seeking to diversify its food supply sources as tensions in the region threaten existing trade routes, particularly with Iran—a key supplier of dairy and other goods to Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan is definitely aiming for self-sufficiency in its agricultural products. However, we still rely on some food items that come from Iran, and if problems arise there, it will undoubtedly have its effects," Omari told Reuters.

Afghanistan currently sources a significant portion of its wheat and flour from Russia and Kazakhstan. This year, the caretaker government is requesting Russia supply more wheat rather than processed flour, aligning with its push to boost domestic milling capacity.

Russia, the world's largest wheat exporter, has become a critical trade partner for Afghanistan, also supplying sugar and vegetable oil.

Afghanistan was the top buyer of Russian flour in 2024 but has increased its own wheat production by 10% to 4.83 million metric tons. Still, the country's annual wheat consumption stands at about 6.8 million metric tons, leaving a considerable shortfall.

"For the past four years, since the withdrawal of the Americans, we have been making efforts to provide our essential food supplies ourselves. The remaining amount, including flour and wheat, is supplied annually by Russia," Omari said. "We have requested that Russia send us wheat instead of flour. Additionally, the import of other products that come from Russia to our country annually is progressing well."

Omari also voiced concern for the estimated 4.5 million Afghan refugees in Iran, who he said could be at risk if the regional conflict escalates.

Omari is leading a high-level delegation from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), which includes officials from the Ministries of Economy, Commerce and Industry, the Chamber of Commerce, and a number of Afghan businessmen.

The delegation departed for St. Petersburg on June 16 to attend the forum, which runs from June 18 to 21 and draws representatives from more than 140 countries.

Islamic Emirate rejects United Nations report — claims Afghanistan more secure than ever

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has rejected a recently published quarterly report by the United Nations, calling it "inaccurate" and "propagandistic," and asserting that the country is enjoying its highest levels of security in recent history.

According to the report, the UN documented 2,299 incidents related to safety and security across Afghanistan between February 1 and April 30—a 3% increase compared to the same period last year. Additionally, 175 theft cases were reported during this time, showing a 7% rise from the previous year.

In a statement released Saturday, Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said the UN report paints a distorted picture of the situation in Afghanistan and is based on misinformation aimed at generating unnecessary concern about the country's



internal conditions.

"The security situation in Afghanistan is presently more stable than at any time in recent history, and the population is living in peace," the statement read.

Mujahid criticized what he described as a recurring trend among international organizations, including the UN, to present a misleading

image of Afghanistan, downplaying progress made under the current government and exaggerating isolated incidents to sow fear.

He also objected to the classification of routine criminal activity as security-related incidents in the UN's reporting, stating that such crimes occur at signif-

icantly higher rates in other countries.

As evidence of national stability, the spokesperson pointed to the recent Eid al-Adha holidays, during which over two million Afghans reportedly traveled domestically—an indicator, he said, of public confidence in the country's peace and security.

Thousands of Afghans flee Iran amid Israeli airstrikes

KABUL (TOLONews): Local officials in Herat report a sharp rise in the number of Afghan refugees returning from Iran as Israeli airstrikes on various Iranian cities continue.

According to statistics, nearly 10,000 Afghan migrants are entering Afghanistan daily through the Islam Qala border in Herat.

Abdul Zahir Rahmani, Deputy Director of Border Affairs for Returnees and Refugees at the Islam Qala crossing, stated: "Recently, due to war and insecurity in Iran, the return of refugees from the country has

increased. Between 8,000 to 10,000 individuals are returning daily via the Islam Qala border—excluding those with passports. This figure includes only those who are deported or return without legal documents. Of these, around 4,000 to 5,000 are families, while the rest are single individuals."

Some of the returnees say they were forced to return to Afghanistan out of fear and concern over Israeli airstrikes.

Nabiullah, a returnee from Iran, said: "I was living in Tehran, and in recent

days the war intensified. Missiles were hitting the city, and there was fire and smoke everywhere. Eventually, we were forced to flee."

Another returnee, Abdul Razaq, said: "On the first night, around 3 a.m., there was a loud noise. When I stepped outside, I saw our surroundings had been bombed. The area in Tehran where we lived was heavily attacked, and the fighting was intense."

Abdul Ahad, who lived with his family in Tehran, witnessed several nights of Israeli airstrikes across dif-

ferent parts of the Iranian capital.

He said: "The war began last week. At first, it was mild for a couple of days, but then the intensity grew each day. I took my family and fled—we have returned to Afghanistan."

The Iran-Israel conflict has now entered its ninth day.

According to Iranian government figures, more than 720 people have been killed and hundreds more wounded in the Israeli airstrikes. Reports also indicate that some Afghan migrants were among those killed.

Jalali seeks NCA help to strength Afghan health sector

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Public Health, Maulvi Noor Jalal Jalali has called on the Norwegian Committee for Afghanistan (NCA) to support efforts aimed at strengthening the country's health sector and providing semi-higher medical education to Afghan students. He issued the call at a meeting with NCA Director Taria Waterdahl at his office today (Saturday), the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) wrote on its X handle.

According to the ministry, the two sides discussed ways to improve Afghanistan's healthcare system, facilitate semi-higher medical education for Afghan students, prioritise the ministry's strategic needs, and ensure the provision of health services in line with the National



Health Policy.

Jalali underscored the importance of delivering services in accordance with the National Health Policy and urged the NCA to play

an active role in enhancing both medical education and the healthcare infrastructure across the country.

For her part, the NCA director reaffirmed the

committee's ongoing commitment to supporting Afghan students in medical education and offering broader assistance to Afghanistan's health sector.

Taliban rules, resource shortages crippling classrooms: Teachers

KABUL (Amu TV): Teachers in western Afghanistan say new pressures under Taliban rule, including compulsory dress codes for students, religiously driven changes to school curricula and a severe lack of supplies, are draining students' motivation and undermining the country's already fragile education system.

Educators speaking on condition of anonymity told Amu TV that Taliban officials are not only imposing strict rules on what students wear but also heavily policing teachers' appearance. "In some schools, administrators cooperate with the Taliban and will not allow us to teach without wearing a long veil," one teacher said. "Even girls in the third through sixth grades are being forced to wear it. The Taliban have said repeatedly that the dress code

must meet their standards or teachers will lose their jobs."

She added that the combination of repressive dress codes, extreme heat, ideologically slanted lesson plans and a lack of even basic school supplies has discouraged many students from attending school. Her own eighth-grade son, she said, has expressed a desire to drop out, saying he cannot bear the enforced dress code.

Students themselves have voiced concerns over deteriorating learning environments. Many schools damaged by recent floods and earthquakes remain in disrepair, leaving thousands of children without classrooms or access to formal education.

"We used to go to school and our teacher taught us girls," said one primary school student who declined to be pho-

tographed for safety reasons. "Now the school is closed and no one is helping. We girls have been left behind."

In response to the worsening conditions, UNICEF — in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, the Saudi Fund for Development and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund — has launched a \$2.75 million project to rebuild and rehabilitate eight schools in Herat and Badghis Provinces.

The initiative aims to bring 4,000 children back into safe, functional classrooms.

"We have seen in Afghanistan and elsewhere how earthquakes and other natural disasters disrupt children's education," said Tajudeen Oyewale, UNICEF's representative in Afghanistan. "With this new funding, we hope children can safe-

ly return to rebuilt or refurbished classrooms."

The Taliban have yet to respond publicly to concerns about the strict enforcement of dress codes. In previous statements, the Education Ministry defended the rules, saying the changes were intended to promote "order and discipline."

Girls above sixth grade remain barred from school across the country — a policy that has drawn widespread international condemnation. Human rights organizations warn that if the ban persists, more than four million Afghan girls could be out of school by 2030.

Education and human rights advocates continue to urge the international community to take urgent and coordinated steps to address what they call an escalating crisis in access to education, particularly for Afghan girls.

Aurangzeb vows sustainable growth beyond stability

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Government's vision goes beyond stability as it aims for inclusive and sustainable growth in line with the Prime Minister's development vision of equal economic opportunity for all citizens, said Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb while winding up debate on the federal budget for fiscal year 2025-26 in Senate on Saturday.

Addressing the Upper House, the minister highlighted that in the outgoing fiscal year, the government avoided any mini-budget, managed to curb inflation, improved foreign exchange reserves, and significantly narrowed the current account deficit.

He said government expenditures increased by only 1.9 percent - a marked slowdown compared to previous years when spending rose by up to 13 percent. Calling this a real example of financial discipline, he said the government is leading by example in reducing wasteful spending. Aurangzeb said the government announced a major relief for the salaried class, saying that the income tax rate for those earning between Rs0.6 million and Rs1.2 million annually would be reduced from 2.5 percent to just 1 percent.

He termed it a practical acknowledgement that the state must not

overburden tax-compliant middle-income earners and expressed hope that this would boost disposable income and restore public trust in the tax system. He said the government also announced a 10 percent increase in salaries and a 7 percent hike in pensions for employees, acknowledging the financial pressures they face and reaffirming that the state stands by them.

On the solar energy front, Aurangzeb clarified that the earlier proposed 18 percent sales tax on imported solar panel components has been reduced to 10 percent and will apply only to 46 percent of imported items. He emphasized the government's commitment to encouraging domestic solar production while supporting the clean energy transition. He also condemned opportunistic hoarding and artificial price hikes by some market players ahead of the new tax's enforcement, warning that strict legal action will be taken in coordination with provincial governments.

The minister also announced that the budget for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) was being increased from Rs592 billion to Rs716 billion, a move expected to benefit millions of families including widows, orphans, elderly citizens, and persons with disabilities. He called this expansion not a temporary

relief effort but a reflection of the state's long-term commitment to the most vulnerable. He also mentioned skill-development initiatives under the same umbrella, terming them a critical step toward sustainable livelihoods.

The finance minister further informed the House that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had issued special directions to include additional safeguards in the proposed laws governing the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) enforcement, to prevent abuse of authority. He noted that detailed consultations were held with Senators Saleem Mandviwalla and Farooq H. Naek, resulting in clearer and more balanced provisions, which will be shared during his upcoming speech in the National Assembly. Aurangzeb said, as in the previous year, more than 50 percent of the Senate Standing Committee's recommendations would be incorporated into the final Finance Bill.

Meanwhile, he expressed gratitude to senators for their insightful contributions and patriotic suggestions, saying these helped strengthen the government's resolve toward self-reliance, transparency, and growth. He acknowledged the active role of the Senate and its Standing Committee on Finance, noting that meaningful consultation had shaped many of the budget's final contours.

Suicide blast kills 20 in Nigeria

KONDUGA, Nigeria (AFP): A suicide attack in Nigeria's Borno state by a woman allegedly acting for Boko Haram insurgents has killed at least 20 anti-militant fighters, militia members told AFP on Saturday. Police have confirmed 10 people were killed and said the overall toll could be higher.

Boko Haram and its rival, the Daesh West Africa Province (Daesh-WAP), have in recent months intensified attacks on villages in Borno and neighboring states. They have also overrun military bases, killing soldiers and carting away weapons.

Late on Friday, a woman allegedly detonated explosives strapped to her body at a haunt for vigilantes and local hunters assisting the Nigerian military in fighting "militants" in the town of Konduga, the militia told AFP. "We lost 20 people in the suicide attack which happened yesterday around 9:15 p.m. (2015 GMT) while our members were hanging out near the fish market," said Tijjani Ahmed, the head of an anti-militant militia in Konduga district.

Konduga is about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Maiduguri, the capital of the northeastern state of Borno. Surrounding villages have been repeatedly targeted by suicide bombers said to be acting for Boko Haram, a group of armed Islamic militants that has been active in the area for at least 16 years.

Konduga town itself had seen a lull in such attacks in the past year. "Eighteen people died on the spot, while 18 others were injured. Two more died in hospital, raising the death toll to 20," Ahmed said. Sixteen were wounded, with 10 of them nursing severe injuries in two hospitals in Maiduguri, he said. The dead were buried in a mass funeral on Saturday, an AFP reporter saw. Corpses wrapped in white cloths — some covered in bamboo mats — were laid out in rows on the ground on wooden biers ahead of the burial.

The alleged bomber was dressed as a local heading to the crowded nearby fish market. She detonated her explosives as soon as she reached the shed used by the militia fighters as a hangout, said militia member Ibrahim Liman. He gave the same toll as Ahmed.

Borno state police spokesman Nahum Daso told AFP that 10 bodies had been recovered from the "suicide attack." He said the toll could be higher as "details are sketchy." Konduga's fish market, which is usually busy at night, has been the target of a series of suicide attacks in the past. "I was in the market to buy fish for dinner when I heard a loud bang some meters behind me," Konduga resident Ahmed Mallum said.

"I was flung to the ground and I couldn't stand. I just lay down," Mallum said. The conflict between the authorities and Boko Haram has been ongoing for 16 years. In that time, more than 40,000 people have died and around two million have been displaced from their homes in the northeast, according to the United Nations.

SC postpones hearing of reserved seats case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has postponed the hearing of the reserved seats case, originally scheduled for Monday.

According to sources, the review hearing for the case will also not take place on Tuesday. The next hearing date will be announced upon the return of Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail from Balochistan, who traveled today due to the demise of his mother. Yesterday, the Supreme Court's Constitutional bench adjourned the hearing of review petitions against the verdict on reserved seats until June 23. The eleven-member bench, headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, heard the case.

Representing Kanwal Shauzab, senior lawyer Salman Akram Raja

argued that Article 184(3) of the Constitution empowers the Supreme Court to act in the public interest and for the protection of fundamental rights, particularly in exceptional circumstances. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail concurred, stating that the Supreme Court must act if there is a constitutional violation even in the absence of a specific article. However, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar noted that Article 199 cannot be read in conjunction with Article 187, as the Supreme Court does not possess the same jurisdiction as the high courts under Article 199. Raja responded that the Supreme Court has broad constitutional powers which can be exercised wherever necessary.

Justice Mandokhail inquired whether the original verdict on reserved

seats involved any constitutional or legal violation. Raja replied in the negative but explained that independent candidates were allowed to join political parties within 15 days instead of three, as no alternative was available under existing law.

During the hearing, Justice Mandokhail pointed out that reserved seats relate to both minorities and the general public, to which Raja affirmed, adding that the general electorate's role is equally important. Justice Najafi asked whether securing reserved seats is a fundamental right of political parties. Raja asserted that the public, through their votes, essentially endorse reserved seats as well, making it a fundamental right of parties, albeit one regulated by law. The court then adjourned the hearing until June 23.

Belarus Opp leader freed from jail after US mediation

WARSAW (AFP): Belarus's top jailed opposition leader Sergei Tikhanovsky was freed alongside over a dozen other political prisoners on Saturday in a surprise release hailed as a "symbol of hope." His wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, who took the mantle of the opposition after his jailing, said the United States helped broker the deal and thanked US President Donald Trump.

Tikhanovsky, 46, had been imprisoned for more than five years. He planned to run against incumbent Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko in the August 2020 presidential election, but was arrested and detained weeks before the vote. Svetlana — a political novice at the time of his arrest — took his place in the polls.

She posted a video on Saturday of her embracing Tikhanovsky after his release with the caption: "FREE." "It's hard to describe the joy in my heart," she said in a post on X. Thirteen others were released, including Radio Liberty journalist Igor Karnei, who was arrested in

2023 and jailed for participating in an "extremist" organization. They have now been transferred from Belarus to Lithuania, where they are receiving "proper care," Lithuanian foreign minister Kestutis Budrys said.

The announcement came just hours after Lukashenko met US special envoy Keith Kellogg in Minsk, the highest profile visit of a US official to the authoritarian state in years. Belarus, ruled by Lukashenko since 1994, has outlawed all genuine opposition parties and is the only European country to retain the death penalty as a punishment. The eastern European country still holds over 1,000 political prisoners in its jails, according to Viasna.

Swedish-Belarusian citizen Galina Krasnyanskaya, arrested in 2023 for allegedly supporting Ukraine, was also freed, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said. The release comes amid a broader warming of relations between the United States and Belarus's chief ally Russia under Trump.

US judge blocks Trump's bid to ban Harvard from enrolling foreign students

WASHINGTON: A federal judge in the United States has blocked President Donald Trump's bid to block Harvard from enrolling foreign students, delivering the prestigious university another victory as it challenges multiple government sanctions amid a battle with the White House.

Friday's order by District Judge Allison Burroughs in Boston preserves Harvard's ability to host international students while a lawsuit filed by the Ivy League school plays out in the courts. Burroughs, however, added that the federal government still had the authority to review Harvard's foreign admission policies through normal processes outlined in law.

Harvard found itself

embroiled in a polarising debate about academic freedom and the right to protest against Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza as its pro-Palestine students demanded full disclosure of the country's oldest and wealthiest university's investments in companies linked to Israel and divestment from those companies. Trump and his allies claim that Harvard, and other US universities that saw similar protests, are unaccountable bastions of liberal, anti-conservative bias and "anti-Semitism".

In May, Harvard sued the Department of Homeland Security after the agency abruptly withdrew the school's certification to enrol foreign students and issue paperwork for their visas, skirting most of its usual proce-

dures. The action would have forced Harvard's roughly 7,000 international students — about a quarter of its total enrolment and a major source of income — to transfer or risk being in the US without the necessary documents. New foreign students would have been barred from coming to Harvard.

The university said it was experiencing illegal retaliation for rejecting the White House's demands to overhaul Harvard policies related to campus protests, admissions and hiring. Trump, who has cut about \$3.2bn of federal grants for Harvard and tried numerous tactics to block the institution from hosting international students, said that his administration has been holding negotiations with Harvard. — Aljazeera



TEL AVIV: Israeli emergency personnel assisting a person after Iranian strike in Ramat Gan.

Tarar visits Tiktoker Sana Yousuf residence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Saturday that Sana Yousuf's murder should be a test case so that no-one in future can dare commit such a crime.

Talking to media during his visit to the residence of murdered Tiktoker Sana Yousuf, he said the entire nation was saddened by her murder. Expressing his condolences to the family, he said the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister had taken strict notice of the murder of Sana Yousuf.

The minister said that the culprit should get the strictest punishment to make him an example. He said a legal team will be formed to take the case to its logical conclusion. He hoped there will be no lacuna in prosecution and trial process and he will be given exemplary punishment.

To a question, he said social media platforms should be used responsibly and their negative use should be discouraged. He said there was a need for legislation to provide protection to young girls. "We have to provide a safe environment for our girls to empower them," Attaullah Tarar remarked. He said that Islamabad Police had arrested the accused within few hours after the crime which was worth appreciation.

PTI politics disgrace to public mandate: Muqam

F.P. Report

SWABI: Federal Minister for States and Frontier and Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs Engr Amir Muqam on Saturday accused the current provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for doing is an insult to democracy and a disgrace to the public mandate.

He was addressing at Swabi District Bar and Totali (Buner) Tehsil Bar Associations. "Lawyers have always upheld the flag of the Constitution, democracy, and justice. Their welfare is a government priority." Timely decisions by the federal government saved the country from default, and economic stability is returning.

The Federal Minister said we are saddened by the martyrdom of Muslims in Israeli attacks on Iran. The sentiments of the Muslim Ummah have been deeply hurt and the entire Muslim world must unite to support the oppressed. He thanked the legal community, political leaders, and district administration, saying the presence of all political parties added dignity to the event. He called Swabi his second home and emphasized staying in touch with the public.

Engineer Amir Muqam administered the oath to the newly elected cabinet of the District Bar Association and congratulated them. The cabinet includes President Tayyab Zaman, Vice President Muzammil Khan, General Secretary Safdar Zaib Joint Secretary: Adnan Haider, Finance Secretary: Daulat Khan and Library Secretary Fida Muhammad. In his speech, Engineer Muqam said the legal fraternity has always played a vital role in protecting the Constitution, law, and democracy.

Fresh Israeli attacks kill 26 people in Gaza

GAZA: At least 26 people, including more aid seekers, have been killed in the latest Israeli attacks on Gaza. The attacks come as desperate Palestinians under Israeli blockade continue to wait at food distribution points amid an ongoing hunger crisis.

Among those killed during Israeli attacks on the besieged enclave on Saturday, 11 were aid recipients at distribution centres run by the United States-and-Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which the United Nations has condemned for its "weaponisation" of aid. Meanwhile, Wafa news agency reported that at least three people were killed and several others wounded by an Israeli drone strike that targeted displaced Palestinians in al-Mawasi, southern Gaza.

The report said that the attack targeted a tent sheltering displaced members of the Shurrab family. The tent was located in an area the Israeli military had previously designated as a "safe zone". In

the last 48 hours, at least 202 people have been killed, including four recovered bodies after Israeli attacks, and 1,037 wounded by Israeli attacks across Gaza, the Health Ministry reported.

Since Israel launched its war on Gaza in October 2023, at least 55,908 people have been killed, and 131,138 have been wounded in Israeli attacks. In recent days, Israeli attacks on aid distribution sites in Gaza have ramped up as thousands of Palestinians gather daily in the hope of receiving food rations following a two-month Israeli blockade of aid deliveries. On Saturday, three people were killed at a GHF site in Khan Younis after Israeli forces opened fire. Several people were also wounded and taken to medical facilities.

Omar al-Hobi, a displaced Palestinian in Khan Younis, told Al Jazeera from a hospital that walking to those sites means you "enter the point of death". "I call it the point of death. The tank is in front of us, the machinegun is in front

of us, and the quadcopter is above us, and there are soldiers on the ground with snipers. Anyone who moves before the time is shot, and the moment the tank retreats, we start running," al-Hobi said. Israel claims its attacks at the aid sites have been to control crowds, but witnesses and humanitarian groups have said that many of the shootings took place unprovoked, resulting in hundreds of casualties.

The Red Cross said on Thursday, the "vast majority" of patients who arrived at its field hospital in the enclave since the GHF aid system began at the end of last month had reported that they were wounded while trying to access aid or around distribution points. Meanwhile, Wafa, citing the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority in the Gaza Strip, reports that there has been a disruption in internet and landline services affecting the governorates of Gaza, which include Gaza City, and north Gaza. — Aljazeera

Four bodies found in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police officials claimed to have found dead bodies of four persons including two army personnel in the mountainous Babuzai area of tehsil Katlang. The Mudasir Khan-Station House Officer- of relevant Baizai police station on Saturday said that they found four dead bodies laying in the mountainous area Babuzai village.

The preliminary investigations conducted by officials of police and counter terrorism department revealed that the slain four persons were allegedly killed by members of Fithna- Alkhwarij-led by Commander Abdul Hameed Hamasi. Mutilated bodies of four people were shifted to Katlang Type D Hospital for postmortem. Among the deceased, one was a local youth while the other three belonged to different districts of the province.

According to the police, the incident took place within the limits of Baizai police station when locals spotted the bodies in the Babuzai mountainous locality and informed the police. After getting information about the dead bodies, the police rushed to the spot and took the dead bodies into custody and shifted them to the hospital. The deceased was identified as Hammad Ghafoor, son of Raham Ghafoor, a resident of Babuzai and owner of a crushing plant. According to sources, he was abducted by unknown persons four days ago.

Other deceased include Zubair Afridi son of Fazal Akbar (resident of Bara), who was known as the head of Aman Lashkar while the other two were identified as Pakistan army Subhiddar Shafiq Ahmad Zar Muhammad, resident of Haripur and Subhiddar Shahab-u-Din son of Muhammad Din, resident

of Dir. The officials said that the victims were killed two to three days ago and their bodies were dumped in a mountainous area, and the bodies were found in a very bad condition.

Hammad Ghafoor's funeral prayers were offered in his native village of Babuzai, while the funeral prayers of the other victims were offered in Nowshera. According to the district police spokesperson, a search operation has been launched by cordoning off the area after the incident. A case has been registered with the CTD and investigation is underway. The police have collected evidence and are searching for the unknown suspects from various angles. The CTD officials nominated six alleged members of Fithna- Alkhwarij in the FIR who were identified as Qasim, Usman, Umar Sadiq, Zahid Khan, Muhammad Umar Khan and Mudasir.

Israel launches

(Continued from Page 1)

could not independently verify casualty figures for either side. Iran has repeatedly targeted Tel Aviv, a metropolitan area of around 4 million people and the country's business and economic hub, where some critical military assets are also located.

Israel said it had struck dozens of military targets on Friday, including missile production sites, a research body it said was involved in nuclear weapons development in Tehran and military facilities in western and central Iran. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said there was no room for negotiations with the US "until Israeli aggression stops". But he arrived in Geneva on Friday for talks with European foreign ministers at which Europe hopes to establish a path back to diplomacy.

US President Donald Trump on Friday reiterated that he would take as long as two weeks to decide whether the United States should enter the conflict on Israel's side, enough time "to see whether or not people come to their senses", he said. Trump said he was unlikely to press Israel to scale back its airstrikes to allow negotiations to continue.

"I think it's very hard to make that request right now. If somebody is win-

ning, it's a little bit harder to do than if somebody is losing, but we're ready, willing and able, and we've been speaking to Iran, and we'll see what happens," he said. The Geneva talks produced little signs of progress, and Trump said he doubted negotiators would be able to secure a ceasefire. "Iran doesn't want to speak to Europe. They want to speak to us. Europe is not going to be able to help in this one," Trump said.

Hundreds of US citizens have fled Iran since the air war began, according to a US State Department cable seen by Reuters. Israel's envoy to the United Nations, Danny Danon, told the Security Council on Friday his country would not stop its attacks "until Iran's nuclear threat is dismantled".

Iran's UN envoy Amir Saied Iravani called for Security Council action and said Tehran was alarmed by reports that the US might join the war. Russia and China demanded immediate de-escalation. A senior Iranian official said that Iran was ready to discuss limitations on uranium enrichment but that it would reject any proposal that barred it from enriching uranium completely, "especially now under Israel's strikes". — Arab News