

Ruet body to meet today
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee has been summoned in Quetta on June 26 (Thursday) for the sighting of Muharram ul Haram crescent. An official notification said that Chairman of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad will chair the meeting. Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committees will also meet separately today.

Earthquake jolts Swat
F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: An earthquake measuring 4.6 on the Richter scale rattled Swat and its surroundings, a Met Office report said on Wednesday. Tremors were felt in Mingora and surrounding areas, prompting residents to rush out of their homes and workplaces in fear. The epicenter of the earthquake was located in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, with a depth of 51 kilometers beneath the earth's surface.

Funeral prayer of martyred Major offered

F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: Funeral prayer of Major Syed Moiz Abbas Shah Shaheed (age; 37 years, resident of District Chakwal) who embraced martyrdom in an operation while bravely fighting against Indian sponsored Fitna al Khawarij in Sararogha, South Waziristan District, was offered at Chaklala Garrison, Rawalpindi.
Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) Chief of Army Staff, Federal Minister for Interior, Senior serving Military and Civil Officials, officers and soldiers attended the funeral.
"Major Syed Moiz Abbas fought bravely in the face of resistance and ultimately laid down his life in the line of duty, upholding the highest traditions of bravery, sacrifice, and patriotism. The entire nation stands united in grief and pride, saluting his



ultimate sacrifice for the defence of the country. We owe an eternal debt to our martyrs. The blood of our Shuhada is the foundation of our nation's strength". COAS said. The body of Shaheed has been taken to his native home town where he will be laid to rest with full military honours.

PM reaffirms govt's commitment to revitalize agriculture sector

Saqib Mushtaq
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to revitalizing the agriculture sector by introducing sustainable reforms in the sector. Describing the agriculture sector as the backbone of the national economy, the prime minister emphasized that the introduction of sustainable reforms in agriculture will not only boost the country's economic development but also significantly enhance per-acre yield and reduce production costs.
Chairing a high-level meeting on agricultural sector reforms, the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to gradually reduce taxes on agricultural machinery and tools in order to encourage farm mechanization across the country. He also instructed to expedite efforts aimed at increasing the storage capacity for agricultural produce.
PM Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the provision of funds by provincial governments for new agricultural projects, stating that these initiatives would play a key role in accelerating sectoral growth. He expressed optimism that the agriculture students and scientists currently pursuing scholar-

ships in China would contribute to the sector's development as entrepreneurs upon their return.
He informed that no new taxes were being imposed on fertilizers or agricultural pesticides in the upcoming fiscal year, reaffirming the government's commitment to support farmers and keep input costs manageable. The prime minister noted that the development of the agriculture sector would directly benefit farmers and uplift rural communities across the country. He stressed that increasing agricultural productivity, modernizing infrastructure, and facilitating access to affordable credit were all crucial pillars of the reform agenda.
During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on key recommendations focused on increasing agricultural output, improving infrastructure, and expanding farmers' access to easy agri-loans. The briefing highlighted the National Agriculture Innovation and Growth Action Plan, which aimed to raise farmers' incomes, boost production, and steer reforms in the right direction.
It was also shared that increasing exports of value-added agricultural products would further enhance farmers' earnings. Under the National Technology Fund's project Ignite, a total of 129 agricultural start-ups have been launched to date, aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the sector.
The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Climate Change Dr. Musadik Malik, PM's Chief Coordinator Musharraf Zaidi, Chief Coordinator for Agriculture Sector Ahmad Umair, as well as private sector entrepreneurs and senior government officials.
Provision of relief, uninterrupted power supply to industries among top priorities: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that provision of relief to the public and uninterrupted power supply to industries, through reforms in the power sector, were among the top priorities. The prime minister chaired a review meeting on the ongoing power sector reforms.
The prime minister directed swift completion of the second and third phases of the privatization of loss-making GENCOs and further instructed that the GENCOs' auction process should be broadcast live on media, just like other privatization programmes, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The prime minister emphasized expediting the privatization of power distribution companies.

UAE, Pakistan strengthen strategic ties at 12th Joint Ministerial Commission

F.P. Report
ABU DHABI: In a significant step towards deepening bilateral relations, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Pakistan concluded the 12th session of the UAE-Pakistan Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday. The session was co-chaired by H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.
The high-level meeting underscored the commitment of both nations to expand cooperation across political, economic, and technological domains. At the conclusion of the session, the two sides signed the official minutes of the 12th JMC, along with several landmark agreements aimed at enhancing strategic collaboration.
Among the highlights was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the mutual exemption of entry visa requirements, facilitating easier mobility for nationals of both countries. This is expected to further boost people-to-people ties, tourism, and business exchanges.



In a bid to bolster economic cooperation, the two countries also inked a MoU establishing a joint task force focused on promoting UAE investments in Pakistan's strategic sectors. The agreement was signed by UAE's Minister of Investment, Mohamed Hassan Al Suwaidi, and Pakistan's Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Tariq Bajwa. Recognizing the importance of innovation and technology, both sides witnessed the signing of an agreement on cooperation in artificial intelligence (AI) and the digital economy. This pact was signed by Mohamed Hassan Al Suwaidi and Zarar Hashim Khan, Federal Secretary of Pakistan's Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications.
Speaking at the session, UAE Minister of State Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh emphasized the enduring strength of UAE-Pakistan relations, which date back to the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1971. He described Pakistan as a long-standing partner and lauded the consistent growth in bilateral trade, with non-oil trade volumes exceeding US\$8.6 billion in 2024.
"The Joint Ministerial Commission reflects our shared commitment to a future of mutual prosperity and strategic cooperation," said Al Sayegh. He praised Senator Ishaq Dar for his dedication to advancing bilateral relations and reaffirmed the UAE's readiness to explore new avenues of partnership.
The session was attended by several senior officials from both countries, including Saeed Mubarak Al Hajeri, Omran Sharaf, Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi, and other key members of the UAE and Pakistani delegations. The agreements signed during the session signal a renewed momentum in UAE-Pakistan relations, with both nations pledging to intensify collaboration in investment, digital transformation, and mobility. As both countries look toward a shared future marked by innovation and inclusive growth, the 12th JMC serves as a cornerstone for a strengthened and more dynamic bilateral relationship.

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Iranian parliament passes bill to halt IAEA cooperation

TEHRAN: Iran's parliament has passed a bill that would effectively suspend the country's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as Iran insists it will not give up its civilian nuclear programme in the wake of massive attacks on the country by Israel and the United States.
The move on Wednesday comes after a US and Qatar-brokered ceasefire between Iran and Israel ended 12 days of fierce hostilities – including an intensive US military intervention that struck three Iranian nuclear facilities on Sunday. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told Al Jazeera in an exclusive interview on Wednesday that parliament voted to suspend – but not end – cooperation with the IAEA, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog.
He said the US had "torpedoed diplomacy" and could no longer be trusted, citing extensive damage to nuclear infrastructure. He reaffirmed Iran's right to pursue peaceful nuclear

energy under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Addressing the parliamentary bill, Baghaei said it sets conditions for Iran's future engagement with the IAEA, including guarantees for the safety and security of Iranian scientists and nuclear facilities.
Ahead of Wednesday's vote, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf criticised the IAEA for having "refused to even pretend to condemn the attack on Iran's nuclear facilities" that the US carried out. "For this reason, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran will suspend cooperation with the IAEA until security of nuclear facilities is ensured, and Iran's peaceful nuclear programme will move forward at a faster pace," Ghalibaf told lawmakers.
Iran has long maintained that its nuclear programme was peaceful, and both US intelligence agencies and the IAEA had concluded that Tehran is not actively pursuing a bomb. IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi said

he had already written to Iran to discuss resuming inspections of the country's nuclear facilities.
Iran claims to have moved its highly enriched uranium ahead of the US strikes, and Grossi said his inspectors need to reassess the country's stockpiles. "We need to return," he said. "We need to engage." But given that Tehran has castigated Grossi for the IAEA's censure of Iran the day before Israel attacked on June 13, and his subsequent comments during the conflict, that seems unlikely to happen anytime soon.
Al Jazeera's Ali Hashem, reporting from Tehran, said it is "clear that Iran's nuclear programme will continue despite everything that has happened". Hashem said the bill will now go to the Guardian Council, which will study it "legally and religiously". "If there is consensus in the body, the bill will go to the Supreme National Security Council to be approved and finally to the government to become policy," he added.

Saif says KP budget passed to thwart conspiracies

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, stated that the provincial budget had been conditionally approved and rejected the narrative linking this approval with sidelining Imran Khan. He emphasized that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) remains fully committed to following Imran Khan's directives, adding that every decision made by Imran Khan is deeply respected by the party leadership.
Dr. Saif further stated that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, acting on the instructions of Imran Khan, has approached the Supreme Court to seek permission for a meeting with the PTI Chairman. He expressed hope that the meeting would take place soon. Following the meeting, any changes in the budget will be made strictly in accordance with Imran Khan's guidance.
He clarified that the decision to approve the budget was aimed at thwarting the conspiracies of opposition forces, who were seeking to create a constitutional crisis in the province by blocking the budget and pushing for emergency rule. He asserted that had the budget not been passed, the opposition would have succeeded in its objectives.

President vows to eradicate drug abuse

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, in his message on the occasion of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, on Wednesday reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to eliminating narcotics from the society and called for a united front in the fight against drug abuse.
Marking the day with this year's global theme, "Breaking the Chain: Prevention and Recovery for All," President Zardari emphasized the urgent need for dismantling drug networks and adopting a comprehensive approach that prioritizes prevention, education, treatment and law enforcement.
"Drug abuse and illicit trafficking remain global challenges that demand unified and sustained international cooperation," the President said, highlighting Pakistan's ongoing efforts and support for international and multilateral initiatives to combat narcotics.
President Zardari lauded the role of the Anti-Narcotics Force, operating under the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control, for its dedication and achievements in curbing the drug trade. "We must raise awareness and educate our citizens, especially the younger generation, about the dangers of drug abuse to build a safer and healthier society," he added.

Israel and Iran are 'both tired', says Trump

US President praises Field Marshal Asim Munir, says US ended Pakistan-India war; US to hold talks with Iran as 'war is over'

THE HAGUE (Reuters): US President Donald Trump has announced that the United States will begin talks with Iran following the recently agreed ceasefire between Israel and Iran.
Speaking at the NATO summit in The Hague, Trump said, "We're going to talk to them next week. We may sign an agreement. I don't know. To me, I don't think that's necessary." He added that he might seek assurances from Iran that it won't pursue nuclear weapons, though he believes Iran is not moving in that direction: "They've had it."



Reflecting on the end of the 12-day conflict between Israel and Iran, Trump declared, "We think it's over. I don't think they're going to be going back at each other." He described both nations as "tired and exhausted" from the intense and violent fighting. "They fought very hard, and they were both satisfied to go home," he said, though he acknowledged the possibility of future flare-ups.
Commenting on the Iranian missile strike on the US base in Qatar, Trump confirmed that all 14 missiles were intercepted. "They were very nice. They gave us warning. They said, 'We're going to shoot them. Is 1 p.m. okay?'" he added, noting that the base was evacuated in time except for the gunners.

During the conversation, the US President also said that Field Marshal Asim Munir is a remarkable person and an inspiring personality, and that he had visited him at his office. During the press conference, he reiterated that it was the US that ended the war between Pakistan and India. He emphasised that both countries are major nuclear powers and stated that he told both India and Pakistan to focus on trade. US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday after talks with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky that he is considering sending more Patriot missile batteries to Ukraine to help Kyiv fend off Russian attacks.
Trump said the anti-missile missiles are "very hard to get" but that "we are going to see if we can make some of them available." Trump, at a press conference after attending the annual NATO summit, said Zelensky would like to end the war.

'US strikes failed to destroy Iran's nuclear sites'

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US airstrikes did not destroy Iran's nuclear capability and only set it back by a few months, according to a preliminary US intelligence assessment, as a shaky ceasefire brokered by US President Donald Trump took hold between Iran and Israel.
Earlier on Tuesday, both Iran and Israel signaled that the air war between the two nations had ended, at least for now, after Trump publicly scolded them for violating a ceasefire he announced at 5am GMT (10am PKT). As the two countries lifted civilian restrictions after 12 days of war — which the US joined with an attack on Iran's uranium-enrichment facilities — each sought to claim victory. Trump said over the weekend that the US deployment of 30,000-pound bombs had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear programme. But that claim appeared to be contradicted by an initial assessment by one of his administration's intelligence agencies, according to three people familiar with the matter.

FBI seizes Jalil Afridi press badge outside State Dept

F.P. Report
WASHINGTON, D.C.: Veteran journalist Muhammad Jalil Afridi, Managing Editor of *The Frontier Post*, is calling for an investigation after being briefly detained by ICE and then having his official State Department press credential seized by FBI agents — just moments after attending a press briefing at the US State Department.
The incident occurred directly outside the State Department building in Washington, D.C., where Afridi had just exited a regularly scheduled press event on Tuesday June 24, 2025. FBI agents, who were present during his detainment, confiscated his press badge on the spot. No charges were filed against him, and no explanation was given for the seizure of his credentials.
Afridi, a US-educated journalist with over 25 years of reporting experience and no criminal history, has long attended press briefings at the White House, Pentagon, and State Department. He believes the actions taken against him are politically motivated retaliation tied to his critical reporting.

Afridi has frequently criticized the Trump administration's foreign policy approach toward Pakistan, particularly what he sees as a flawed preference for building ties with Pakistan's military establishment over its civilian leadership. He has warned that this policy undermines democratic progress and fuels internal instability in the region.
In addition, Afridi has raised public concerns about the involvement of Donald Trump Jr. and the son of real estate developer Steve Witkoff in launching a cryptocurrency business in Pakistan. He alleges that the initiative could open financial pathways for Pakistan and Afghanistan's estimated \$10 billion narcotics trade to be funneled through crypto transactions, effectively masking illicit flows under the pretext of digital finance.
"I was released without charges, yet the FBI took away my press credentials immediately after taking me into custody," Afridi stated in formal appeals to the FBI, the State Department, the Department of Justice Inspector General, and the Committee to Protect



Journalists. "This is not just a personal attack—it's a warning shot to all independent journalists."
Afridi is now seeking full reinstatement of his credentials and an official investigation into what he sees as a dangerous precedent against press freedom in the United States. The FBI's direct involvement, particularly in the absence of due process, will draw serious concern from media watchdogs.

LIFE

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11:00 AM
12:00 PM

26

June

2025

**The International Day
Against Drug Abuse
and Illicit Trafficking**



Let us jointly pledge today that

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narcotics and will continue our efforts and struggle to
eradicate this menace from our country.

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P/D(1)8926-D/24

Tordher chairs workshop on promotion of electric vehicles

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher has said that the world is moving towards environmentally friendly transport solutions and the promotion of electric vehicles (EVs) is a significant step in this direction. He said that sincere policy-making efforts in Pakistan is a positive step in this regard, but emphasized the urgent need for a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework to ensure effective implementation.

He expressed these views while addressing a high-level workshop held at the Civil Secretariat in Peshawar, regarding the recently introduced five-year National Electric Vehicle Policy (2025-2030), aimed at promoting electric mobility and eco-friendly transport across the country.

The workshop was organized to raise awareness about the new national policy and to strengthen coordination between federal and provincial governments. The session was jointly presided over by Special Assistants to the Chief Minister for



Industries, Abdul Karim Tordher, and for Transport, Rangez Khan, along with Federal Secretary for Industries and Production, Saif Anjum.

On this occasion, Mr. Anjum presented a detailed presentation on the new policy, covering its framework, strategic objectives, expected benefits, institutional mechanisms and the roadmap for implementation. Participants actively contributed suggestions for further improving the policy.

The workshop was attended by Additional Chief Secretary Planning & Development Department Ikramullah, Secretary Planning and Development Department Adeel Shah, Secretary Transport Masood Younas, along with other senior officials, representatives from federal and provincial departments, industrialists,

business leaders, President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Muqem, representatives from traders' associations and other key stakeholders.

Under the new five-year policy, a target has been set to convert 30% of the country's vehicles to electric by 2030. To support this transition, 3,000 electric vehicle charging stations will be established nationwide.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant, Abdul Karim Tordher noted that although the new policy was brought for consultation process in a short time, it still represents a positive step toward environmental protection. He stressed the importance of developing local manufacturing capabilities for electric vehicles, particularly in the production of lithium batteries. He called for the intro-

duction of investor-friendly models and transparent leasing mechanisms to promote local industry for battery manufacturing.

He further stressed the need for a robust regulatory system to address issues such as battery lifespan, safe disposal after use and potential environmental impacts. He also highlighted the importance of a transparent policy on the location, accessibility and operational protocols of charging stations. Karim Tordher assured that the Industries Department, through the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade, would maintain close liaison with federal agencies in case of any coordination at the provincial level.

On this occasion, Special Assistant for Transport Rangez Khan stated that the subsidies offered in the policy for two- and three-wheeled electric vehicles would benefit low-income individuals, provided that charging stations are made available in rural areas. He proposed that all procedures related to the establishment of EV charging stations be completed through a one-window operation to facilitate both investors and consumers.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Education Faisal Khan Tarakai chairing meeting regarding appointments of teachers.

ATC adjourns hearing till 10 July in Kamran Bangash case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar Judge Asad Ali adjourned the hearing of the case against former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister Kamran Bangash until July 10 due to the prosecution's failure to present the case property.

According to prosecu-

tion, on December 20, 2023, Chamkani police raided Kamran Bangash's hujra in an attempt to arrest PTI leader Murad Saeed.

During the raid, police officials were fired upon, resulting in two injuries. ATC judge Asad Ali initiated the hearing, during which witnesses testified.

However, the case property was not presented in court, preventing the hearing from being concluded. Police registered a case against Kamran Bangash and his associates under various sections, including terrorism.

The police completed the investigation and submitted the challan to the court, leading to the com-

mencement of the trial. A notice was issued to prosecution to present the case property in court.

Former Minister Kamran Bangash was framed charges, which he denied.

ATC will heard the case again on July 10, when the court will consider the case property and witness testimonies.

KP health sector reform prioritized: CS Shahab Ali Shah

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shahab Ali Shah, chaired a high-level meeting to review the Health Department's Good Governance Roadmap, declaring the health sector a top priority for governance reform and public service delivery.

During the meeting, a detailed presentation outlined the department's roadmap initiatives aimed at strengthening healthcare services at all tiers of the health system.

A roll-out conference for Governance Roadmap is planned in the coming days to engage all stakeholders and ensure province-wide implementation of the roadmap.

One of the flagship interventions includes expanding 24/7 Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) services to 250 Primary Healthcare (PHC) facilities.

To enhance service delivery at PHC level, the roadmap mandates full availability of essential

medicines and 100% functionality of infrastructure and biomedical equipment.

The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) will be reinforced, and polio eradication efforts will be integrated into routine outreach services.

Family Planning commodities will be procured via the Population Welfare Department and made available in 100% of PHC facilities.

Tertiary healthcare services will be upgraded through the establishment of Level-3 Trauma Centers and provision of Mammography services at regional District Headquarters Hospitals (DHQs).

Neonatal care capacity will be strengthened by setting up 10 Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) and newborn nurseries across DHQs.

A legal framework is being developed for structured postgraduate medical and dental education with a focus on deploying trained professionals to PHC facilities.

The Health Department will fully implement a

Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), ensuring coverage of all staff and enabling data-driven workforce decisions.

The roadmap targets 90% occupancy of managerial positions on a regular charge basis and biometric verification to ensure maximum attendance of doctors, midwives, and paramedics at primary and secondary healthcare facilities.

To digitize governance and clinical oversight, the KP-Health Information and Service Delivery Unit will be established across the province.

Monitoring capacity will be enhanced through the expansion of Independent Monitoring Unit (IMU) staff to merged districts.

The KP Health Sector Policy 2018 will be revised following extensive stakeholder consultations.

The Health Sector Reform Unit (HSRU) will be restructured to enhance technical capacity and achieve full operationalization.

The Health Care

Commission will be revitalized through legal reforms and capacity building in licensing, certification, and facility accreditation.

The Health Foundation will be strengthened to support Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and improve health contract management systems.

Policy guidelines will be developed to institutionalize oversight and performance accountability mechanisms in Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs).

A major transition will shift management of 54 Category-D hospitals to the private sector through PPPs, along with outsourcing of 20 additional DHQs and THQs.

Uninterrupted insulin supply will be ensured through the provincial Diabetes Control Program.

Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah emphasized that these reforms will strengthen healthcare delivery at the grassroots level and deliver long-term benefits to communities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah chairing a meeting on health department's governance roadmap initiatives.

MoU signed between University of Agriculture and Agri Direct

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A ceremony was held to sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the University of Agriculture Peshawar and Agri Direct Private Limited.

Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Peshawar, Prof. Emeritus Dr. Jehan Bakht and Chief Executive Officer of Agri Direct Private Limited, Shahroz Khattak, signed the MoU.

The purpose of this MoU is to establish a framework for collaboration between the University of Agriculture Peshawar and Agri Direct in areas of mutual interest,

particularly in: Agricultural technology and digitalisation, climate change and food security research, Sustainable farming practices, students engagement and internships, knowledge transfer and innovation.

Dean Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences Prof. Dr. Abdul Rahman, Director ORIC and Focal Person Prof. Dr. Muhammad Arif, Director Climate Change Sciences Prof. Dr. Humayun Khan, Director Advanced Studies and Research Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sajid, Controller of Examinations Dr. Saad Saud-ur-Rahman, Dr. Ishiaq Khan, Dr. Mudassar Iqbal, Dr. Farhan Anwar and Focal Person

Agri Direct Private Limited Arsalan Khattak were present at the event. Vice Chancellor Prof. Emeritus Dr. Jehan Bakht said that this agreement will yield long-term results. He said that the mission of the University of Agriculture Peshawar is quality education, research and excellent training.

The graduates of the University of Agriculture Peshawar are playing an important role in the development of agriculture and livestock at the provincial, national and international levels and expressed the hope that this cooperation will foster an atmosphere of educational and research development.



To boost exports, discuss policies and new regulations

GIZ and FPCCI organize training workshops

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR. In a bid to strengthen Pakistan's export sector, a series of training workshops have been jointly organized by the German development agency GIZ and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). The sessions focused on export enhancement strategies, policy reforms, and updates on newly introduced regulations.

Speaking at the event, GIZ official Ms. Saman Haseeb emphasized the importance of keeping the business community well-informed about evolving

national and international regulations. "Exporters must stay updated on current laws to remain competitive. Without awareness of the changing landscape, it is impossible to grow businesses sustainably," she noted.

Ms. Haseeb also highlighted the ongoing collaboration between Germany and Pakistan, under formal agreements at both governmental and institutional levels. She stated that the establishment of the Responsible Business Help Desk (RBH) is a major milestone, offering vital guidance and support to entrepreneurs across the country.

"We hope that, like Quetta, women from other cities and provinces will also take active roles in the export sector. We are committed to providing complete informational and moral support," she added during her address.

The workshop, held at a local hotel in Peshawar, was jointly organized by FPCCI's Peshawar regional office and GIZ. Participants included representatives from the Women Chamber of Commerce Peshawar, Sarhad Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Charsadda Chamber of Commerce, Kurram Chamber, and other

regional bodies.

Female entrepreneurs from Peshawar actively participated in the session, terming it a crucial initiative for export growth. The event emphasized the significant role women can play in trade and entrepreneurship, and encouraged them to make full use of resources such as the RBH.

Ms. Haseeb provided participants with a detailed briefing on the functioning and benefits of the Responsible Business Help Desk, urging the business community—both men and women—to utilize the platform to enhance their export potential.

KP's power woes: Schools, hospitals, businesses, residents bear brunt of loadshedding

PESHAWAR (APP): For residents of KP, power outages have become a daily torment rather than a minor inconvenience affecting almost all sectors of life.

As summer temperatures soar beyond 40°C, prolonged and unscheduled load-shedding in KP has badly affected daily life ie from homes to hospitals, transport to business and classrooms to commercial centers.

"I can't remember the last time we had uninterrupted electricity for more than a few hours," says Shaheen Bibi, a housewife at Pabbi Nowshera. "We now plan our entire day around the power outages as cooking, teaching, even sleeping depends on a schedule that changes without notice."

According to residents, some areas face up to 18 hours of load-shedding per day, often without prior intimation. Surrounding areas of Peshawar reportedly endure 12 to 14 hours of outages, pushing many to invest in solar panels, despite their high initial costs.

Low-income neighborhoods appear to be hit the hardest. Residents claim the outages are not only excessive but also discriminatory, disproportionately affecting those least equipped to cope.

For small business owners like Zubair Khan, a tailor in Faqirabad, the electricity crisis has become financially devastating.

"I have orders piling up ahead of Eid, but I can't work without power. I took a loan to buy a generator, but fuel prices are so high I

can't afford to run it all day," he laments.

Zubair now think to buy solar panel to continue his painstaking profession.

Like tailor Zubair, barbers, ice-cream vendors, bread makers, photocopy shop owners, meat sellers, and other small traders echo similar frustrations.

The frequent outages during peak business hours have led to lost income, spoilage of perishable goods, and growing customer dissatisfaction.

While major hospitals rely on generators, smaller clinics—especially in areas like Dabgari Gardens Peshawar—often operate under solar panels.

"Vaccines need refrigeration. Life-saving equipment needs electricity. How are we supposed to function?" asks Dr. Amir Shah, who runs a private clinic at Dabgari Garden.

Students, especially those preparing for board or university exams, are also bearing the brunt.

"It's impossible to study at night without light or a fan in such hot weather. Online classes during power cuts? That's a joke," says Azhar Khan, a third-year college student at Swati pattak.

Usman Zakriya, Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) attributed the extended outages to high line losses, overconsumption, and power theft cases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Areas with higher line losses and lower bill recovery face longer load-shedding," said a PESCO spokesperson. "This is necessary to manage the demand-supply gap and

provide uninterrupted power supply to law abiding consumers"

But residents say the policy is unjust and exploitative.

"Why should an entire neighborhood suffer because a few people steal electricity?" asks Zahid Rehman, a retired government employee. "It's the KP government's job to curb theft—not to punish those who pay their bills."

Frustration has spilled into the streets in different cities and towns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with traffic jams and protest rallies demanding fairer policies and reduction of load shedding hours.

Civil society leaders and political figures have joined the call for action and approached PESCO for relief.

Amid the energy crisis, officials hope long-term relief may come from major energy projects currently underway in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Chairman WAPDA Naveed Asghar Chaudhry visited the Dasu Hydropower Project on Tuesday to inspect progress at key construction sites, including the main dam, powerhouse, transformer cavern, and the relocated segment of the Karakoram Highway (KKH-1).

During a progress review meeting, the Chairman was briefed that work is currently active on 20 different sites. Excavation of both the right and left abutments of the dam has been completed.

The right-side bypass tunnel and open channel—

critical for diverting excess water during flood season—are also finished.

Excavation of the dam foundation is scheduled for completion by October 2025, with Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) placement expected to begin by March 2026.

The underground powerhouse and the 25-kilometer relocated KKH-1 (comprising seven tunnels and three bridges) are expected to be completed by early 2026. Power generation is projected to begin in 2027.

Chairman Chaudhry emphasized the strategic importance of Dasu for Pakistan's energy security and urged contractors to maintain international quality standards and meet deadlines.

The 4,320 MW Dasu Hydropower Project, being constructed on the River Indus in Upper Kohistan with support from the World Bank, is being developed in two stages. Stage I, currently underway, will produce 2,160 MW, generating 12 billion units of clean, affordable electricity annually.

An allocation of Rs. 17.34 billion has been made for local development through Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to uplift communities in the project area.

Construction work has also begun on the Mohmand Dam on the River Swat, which will contribute 800 MW upon completion. These mega projects are expected to significantly reduce load-shedding and provide flood protection in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



In brief

Shutter down strike observed F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A complete shutter-down strike was observed in all major and small markets across Lower and Upper Dir districts—except Adenzai tehsil—on Wednesday in protest against the federal government's proposed imposition of 10 percent sales and income taxes in the tax-exempt Malakand division. The strike, called by local traders' associations, was supported by political parties and civil society organizations as a show of resistance to what they termed an "unjust and unconstitutional" move by the federal government. Markets in Timergara, Talash, Khall, Munda, Samarbagh, Lal Qila, Kambat, and Rabat remained completely shut throughout the day. However, markets in Adenzai tehsil stayed open, as the local traders' body declined to participate in the strike, citing lack of consultation. Speaking to this reporter, Khwaja Faizul Ghafoor, president of Anjuman Tajiranj Chakdara, said the decision for the strike was conveyed too late for a consensus to be developed among the tehsil's 10,000 shopkeepers. He said that markets at Chakdara, Gulabad, Ouch, Asbnar and Badwan remained open. "We were informed late on Tuesday evening. It was practically impossible to convince such a large number of traders on short notice," he said. Nonetheless, he termed the government's tax proposal unconstitutional and expressed full support for future public resistance. Meanwhile, addressing reporters, Anjuman Tajiranj Timergara president Haji Anwaruddin and Talash bazaar president Dr. Noor Muhammad said the business community had unanimously rejected the tax plan. They warned that if the decision was not withdrawn, a wheel-jam strike would follow.

Setup of toll plaza rejected F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Establishing a toll plaza on Pak-Afghan highway, Khyber was unanimously rejected by the councilors in the tehsil council meeting held in jirga hall on Wednesday. It is to be mentioned here that NHA has planned to erect toll plazas on all major highways including Pak-Afghan highways. Chaired by presiding officer, Wali Muhammad Shinwari, the meeting was attended by Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) Shahbaz Khan, Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid besides a number of village and neighborhood councils chairmen and councilors of Landi Kotal sub-division. The local bodies' representatives thoroughly discussed the issue and collectively rejected the plan of structuring of toll plaza at Pak-Afghan road by the National Highway Authority. We will not let anyone steal our resources, they remarked. They went on that if attempted to forcibly materialize the plan in the area, they would effectively resist it, the councilors vowed. The councilors asked the provincial government to forthwith provide female teaching staff to twenty-three State-run girls' schools in Landi Kotal, suspended due to lack of female teachers. They also demanded the provincial government to reserve and bestow a twenty percent budget to the local bodies so that the counselors could play an effective role in the uplift of the people of their constituencies.

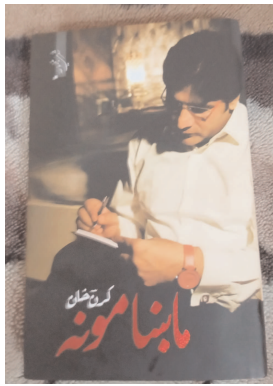
Noted folk artist's newly published volume of poetry earned fans' appreciation

Sher Alam Shinwari

LANDI KOTAL: Popular Pashto folk singer, Dr Karan Khan has recently brought out second poetry collection titled 'Makhmoonah' (The Evenings) after a gap of five years and gained widespread fame and appreciation from his large fans following and literary circles. Karan Khan had published his maiden Pashto poetry collection titled 'Meena Auo Mananana' which was well received by fans and literary critics owing to his creative and thematic approach.

The folk artist has done his doctoral thesis on modern poetic genres in Pashto literature four years ago from Pashto Academy University of Peshawar. Like his art of singing, his research on modern literary genres was termed a nexus between folk music and poetic tradition which rare in Pashto literature. Mr. Karan's love for music and poetry gave him an edge over to him when it came to contemporary Pashto folk singers.

A ceremony was arranged in a local college Hall here Saturday where newly published poetry collection titled 'Makhmoonah' by Dr Karan Khan was unveiled where poets, literary critics and fans showed up and shared their views and reviews on the artist's book. The pro-



gressive Pashto Society (PPS) arranged the event.

Participants while highlighting different aspects of Pashto poetry volume and the artist said both poetry and music are the powerful mediums for expressing emotions, thoughts and experiences as they have the capability to evoke strong feelings in the audience. Dr Karan Khan used vivid imagery to explore themes that resonate with audience, they remarked.

Prof. Yousafzai expressed that newly published poetry collection by Karan was a unique addition to Pashto literary tradition saying it carried a strong message for Pashtun audience urging them to engage youth in positive activities. The new collection contains ghazals in long and short rhymes with musical quality. Afsar Afghan, social media influencer and poet observed that Dr Karan Khan excelled both in folk music and modern

Pashto poetic tradition arguing that he had mastery over composition of tunes, rhyme and rhythm connecting the spirit of casting strong impact on audience.

"Most poems composed in free verse are drenched in romance, nostalgia, love for land people with stress on spreading love, peace and tolerance. The book under debate is a galaxy of beautiful thoughts composed in musical tunes," Mr Afghan remarked.

In his self addressed foreword 'Dr Karan Khan writes, in know this era is last epoch of reading books, I know youth have been overtaken by hi tech media and turned their back on books but still I want to bring them back to the pages of written words.'

"I am not favour of taking notes from literary critics as it might hurt readers or poetry itself as one great poetry lover once said 'you murder it when you explain poetry.' Nor I want to write a long commentary on my own poetry - suitable or superfluous contents. I strongly believe it is the ultimate voice of my heart," the artist says.

Spread over 172 pages, published by Gran Khparandoia Tolana, the poetry collection is available at bookstores across KP and Balochistan where fans can get its one copy for Rs 400 and though online addresses given on the back of the book.

Four pesons killed in different incidents

Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: A speeding car hit a loader rickshaw going to a vegetable market on the Larkana-Wagan road near village Bhatti, killing one person Gullan Khushik and seriously injuring two kashif Jatoti others. The injured were shifted to the trauma center in Larkana for treatment.

On the other hand, due to an old dispute between the Jeha and Dahani communities in the limits of Neodero near Larkana, people from the Dahani community opened fire in Sehwan city and killed Saeed Ahmed Jeho, a resident of Wasayo Jeha village near Nodero Larkana, who was riding in a car.

The accused fled after firing. Meanwhile, a 10-year-old boy, Ghulam Mustafa Junejo, a resident of village Sabal Junejo in the slum area near Larkana, drowned in the water after his feet slipped from the bank of the river while grazing goats. His body could not be recovered by rescue workers despite an extensive search.

The deceased a 14-year-old girl, Tayiba, born to Shahid Hussain Mohil, died due to an accidental gunshot wound in a house near Aisha Masjid in the Hadd Lahr Qanuni area of Haidari Police Station in Larkana city.

At that time, the relatives of the deceased girl told the media that the girl

lost her life due to firing from a loaded repeater in the house. Meanwhile, the police took the body of the deceased girl and handed it over to the relatives after necessary action.

National conference held: A major national conference on "Eliminating Malnutrition in Sindh" was organized by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University (SMBBMU) Larkana at Chandka Medical College, in which a large number of institutions and organizations related to health, nutrition, education, development, and civil society participated.

This conference was organized by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University Larkana, with financial support from the European Union and, under the leadership of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), Shah Latif University Khairpur MERE, SALU, BNBWU Sukkur, Ziauddin University Sukkur Campus, ZBIIST Larkana, Ghulam Muhammad Mahar Medical College Sukkur, PPHI, AAP Task Force, Health Department, and private sector organizations. The inaugural session of the conference was welcomed by SMBBMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nusrat Shah, while representatives of partner institutions and senior Faculty members

stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to address the issue of malnutrition.

During the conference, information stalls and poster exhibitions of civil society organizations (CSOs) were also set up, in which posters on community-level nutrition awareness, successful projects, and research posters on Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) were displayed.

Procession routes inspected F.P. Report

BANNU: Deputy Inspector General Bannu Sajjad accompanied by district police officer, visited Imambargah Hussainia, met with Shia scholars, and inspected the routes of the upcoming Muharram processions.

According to details, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Bannu Sajjad Khan, along with DPO Bannu Saleem Abbas Kulachi, visited Imambargah Hussainia within the jurisdiction of City Police Station. There, he met with Shia scholars and other community leaders. The RPO Bannu held detailed discussions with the Shia organizers regarding the security situation.

Mass wedding brings joy to 164 couples Anees Takar

CHARSADDA: The Department of Zakat Ushr and Social Welfare organized a mass wedding ceremony in Charsadda, where 164 orphaned and underprivileged couples were united in marriage. Held on Tuesday, the event was described as a practical move by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to simplify the process of marriage for those burdened by financial constraints.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah attended the event as chief guest. In his address he said that the initiative was a reflection of the provincial government's commitment to facilitating dignified lives for the poor and marginalized. "This mass wedding is not only a symbol of compassion but a demonstration of the government's dedication to easing the difficulties of marriage for orphans and needy families. It is part of a wider mission to organize such ceremonies across the province," he said.

The provincial government provided a grant of Rs. 200,000 to each couple to support their new beginnings. Minister Qasim Ali Shah also announced that every couple would be eligible to receive up to Rs. 500,000 in interest-free loans to start small businesses or generate sustainable income.

One of the grooms Jawad Ali shared his gratitude saying, "I wanted to get married but couldn't afford it. When I learned about the Social Welfare program, I applied. Today I not only got married with dignity but also received financial support. With the interest-free loan, I plan to open a shop for handmade footwear, a skill I already possess."

During the mass wedding ceremony in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah announced several new welfare schemes aimed at supporting vulnerable communities. These include the Sahara Card for widows providing a monthly stipend of Rs. 5,000, a child support program offering Rs. 5,000 monthly for orphaned children and the introduction of an Education Card through which persons with disabilities will receive Rs. 5,000 per month to support their education. Additionally, newlywed couples were offered interest-free loans of up to Rs. 500,000 to help them start small businesses and achieve financial independence.

The ceremony was attended by several dignitaries including Minister for Labour Fazal Shakoor Khan, Members of Provincial Assembly Arshad Khan Umarazi and Iftikhar Khan, Deputy Commissioner Qaiser Khan, Chairman of Provincial Zakat and Ushr Intiaz Khan, District Chairman of Charsadda Muzzamil Khan, Assistant Commissioner and other officials from relevant departments.

Malakand Division traders' strike brings Region to a standstill

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The Malakand Division came to a grinding halt on Tuesday as traders' organizations observed a complete strike against the imposition of taxes. Markets, factories, and commercial centers remained closed, with transporters also joining in to show their support.

The strike was called in protest against the federal government's decision to impose a 10% sales tax on traders in Malakand Division, as part of the new financial budget. Dr. Khalid Mahmood, spokesperson for the Malakand Division Traders' Federation, said that the traders are opposed

to the tax, citing the region's special status and historical agreements.

Al-Hajj Zahid Khan, President of the All Swat Hotels Association, emphasized that Malakand Division joined Pakistan in 1969 with the condition of being exempt from taxes. "We are not Pakistanis of August 14, 1947, but we are Pakistanis of July 28, 1969," he said, highlighting the region's unique history and agreements.

Abdul Rahim, President of the Malakand Division Traders' Association, expressed concerns about the government's decision to abolish the special status of Malakand Division and impose taxes without con-

sulting local leaders. He argued that the government is not doing enough for the region's development, while exploiting its natural resources.

The government claims that there are no other taxes in Malakand Division, but sales tax is levied on goods brought from other countries for business. However, traders argue that this move will further burden the local business community and hinder economic growth in the region.

The strike highlights the ongoing tensions between the traders and the government, with the traders determined to protect their rights and interests.

Kohat University secures second position

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) has once again achieved remarkable global recognition due to its commitment to academic excellence, research development, and alignment with international standards. In the prestigious Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2025, KUST has earned a notable placement based on its outstanding performance.

According to the latest rankings, KUST has been placed second among public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 29th among 120 universities nationwide, and within the 1001-1500 band globally among over 2,600 institutions. This remarkable achievement is a testament to KUST's continuous academic and research progress and highlights its dedication to advancing on the path of global excellence.

On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas extended heartfelt congratulations to all

Deans, the Registrar, Heads of Departments, Sectional Heads, faculty members, and students. He also appreciated the relentless efforts and dedication of Dr. Zeeshan Bangash, Director of the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC), and his team, whose hard work played a pivotal role in reaching this milestone.

Dr. Zeeshan Bangash stated, "This success is the result of collective efforts and teamwork across the university. We specifically focused on enhancing the quality of teaching, research, internationalization, and industry linkages, which have yielded positive outcomes. Our aim is to further improve our ranking next year and make KUST more prominent on the global academic map."

Olympic Day celebration week 2025 concluded: The colorful events of Olympic Day Celebration Week 2025 concluded at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). The closing ceremony began with an Olympic walk and flag hoisting ceremony, where

the Olympic flag was raised by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas and Registrar Zilladar Khan.

The event was attended by Vice Chancellor's Advisor on Education Taleem badshah, Dr. Jan Alam (In-Charge Co-Curricular Activities), Events Manager Hafiz Rubail Nazir, Director Sports Mr. Wajid Khan, faculty members, students, non-teaching staff.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas distributed trophies and certificates among students who excelled in various sports competitions. In his address, he emphasized the importance of promoting healthy activities, the role of sports in personality development, and the positive impact on youth. He appreciated the efforts of the Directorate of Sports and stressed the continuation of such activities in the future. Director Sports Mr. Wajid Khan stated that the primary objective of the week-long event was to promote discipline, teamwork, and a healthy lifestyle among students.

Security tightened for Muharram in Kohat

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has said that full-proof security arrangements have been made in all the districts of the division, including Kohat, Orakzai, Hangu and Kurram, for the upcoming Muharram-ul-Haram and he has personally visited each district along with the concerned Deputy Commissioners and officials of other concerned departments and has closely reviewed all the arrangements made in this regard.

This he said while addressing the Grand Divisional Aman Jirga held at Kohat Police Club in connection with the peaceful holding of Muharram-ul-Haram. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Shahab Ali Shah, Law Minister Aftab Alam Advocate, Members of the National Assembly, Shahryar Afridi, Hameed Hussain and Yousaf Khan, Members of the Provincial Assembly Shafi Jan, Aurangzeb Orakzai and Ali Hadi, IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed, DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, former Chief Justice Syed Ibne Ali and prominent Sunni and Shia leaders also addressed the Jirga and assured their full cooperation and role for the peaceful holding of the Muharram-ul-Haram.

On this occasion, GOC 9-Div Kohat Major General Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti, Deputy Commissioners and DPOs of Kohat, Kurram, Orakzai and Hangu districts, and Sunni and Shia Ulama and

elders of these districts were also present.

Commissioner Kohat said that before the today's Grand Peace Jirga, the peace Jirgas of Sunni and Shia Ulama and elders of the above districts were held there. In addition, two Ulama conferences, a youth conference, a peace committee conference and a divisional education conference have also been organized at the divisional headquarters, Kohat. Similarly, he has also conducted a detailed review of the security checks, the procession routes, cleanliness and other facilities in each district and in this regard, special meetings have been held with the relevant departments and institutions and responsibilities have been assigned to them.

KP's budget: A covenant of self-reliance and public welfare

Ghulam Hussain Ghazi

THE new fiscal budget of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for the FY 2025-26 is not merely an annual financial statement; rather, it embodies an extraordinary, forward-looking and realistic strategic vision. It has been presented under some of the most difficult economic, political and geographical circumstance, at a time when other provinces, particularly Punjab and Sindh, despite their abundant financial resources, are barely maintaining fiscal balance through federal assistance, loans and subsidies.

Yet, KP has demonstrated both wisdom and resolve by tabling a balanced and development-oriented budget. It stands as a shining example for others and reflects the farsightedness of the provincial cabinet under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

In an era when inflation has broken into every household like an unchained beast, when currency devaluation has made even basic food unaffordable for the poor and when the salaried class prays instead of calculating their monthly expenses, a

province that quietly presents a budget, without flashy advertisements or hollow slogans, without seeking new loans, offers not just a budget but a bold statement of dignity.

The new KP budget articulates a candid financial narrative: when intentions are sincere, priorities are clear and feet are firmly on the ground, any government, even with limited resources, can ameliorate lot of the poor and deliver meaningful progress. The total budget stands at Rs. 2.119 trillion, with over Rs. 1.95 trillion allocated for current and development expenditures, and a surplus target of over Rs. 150 billion, indicating a budget, free from any deficit. No new taxes have been imposed, and existing burdens have been eased.

One of the most commendable aspects of this budget is its complete avoidance of reckless borrowing. Unlike past governments that obtained extraordinary loans, launched schemes for political gains and passed the debt to future generations, this provincial government has made it clear: loans will only be taken when there is a guaranteed plan for repayment. Additionally, Rs. 49 billion have been earmarked to repay existing loans, demon-

strating not just fiscal prudence but intergenerational responsibility.

In contrast, if we take a cursory look at the new budgets of the two big provinces viz Punjab and Sindh, the Punjab government's budget is Rs 5.3 trillion and that of Sindh is Rs 3.45 trillion, with a significant burden of internal and external debt. Meanwhile, the provincial GDP (GSDP) growth rate is considerably lower compared to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There is no mention or concern about getting out of debt as well.

The KP development agenda prioritizes sectors that directly impact the lives of ordinary citizens. Education receives the largest share, with Rs. 363 billion allocated to improve school infrastructure, establish new institutions and enhance the quality of education. Another Rs. 39 billion are set aside for higher education, enabling youth to meet modern demands. The health sector will receive Rs. 276 billion, of which Rs. 35 billion is dedicated to the Sehat Card Plus scheme, ensuring that even the poorest citizens can receive VIP-level treatment for life-threatening diseases like cardiac, liver and kidney ailments.

For the youth, the good news is that Rs. 2 billion have been allocated for self-employment schemes, double the amount from last year. This initiative aims to empower educated but jobless youth by equipping them with skills to start their own businesses. The vision is to transform job seekers into job providers, igniting a ripple effect of employment.

Public safety and infrastructure have not been overlooked. The government has set aside Rs. 158 billion for policing, law enforcement and security, Rs. 123 billion for communications and works and Rs. 17 billion for agriculture, to keep the economic wheels spinning in nook and corner of the province. A further Rs. 11.6 billion is allocated for sports and youth activities, recognizing that a healthy society depends not just on food but on active, engaged youth.

About tourism, the most beautiful face of KP and a potential goldmine of foreign exchange. Encouragingly, this year's budget gives serious attention to it, with Rs. 6.3 billion earmarked for new sites identification, facility enhancement and promotion of the local economy. This includes developing tourism zones in Galiyat,

Swat, Dir, Chitral and the merged districts, as well as infrastructure upgrades, initiatives that promise both employment for locals and attracts domestic and international tourists.

The merged districts have not been neglected either. Under the Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP), Rs. 92 billion have been allocated, along with an additional Rs. 40 billion through the Annual Development Programme (ADP). These funds will support essential infrastructure, education, healthcare and job creation, ensuring balanced development across the province.

Further measures include waiving registration and token fees on electric vehicles, tax relief in FATA and PATA and exemption from professional tax for low-income skilled workers. These steps indicate a government that is not just crunching numbers but making people-centric decisions.

However, one area that demands attention is the rise in salaries and pensions for government employees and retirees. The provincial increase proposed is even lower than that of the federal government, prompting rightful concern from employee bodies like AGEA.

The government must address this, as this very workforce carries the weight of governance on its shoulders. Similarly the federal government is also requested to ensure regular payment of hydropower profits, NFC Award funds, tobacco cess, and settled revenues for the merged districts to the province. This will help send a positive message to the public and foster better relations.

In essence, the KP budget is a silent revolution, free from loud slogans, deceptive banners or exaggerated ads. It is not just a collection of figures but a manifesto of dignity, transparency, and public welfare. A message desperately needed in today's Pakistan, both as a mirror and a guiding light for other administrations. Each page of this budget bears witness to the fact that KP's leadership understands that governance in a region beset with resource disparities, economic blockades and constant security threats, requires not just fiscal acumen but vision, courage, and wisdom. This is what transforms this budget from a mere financial document into a people's charter, marking the beginning of a proud journey toward freedom from poverty, self-reliance, and a life of dignity.



DOHA: People sitting at Hamad International Airport after Qatar reopened its airspace following a brief closure in the wake of Iran's missile attack on Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

Iran diaspora in Los Angeles dream of ‘regime change’

LOS ANGELES (AFP): At his grocery store in an Iranian neighborhood of Los Angeles, Mohammad Ghafari is worried sick about his brothers and sisters since the United States bombed the Islamic republic's nuclear sites. But as he stands among his dates, dried plums and pistachios, he also cherishes the hope of change in his native country.

Iran "is not capable of providing food to the Persian people," said Ghafari, who left to study abroad before the 1979 revolution and never returned. "If the people (there) were happy about a change of regime, I would be too."

"Everyone would be happy," agreed Fereshteh, one of his customers and a fellow resident of so-called "Tehrangeles" -- a mash-up of Tehran and Los Angeles. For Fereshteh, who gave only her first name to protect her identity, "Donald Trump is a hero." The American president ordered strikes against three Iranian nuclear sites last weekend, providing unprecedented support to Israel in its offensive against Iran. He even raised the possibility of "regime change," before backing away and saying it

would sow chaos.

Any talk of ousting Iran's clerical leadership resonates strongly in the Los Angeles area, where nearly 200,000 Iranian-Americans live, making the Californian metropolis the diaspora's global hub. Many of its members live in the west end of the city, near the UCLA campus.

Filled with Middle Eastern grocery stores, carpet merchants and bookstores selling books in Farsi, the neighborhood is also known as "Little Persia."

The immigrants who have made it their home include minorities often seen as discriminated against in Iran, such as Jews, Christians and Assyrians. "It's time for the Iranian people to rise up, because right now, the regime is very weak," said Fereshteh, herself Jewish, who fled Iran in the 1980s during the war between her country and Iraq. Trump was elected on a promise to focus on America and stay out of foreign wars. But among the grocery store's customers, some would like him to push his intervention in Iran to the limit. "We should send troops there," says Mehrnoosh, a 45-year-old woman who arrived in the United States in 2010.

"The people there have their hands tied," she said, adding that "the regime killed so many Iranians three years ago during the protests following the death of Mahsa Amini," a student arrested for allegedly flouting dress rules for women. But on the patio of the "Taste of Tehran" restaurant, one man hopes the United States will pull back to avoid its fate in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Change by force never pays off....Change must come from within, by the people, for the people, and we're not there yet," said the 68-year-old engineer, who wished to remain anonymous. The conflict has so far claimed more than 600 lives in Iran and 28 in Israel, according to authorities in both countries. A fragile ceasefire in the war between Iran and Israel war appeared to be holding -- a relief for the engineer, who had recently spoken to his aunt on the phone. For several days, she fled Tehran for the northwest of the country to escape Israeli bombardments. "Is it worth it? Absolutely not," he said, recalling he lost his grandparents to bombs during the Iran-Iraq War. "My hope is for all this to end soon."

Putin says Russia ramping up production of Oreshnik missile

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia is stepping up production of its Oreshnik intermediate-range hypersonic missile, which it launched for the first time against Ukraine last November. "Serial production of the latest Oreshnik medium-range missile system is under way," Putin told a graduating class of military cadets in televised comments. The system has "proven itself very well in combat conditions," he added.

Russia first used the Oreshnik (Hazel tree) against Ukraine on November 21, when Putin said it had fired the missile at a defence enterprise in the city of Dnipro. He said he had authorised the strike in direct response to Ukraine's first use of US-made ballistic missiles and British-made cruise missiles to hit Russian territory, after Western countries granted their permission. Putin subsequently threatened further strikes, including against "decision-making centres" in Kyiv, if Ukraine kept attacking Russia with long-range Western weapons.

Intermediate missiles have a range of up to 5,500 km (3,415 miles), which would enable them to strike anywhere in Europe or the western United States from Russia. Putin has boasted that the Oreshnik is impossible to intercept and has destructive power comparable to a nuclear weapon, although some Western experts have cast doubt on those claims. In December, a US official said the weapon was not seen as a game-changer on the battlefield, calling it experimental in nature and saying Russia likely possessed only a handful. Putin said late last year that Russia could also deploy Oreshniks on the territory of its ally Belarus in the second half of 2025. Belarus shares borders with NATO members Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

Vietnam to remove death penalty for embezzlement

HANOI (Reuters): Vietnam will remove the death penalty for eight offences from next month, including embezzlement and activities aimed at overthrowing the government, parliament said, sparing the life of a tycoon in a \$12-billion fraud case. The National Assembly, the country's lawmaking body, unanimously ratified the amendment to the Criminal Code to abolish the death penalty for the crimes, it said in a statement.

Other crimes that will no longer lead to the death penalty include vandalising state property, manufacturing fake medicine, jeopardising peace, triggering invasive wars, espionage and carrying drugs, official Vietnam News Agency said. The maximum sentence for these crimes will now be life imprisonment, the report said.

Those who were sentenced to death for these offences before July 1 but have not yet been executed will have their sentences commuted to life imprisonment, the report added. These will include real estate tycoon Truong My Lan, the chairwoman of real estate developer Van Thinh Phat Holdings Group, who was sentenced to death last year on embezzlement charges. Lan's lawyers didn't immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. "According to the amendment of the Criminal Code, her sentence will automatically be reduced to life imprisonment," lawyer Ngo Anh Tuan, who is not part of Lan's defence team, told Reuters.

Ten offences will remain subject to capital punishment in Vietnam, including murder, treason, terrorism and the sexual abuse of children, according to the report. Drug trafficking will also remain a capital offence. Capital punishment data is a state secret in Vietnam and it is not known how many people are currently on death row in the country. Lethal injection is the only method of execution after firing squads were abolished in 2011.

Fearing war with Russia, Finland hardens NATO's north frontier

LAPPEENRANTA, Finland (Reuters): At a shooting range 10 miles from the Russian border, Finnish army reservist Janne Latto opened the trunk of his car and unpacked a small surveillance drone and controller, equipment he sees as vital for any future conflict with Finland's neighbour.

Since the invasion of Ukraine prompted Helsinki to join NATO two years ago, tensions reminiscent of the Cold War have resurfaced along the forested 1,340-km (833-mile) frontier, Europe's longest with Russia. The Nordic nation is beefing up an already-sizeable reservist force and will host a new command for NATO, whose members meet in the Hague on June 24 for an annual summit.

Still under construction, an imposing barbed-wire-topped fence now dominates a once-bustling section of the border, closed by Finland after it accused Russia of weaponising migration. Shopping malls and restaurants that buzzed with Russian visitors have fallen quiet. On the other side, Russia has slowly begun dusting off Soviet-era military bases, satellite images show. Kyiv's June 1 attack on Russia's strategic bomber fleet, including at the Olenya airfield near northern Finland, brought the war in Ukraine closer to home. For this story, Reuters spoke to a dozen people in Finland's border region, where the emerging divisions have left some unable to visit relatives and caused economic losses. Others supported the measures, citing a need to prepare for and deter future conflict.

At the shooting range -

near the lakeside town of Lappeenranta, some 100 miles from Russia's second city, St Petersburg - Latto said the Lauritsala Reservists were training with three drones including the Parrot Anafi surveillance vehicle, used by the professional armies of several NATO members, including Finland. A grant from Finland's association of reservist groups meant ten more were on order, he said. The 2022 assault on Ukraine hardened 47-year-old Latto's perception of Russia.

"What if they decide to come and change the border, just like they went to Ukraine," said Latto, who runs a small business assembling neon signs and billboards. He recalled Soviet attempts to invade during World War Two, and how Finland was forced to cede approximately 10% of its territory to Russia, including Ayrappaa, a nearby municipality that his grandfather died defending in 1944. The countries each insist they pose no threat to the other. Finnish President Alexander Stubb has said some level of Russian buildup is a normal response to Helsinki's accession to NATO, which more than doubled the length of Russia's border with the alliance. However, a Finnish government defence report late last year described "a heightened risk of an armed conflict," citing the development of Russia's military capabilities since the start for the war in Ukraine, and saying Moscow had ambitions to create a "buffer zone" from the Arctic to Southern Europe.

Finland has since announced plans to stockpile landmines. It banned

Finnish-Russian dual nationals from flying drones and Russians from buying property, and last week warned that mobile signals were disrupted in regions near Russia. "Finland is responsible for over half of the entire land border between NATO countries and Russia," Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen posted on X, saying the country's defence posture was to ensure the border "remains inviolable." Finland's presidency declined to comment for this story. Russia's foreign ministry did not respond to a comment request. President Vladimir Putin denied any plans to attack NATO. He said he did not see NATO rearmament as a threat. After Finland joined the alliance, Moscow announced plans to strengthen military capacity in Russia's west and northwest. The activities of the Finnish reservists, who also use firearms in target practice, are voluntary, although most have completed Finland's long-standing mandatory male conscription.

More than 50,000 Finns take part in such clubs, up by about a third since before the Ukraine war, according to the Finnish Reservists' Association, with a similar increase in the number of reservists called up by the military for refresher training. Even older members of Latto's band of volunteers could see service in a crisis, as Finland raises the reserve's upper age limit to 65 to add 125,000 troops to a wartime army, and to take the number of reservists to one million by 2031. He welcomed the extended military service, saying older reservists could be drone or radar operators.

Kenyans brace for protests

NAIROBI (Reuters): Kenyans are expected to take to the streets in large numbers to mark the one-year anniversary of anti-government protests that culminated in the storming of parliament and several deaths as police opened fire on demonstrators.

Although the protests eventually faded after President William Ruto withdrew proposed tax hikes that had initially sparked the rallies, public anger over the use of force by security agencies has not abated, with fresh demonstrations erupting this month over the death of a blogger in police custody. Six people, including three police officers, were charged with murder over the killing of 31-year-old blogger and teacher, Albert Ojwang. All have pleaded not guilty.

The death of Ojwang has become a lightning rod for Kenyans still mourning the deaths of more than 60 people killed during last year's demonstrations and blaming

security forces for the fatalities and dozens of unexplained abductions. Police sources told Reuters that a heavy security presence would be deployed around downtown Nairobi, particularly near the presidency, parliament and the central business district. The interior ministry in a post on X warned protesters not to "provoke police" or "attempt to breach protected areas".

The unprecedented scenes on June 25, 2024, showing police firing at demonstrators as they broke through barriers to enter parliament, created the biggest crisis of Ruto's presidency and sparked alarm among Kenya's international allies. The embassies of the United States, Britain, Canada, and other Western nations released a joint statement on X urging all involved to "facilitate peaceful demonstrations and to refrain from violence." "The use of plain clothed officers in unmarked vehicles erodes public trust," the statement

said. Rights campaigners condemned the presence of unidentified police officers at protests last year.

The embassies also said they were troubled by the use of hired "goons" to disrupt peaceful demonstrations, after Reuters reporters saw groups of men beating protesters with sticks and whips last week. The counter-protesters have defended their actions, telling Reuters that they are not goons but rather patriots protecting property from looters. Two police officers were arrested last week over the shooting of an unarmed civilian during a protest in Nairobi over the death of Ojwang, the blogger. Kenya's police chief initially implied that Ojwang had died by suicide but later apologised after an autopsy found that his wounds pointed to assault as the cause of death.

President Ruto said that Ojwang had died "at the hands of the police", which he said was "heartbreaking and unacceptable".

Australia prepares for verdict in mushroom murder trial

MORWELL, Australia (Reuters): The trial of an Australian woman accused of murdering three of her estranged husband's elderly relatives using toxic mushrooms entered its final stages, with the jury soon to begin its deliberations in a case that has gripped the nation.

Erin Patterson, 50, is charged with the murders of her mother-in-law Gail Patterson, father-in-law Donald Patterson and Gail's sister, Heather Wilkinson, along with the attempted murder of Ian Wilkinson, Heather's husband, in July 2023. The prosecution accuses her of foraging for poisonous death cap mushrooms and knowingly adding them to individual portions of Beef Wellington that she served to her guests at her home in Leongatha, a town of about 6,000 people some 135 km (84 miles) south-east of Melbourne.

Patterson denies the charges, which carry a life sentence, with her defence

calling the deaths a "terrible accident". Justice Christopher Beale, the presiding judge, began his second day of instructions to the jury at the Latrobe Valley Magistrates Court in Morwell, a former coal mining town whose best known tourist attractions until the trial were a rose garden and a regional art gallery.

Beale has said the process will take until at least the end of the day, meaning the 14-member jury will retire to consider their verdict at the earliest. Their decision must be unanimous. Outside, despite the winter cold and rain, members of the public began queuing for the limited seats in the court hours before proceedings began.

"I am a true crime fanatic," said Philip Mayers, a social worker who got up at 5am and drove two hours from Melbourne, the state capital, to get his place in the court. "It's the uniqueness of it, you don't

hear it every day." The trial has caused a sensation in Morwell, where Patterson requested to be tried rather than Melbourne. Laura Heller, the owner of Jay Dee's Cafe across the road from the modest two-storey court building, said business had tripled since the trial began on April 29. "Even though it's not great circumstances, it has been very good for our community because it's brought people from outside the area," she said. Journalists, podcasters and documentary crews from domestic and international media have descended on the town for the proceedings, which British magazine The Spectator dubbed "Australia's trial of the century".

Public broadcaster ABC's daily podcast on the trial is currently the most popular in Australia, while streaming platform Stan says it will soon be airing a documentary on the trial and "media frenzy" surrounding the case.

POWs, abductees, defectors and separated families are the legacy of the Korean War

GIMPO, South Korea (AP): Prisoners of war held for decades after the fighting stopped. Civilian abductees. Defectors. Separated families. They are Koreans who symbolize the decades of division and bitter animosities between North and South Korea, which have been split by a heavily fortified border since the the 1950-53 Korean War. North and South Koreans aren't allowed to exchange visits, phone calls or letters with their loved ones on the other side. The 75th anniversary of the war's beginning. The Associated Press spoke with Koreans whose pain and sorrow likely won't be healed anytime soon as diplomacy between the Koreas remains dormant.

South Korean prisoner of war isolated after his return home Lee Seon-wu, who was a South Korean soldier, lost three fingers and was captured by Chinese troops

during a fierce battle in the eastern Gangwon province in the final days of the war. Like tens of thousands of other South Korean prisoners, Lee was held by North Korea even after an armistice ended the fighting. He was forced to resettle as a miner in the country's remote northeast. In North Korea, Lee said he belonged to the lowest social class and married a poor woman. He also lived under constant state surveillance.

In 2006, he fled to South Korea via China, only to learn that his parents and two of his three siblings had already died. Lee said he was shunned by his nephew, who likely worried Lee would demand the return of land that was originally bought with compensation money that authorities gave to his family after they wrongly concluded that Lee had died in the war. Now

94, he doesn't stay in touch with any relatives in South Korea and misses family members in North Korea.

Lee said his three daughters in North Korea rejected his offer to flee to South Korea because they feared punishment if caught. Lee said he also has a grandson whose parents - Lee's son and daughter-in-law - died in an accident. "I'm happy because I've returned to my homeland but I shed tears when I think about them in North Korea," Lee said during an interview at his home in Gimpo, a city near Seoul. A total of 80 South Korean POWs have fled to South Korea since 1994, but only seven of them including Lee are still alive. In 2016, the South Korean government estimated about 500 South Korean POWs were still alive in North Korea.

Son Myong Hwa, 63, is the North Korea-born

daughter of a South Korean POW held in the North. She said her father sang and played the harmonica well but often drank alone at home and wept. Son's father, who also worked as a miner in North Korea, died of lung cancer in 1984. Son said he left a will asking her to move his ashes to his South Korean hometown when the Koreans are unified. Son escaped to South Korea in 2005 and brought her father's remains to South Korea with the help of her brother and sister in North Korea in 2013. Her father's remains were eventually buried at the national cemetery. But Son said her demand for the government to give her father's compensation to her has gone unanswered because South Korean law only grants financial assistance to returning POWs, not their bereaved families.

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Powell remains focused on inflation

US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell told the Republican-held House (of Representatives) Financial Services Committee on Tuesday that the Fed's policy position is not meant as a criticism of President Donald Trump's tariff policy.

But he said that there is the expectation among professional economists that it could have an impact because rise in tariffs would mean rise in domestic prices of the imported goods, and the rise in prices would in turn lead to rise in inflation. He said, "We aren't commenting on tariffs. Our job is to keeping inflation under control, and when policies have short- and medium-term, meaningful, implications, then inflation becomes our job."

Powell has been facing criticism from Trump that the Fed Chair was not reducing interest rate, which now stands between 4.25 per cent and 4.50 per cent. The American economy has not been doing too well in terms of growth. Powell has assured the committee that the economy was in a strong position. Powell is however not inclined to reduce interest rates and ease borrowing which could lead to new businesses and economic expansion.

Powell is cautious and he thinks that he should wait and watch how the tariffs that Trump has raised against all the trading partners would impact the domestic economy. As the US remains a country of huge imports, the tariffs are bound to effect the prices at home. But Trump has been single-minded in his approach to tariffs.

His argument is that compared to all other countries, the US has the lowest tariffs, and that other countries are benefiting from it, while the US is paying a price because American manufacturing has migrated. He wants to bring back the American manufacturers and make America the manufacturing hub it was till the 1960s.

Powell told the House committee: "All the professional forecasters I know of...expect a meaningful increase in inflation over the course of this year."

There is a huge debate whether Trump's old-fashioned approach to the economy and to manufacturing is valid. It is argued that it is but natural that American manufacturers should go to countries where the labour is cheap and the wages low. The advantage to the American consumer is that he/she gets to buy things at lower prices. With the proposed rise in tariffs, which go into effect from July 9, there could be volatility in domestic prices.

Trump believes that if American manufacturers come home and make things at home, then things will be alright. He is not taking into consideration the costs of production in America.

Interestingly, it is Trump who had chosen Powell as the Fed Chair in his first term as president. Powell is set to retire next spring and Trump is keen to find another Chair. Trump is not happy with Powell, and Trump does not hide the fact. Powell is not willing to abandon the customary caution of a central banker, and he is not the one to please the political boss as it were. Trump wants to have his way, but professional bankers and economists cannot overlook the real economy. Trump wants the ideal economy where American make their own things and buy what they make.

And also, the rest of the world buys what Americans make. The truth is that Americans are good at making some things more than other things. Japanese had started to make better and cheaper cars and they gained an upper hand.

Similarly, the computer hardware is made more efficiently in Taiwan than in America. But America retains an upper hand in terms of the Internet, and now the Artificial Intelligence (AI).

So, there is a division of labour of sorts. Trump the populist politician does not believe in the economic trends that shape the world.

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Iranian N programme survives..!



Trump is angry with a world that won't give him easy deals

LU CHUANYING

As the 50th anniversary of China-EU diplomatic relations approaches, both sides should foster strategic trust in critical areas such as AI ethics

Since 2018, the European Union has forged an artificial intelligence strategy centered on norm setting, standard guiding and technological sovereignty. However, faced with the reality of "excessive regulation yet insufficient competitiveness", the EU is actively pursuing strategic adjustments.

Chinese companies such as DeepSeek now offer cost-efficient, high-performance solutions that present viable cooperation opportunities for the EU. Specifically, prospects for China-EU AI collaboration can be explored through three dimensions: R&D complementarity, sustainable development and global governance.

The EU and China possess distinct yet complementary comparative advantages in R&D. The EU maintains strong capacities in fundamental research and core algorithmic development, though its scientific prowess has not been transformed to large-scale commercialization or industrial competitiveness. In contrast, Chinese tech companies excel in deploying and iterating models rapidly, fostering enterprises such as DeepSeek with strong industry-specific adaptability, heightened contextual awareness, and robust system-level integration capacities. This synergy between theory-driven and application-driven innovations lays the groundwork for a shared technology ecosystem.

China and the EU share key interests in sustainable growth. From the EU-proposed Green New Deal to China's innovation-driven development strategy, both require foundational support from AI technology. Robust markets and research institutions in the healthcare sector exist on both sides, presenting significant potential for collaboration. Confronted with intensifying aging challenges, China and Europe share the goal of leveraging AI to enhance elder care services, clinical care systems and social security efficiency.

This convergence highlights significant shared interests in advancing sustainable growth, which establishes a solid foundation for collaboratively developing more robust global frameworks.

On global AI governance, China and the EU exhibit converging positions in upholding multilateralism and opposing unilateral governance. Both are committed to establishing open, inclusive international governance frameworks. Through platforms such as the United Nations and the G20, they seek to develop balanced and inclusive rule systems

that accommodate diverse interests. This shared commitment to multilateral approaches creates momentum for bilateral cooperation.

Despite this, the EU maintains multiple practical concerns regarding the technical solutions offered by Chinese AI startups. Foremost among these is compliance with data privacy regulations. Any AI products entering the European market must comply with regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation. The EU questions whether models such as DeepSeek will adhere to its privacy standards. Key concerns include demonstrating transparency in training data collection and user data processing, securing user consent, and ensuring European data is not

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In its AI policy toward China, the EU frequently grapples with a structural contradiction between its pursuit of strategic autonomy and its reliance on transatlantic security. This tension has prompted increasingly stringent security reviews of Chinese tech companies in recent years. Consequently, Europe has heightened its vigilance toward Chinese AI products such as DeepSeek, scrutinizing them not only from a commercial standpoint but also, and more critically, from a national security perspective.

Then, ethical and value considerations come into play. European policymakers are concerned that large models developed in China may embed preferences not aligned with EU ethical norms, potentially impacting its established standards.

This dual reality — where opportunities for cooperation coexist with necessary safeguards — reflects the complex interplay of technical complementarity and

institutional heterogeneity in China-EU AI collaboration.

Given the substantial shared interests and structural complementarities in AI governance between China and the EU, the two sides possess both the practical foundation and strategic imperative to forge a deeper collaborative partnership. Advancing the China-EU cooperation framework requires a coordinated approach across multiple dimensions, including institutional dialogue, standards alignment, multilateral governance and enterprise collaboration.

First, establishing a high-level China-EU dialogue mechanism on AI governance. The two sides should build an institutional platform for exchanges on digital policy coordination.

Last but not least, a collaborative risk-response mechanism for China-EU AI enterprises should be established. Beyond intergovernmental cooperation, fostering trust-building and collaboration mechanisms between enterprises is equally vital. China and the EU should encourage leading AI companies to establish joint R&D platforms, enhance cross-context and cross-cultural model adaptability, and facilitate exchanges among AI companies, platform operators and standard-setting bodies.

Moreover, to build consensus on technological risks, both parties should establish a jointly supported AI risk-assessment center.

This center would focus on algorithmic ethical assessments, security vulnerability testing, and misuse early-warning systems for large-scale models and generative AI, thereby strengthening common understanding of foundational AI risks between China and the EU.

In summary, the EU's AI strategy reflects its fundamental dilemma between shaping global rules and safeguarding technological sovereignty. As the 50th anniversary of China-EU diplomatic relations approaches, both sides should embrace the principle of win-win cooperation and foster strategic trust in critical areas including AI ethics, safety certification and cross-border collaboration. Only through steadfast multilateralism can we advance a global AI governance framework characterized by technological inclusiveness, coordinated rules and shared responsibility — thereby balancing innovation with societal risks and advancing sustainable development in the AI era.

goods through international standards organizations and multilateral forums, providing adaptable technical reference frameworks for emerging economies.

Third, enhancing multilateral cooperation and position coordination. As pivotal actors in global governance, China and the EU share the responsibility to advance inclusive global AI governance frameworks. Both should leverage platforms such as the UN and G20 to foster open, cooperative governance models. Amid growing geopolitical fragmentation in technology governance, the US is establishing a small, exclusive grouping that promotes the same regulatory standards, turning AI into a tool for unilateral global governance. As key stakeholders committed to rules-based international order, China and the EU must jointly counter the trend toward fragmented, bloc-based technology governance and champion inclusive multilateralism to resolve the structural imbalance of "hegemonic rule-setting vs forced compliance".

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How Israel failed in Iran

Ori Goldberg

WHAT did Israel accomplish in Iran after 11 days of incessant bombing? Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in his statement acknowledging the ceasefire that the Israeli goals have been achieved. Such an assertion seems problematic, to say the least.

At the start of the short-lived war, he declared two goals: "decapitating the nuclear programme" and "regime change".

Was the nuclear programme decapitated? The answer is likely negative. It seems that Iran transported fissionable material out of the Fordow facility attacked by the United States. This stockpile is the most important part of the nuclear programme, so "decapitation" seems to have failed.

What damage, if any, did Israel inflict on the Iranian nuclear programme? That is also unclear. Israel managed to persuade the US to attack Iranian nuclear facilities using bunker-busting bombs, Massive Ordnance Penetrators (MOPs), but the US did little else to help the Israeli offensive. The extent of destruction would be hard to evaluate since Iran is unlikely to grant outside access.

Has Israel generated "regime change" in Iran? The brief answer is that it has very much achieved the opposite. Israel attempted to trigger an uprising against the regime by killing military leaders of Iran's various security structures. This strategy is based on the firm Israeli belief that the best way to destabilise an enemy is through assassinations of senior leaders. This has never worked. The only possible exception was the effect Hassan Nasrallah's death had on Hezbollah in Lebanon, but that had a great deal to do with internal Lebanese political dynamics. In all other cases, Israeli assassinations have failed to create any major political

change. In the case of Iran, the assassinations rallied the people around the government. Israel assassinated the senior commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), perhaps the most powerful element in current Iranian politics, but also one of the most hated by the Iranian public. Regardless, many Iranians who consider themselves staunch opponents of the Islamic Republic and especially of the IRGC found themselves supporting it. Iranians saw Iran in its entirety under attack and not just "the regime". Israel's attempts to bomb "regime symbols" only made the situation worse. It attempted to spin its air strikes on Evvin Prison, infamous for the torture of political prisoners, as a contribution to the struggle of the Iranian people against the repression of the Islamic Republic. But Israel's bombs effectively worsened the situation of the prisoners, as the authorities moved many of them to unknown locations. Bombing the "Israel doomsday clock", which Israelis often employ as a demonstration of Iran's commitment to Israel's destruction, was simply pathetic. Israel's bombing of the Iranian state broadcaster IRIB was also absurd. Israel claimed it was curtailing the regime's attempt to spread propaganda. As many Israelis pointed out, this bombing gave the Iranians the vindication they needed to threaten Israeli television stations as well.

almost at will. Iranian missiles, however, repeatedly managed to penetrate the famed Israeli air defense system, strike at the heart of Israel and across the entire country, and bring it to a standstill while inflicting an unprecedented number of casualties as well as massive destruction. Israel was running low on interceptor missiles without hopes of immediate replenishment. The Israeli economy was quickly grinding to a halt. This was another triumph for Iran. Iran emerged from the war bruised and bombed, suffering hundreds of casualties and real damage from incessant bombing around the country. But the Islamic Republic did not crumble, even when facing a massive Israeli force. Iranian missiles hit home, Iran's image was not tarnished (it was seen by most of the world as a victim of an Israeli attack), and Iran's options for response were not severely constrained. Iran successfully de-escalated by warning in advance about its "retaliation" for the US strike on its military base in Qatar. Iran was powerful enough to convince Trump to warn Israel not to attack after the ceasefire appeared to have been violated. Iran emerged as it prefers to emerge — still standing, and with potential for the future.

tailoring the regime's attempt to spread propaganda. As many Israelis pointed out, this bombing gave the Iranians the vindication they needed to threaten Israeli television stations as well.

If Israel did not manage to achieve its stated war goals, did it at least manage to rally the world behind it, to make the public forget about Gaza and recast Israel again as fighting the good fight? That seems dubious at best. True, President Donald Trump and the US did strike Iranian nuclear facilities. By doing so, they violated several major rules of international law. This is likely to have long-term implications. However, Trump did not join the war alongside Israel. Immediately after the strike, the strategic bombers returned to the US.

Before and after carrying out the bombing, Trump iterated and reiterated his desire for a deal between the US and Iran, one that may also include Israel. It seems likely that the US president assisted Israel to serve his own interests as well as those of his allies in the Gulf. While several world leaders, most notably German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, were quick to support the US strikes and "Israel's right to defend itself", no one adopted Israel's stringent list of demands, which included that Iran should not be able to enrich uranium at all.

The world returned to the formula of "no nuclear weapon", with which Iran had already announced it was willing to comply.

When it comes to the operational development of the Middle East, the world appears to find Iran a legitimate partner for doing business. This is a loss for Israel and a victory for Iran.

The very real damage to the Israeli heartland should also be considered. Israel achieved aerial dominance over Iran very quickly and struck

Trump order requires truckers to speak English

AT a trucking school in New Jersey, students are maneuvering 18-wheelers around traffic cones. Other future drivers look under hoods to perform safety checks, narrating as they examine steering hoses for cracks and leaks. An instructor glides between speaking Spanish and English as he teaches Manuel Castillo, a native Spanish speaker, how to inspect a school bus. They're using a printed script of English phrases to practice what Castillo would say during a roadside inspection. Brushing up on English has taken on new urgency for future and current truck drivers after President Donald

scripts and watching instructional videos. "If it's not the language that you prefer to use daily, you may get a little nervous and you may feel, 'What if I say the wrong thing?'" said Jerry Maldonado, chairman of the board of the Laredo Motor Carriers Association, a trade association in Laredo, Texas, that represents approximately 200 trucking companies. "It's going to be, at the end of the day, the interpretation of the officer, so that makes people nervous." The guidance applies to truck and bus drivers engaged in interstate commerce. It aims to improve road safety following incidents in which truck drivers' inability to read signs or speak English may have

Cathy Bussewitz

things like height clearance," Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association President Todd Spencer said. In Laredo, a border city where many residents speak a mix of English and Spanish, Maldonado's association is offering free English classes on weekends to help truckers feel more confident in their ability to communicate. "Everybody knows what a stop sign looks like," Maldonado said. "But if there's construction or if there is an accident five miles down the road, and they have to put up a sign — 'Caution, must exit now, road closed ahead,' and you are not able to read that or understand that, that

industry terms. "Some words I don't understand, but I try to learn more English," he said. Asked whether he supports the president's executive order, Castillo said he voted for Trump but doesn't agree with the president's push to deport some immigrants who haven't committed crimes. "He makes a lot of problems, especially for Hispanic people," Castillo said. GTR Trucking School in Detroit also has offered students ESL classes. Co-owner Al Myftiu drove a truck after moving to the U.S. from Albania in 1993. He said he wants to create a small book of phrases that truckers need to learn. For students with a thick accent, "I tell them,

questions about the business just to strike a conversation, ... and they're not able to communicate with us at all," Kassem Elkhatib, one of the drivers at Flying J, said. It's unclear how safety inspectors will decide whether a driver knows enough English because that portion of the instructions was redacted from the guidance distributed by Transportation Department. The department advised motor carriers that drivers should be able to answer questions about shipping documents, the origin and destination of trips, and how long they've been on duty. A trucker placed out of service and the company they work for are

I'm in northern Gaza. I would rather starve than take GHF aid

IT has been two months since I last ate bread. Food in the markets has been fading away since Israel blocked nearly all aid into Gaza on 2 March. Following the blockade, food prices skyrocketed. Sugar and flour vanished, fruits and vegetables became a rare sight, and only red lentils remained available in the markets.

Unlike many others who stored food during the January truce, fearing another harsh round of famine, my family and I made the risky decision not to store anything. We had previously done so, but lost everything when Israeli soldiers reached our area with their tanks.

In such moments, you don't think of food. You forget about your empty stomach and weak body. You just count your loved ones, make sure the number matches what you memorised, and escape.

While we made this decision of our own free will, many had no choice — including the four families from the Shujaiyya neighbourhood now sheltering in our home. The breadwinners lost their incomes due to the war: a taxi driver whose car was bombed, a co-owner of a plastic manufacturing workshop that was destroyed, an electrician who rarely works since Israel cut off power, and a snack vendor with nothing left to sell.

All of the families now sheltering in our home, including mine, are surviving almost entirely on red lentils, just water, lentils, and salt, with nothing else added. We mostly drink it with a spoon. We rarely dip bread into it to feel full, as flour prices have continued to soar over the past two months, ranging from 60 to 100 shekels per kilogram (\$7.72 – \$14.31 per pound), making even the simplest meals harder to come by.

By day, we introduced a new verb into the Arabic lexicon, ta'ddaset, which roughly translates to "I have been lentilised," meaning one has completed one of the day's two missions: eating lentil soup.

At the end of May, news began circulating widely about the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Food (GHF) initiative. Social media users claimed that every family would receive a portion of flour, sugar, biscuits, and canned food – enough for one week.

Reports indicated that GHF distribution sites would only be open at three locations in Rafah, along the Morag – the Israeli military corridor. Later, another point was to be opened along the Netzarim Corridor, which splits Gaza into two halves. This was the first red flag: why would starving people be expected to head into combat zones to receive food? And why were all the sites in the southern part of the Strip?

My suspicions about the GHF deepened as investigations into the

Eman Hillis

foundation began to emerge. Israel denied that it funds the GHF. However, US government sources stated that the initiative originated from the same state that has repeatedly used food as a weapon: Israel.

But at least for a brief moment, the lack of food made me consider going to the GHF. For people in northern Gaza like me, waiting for the Netzarim Corridor site to begin operating seemed the only realistic choice. Still, heading into what had been a previous kill zone for the Israeli army was terrifying.

Nasser added that it felt as though Israeli soldiers were placing bets on who could kill or injure more people. He said GHF workers used tear gas and sound bombs to disperse the crowds just half an hour after the distribution process began.

GHF workers and Israeli troops enabled a system of chaos inside the distribution points. There is no clear or consistent share for each person. Strong and armed individuals take whatever they want, stealing from others in full view of the staff. The GHF workers, described as "seasoned crisis operators," have troubling backgrounds. Phil Reilly, CEO of Safe Reach Solutions (SRS), which assists the GHF, was a senior vice president at a US company that committed a massacre in Iraq in 2007.

The foundation is also assisted by another company, publicly known as UG Solutions. During the January ceasefire, UG hired US mercenaries at daily rates starting at \$1,100 to inspect vehicles at the Netzarim checkpoint. Heading to a GHF site for aid means entering a murky operation, set in militarised zones, surrounded by armed soldiers, only to find the site overrun by criminal gangs likely to steal the little you may get.

The monotony of red lentils and the absence of other food have not pushed us to seek aid wrapped in blood and humiliation.

killed directly by fire felt more merciful than dying slowly from famine.

At first, the men in my family were prepared to go. But the testimonies of those who had already been there changed our minds.

Mohammed Nasser, who went to the GHF Netzarim distribution point on 14 June, the day 59 people were killed near the aid sites, told me that most of those present were gangs of thieves, armed with pistols and knives, looting aid from ordinary civilians. "If they saw a date with you, they'd steal it."

Nasser added that it felt as though Israeli soldiers were placing bets on who could kill or injure more people. He said GHF workers used tear gas and sound bombs to disperse the crowds just half an hour after the distribution process began.

GHF workers and Israeli troops enabled a system of chaos inside the distribution points. There is no clear or consistent share for each person. Strong and armed individuals take whatever they want, stealing from others in full view of the staff. The GHF workers, described as "seasoned crisis operators," have troubling backgrounds. Phil Reilly, CEO of Safe Reach Solutions (SRS), which assists the GHF, was a senior vice president at a US company that committed a massacre in Iraq in 2007.

The foundation is also assisted by another company, publicly known as UG Solutions. During the January ceasefire, UG hired US mercenaries at daily rates starting at \$1,100 to inspect vehicles at the Netzarim checkpoint. Heading to a GHF site for aid means entering a murky operation, set in militarised zones, surrounded by armed soldiers, only to find the site overrun by criminal gangs likely to steal the little you may get.

The monotony of red lentils and the absence of other food have not pushed us to seek aid wrapped in blood and humiliation.

Updated US Department of Transportation procedures call for enhanced inspections to determine if commercial motor vehicle operators can reply to questions and directions in English, as well as understand highway traffic signs and electronic message boards. Truckers who learned English as a second language are concerned they may lose their jobs if they make a mistake or speak with a heavy accent while under questioning. Some have worked to improve their English fluency by taking classes, reciting scripts and watching instructional videos. "If it's not the language that you prefer to use daily, you may get a little nervous and you may feel, 'What if I say the wrong thing?'" said Jerry Maldonado, chairman of the board of the Laredo Motor Carriers Association, a trade association in Laredo, Texas, that represents approximately 200 trucking companies. "It's going to be, at the end of the day, the interpretation of the officer, so that makes people nervous." The guidance applies to truck and bus drivers engaged in interstate commerce. It aims to improve road safety following incidents in which truck drivers' inability to read signs or speak English may have contributed to traffic deaths, the Transportation Department said. Requiring truck drivers to speak and read English isn't new, but the penalty for not meeting the proficiency standard is becoming more severe. To get a commercial driver's license, applicants must pass a written test and be able to name the parts of a bus or truck in English as they check tire inflation, tread depth, lug nuts and coolants. The revised policy reverses guidance issued nine years ago, near the end of then-President Barack Obama's final term, according to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. In 2016, the agency said drivers whose English skills were found lacking could receive a citation but not be prohibited from working. Before that, the penalty was getting placed on "out-of-service status." "We have bridges that get hit because drivers don't understand the signs on the bridges for things like height clearance," Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association President Todd Spencer said. In Laredo, a border city where many residents speak a mix of English and Spanish, Maldonado's association is offering free English classes on weekends to help truckers feel more confident in their ability to communicate. "Everybody knows what a stop sign looks like," Maldonado said. "But if there's construction or if there is an accident five miles down the road, and they have to put up a sign — 'Caution, must exit now, road closed ahead,' and you are not able to read that or understand that, that could potentially be a safety issue." At Driving Academy in Linden, New Jersey, multilingual instructors teach students how to inspect vehicle parts in their first language and then provide explanations in English, according to founder Jonathan Marques. The school created scripts so students could practice what to say if they're stopped, he said. Students are advised to watch training videos as homework, while licensed truckers can listen to English language apps instead of music when they're on the road, Marques suggested. Instructor Paul Cuartas helps students prepare but worries that inspectors will now expect truckers and bus drivers to have perfect English. "I'm concerned because now for all the Spanish people it's more difficult," he said. Castillo, who moved to the US from Ecuador in 1993, said he has no problem understanding English but has been watching videos to study

Trump issued an executive order saying truckers who don't read and speak the language proficiently would be considered unfit for service.

"A driver who can't understand English will not drive a commercial vehicle in this country. Period," Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said last month while announcing enforcement guidelines that take effect on Wednesday.

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'Slow down, speak slowly and people can understand you, and if you don't understand something, you can ask,'" Myftiu said.

Roadside inspections can be initiated over issues such as a faulty brake light or on a routine basis, and often take place at weigh stations.

The guidance directs inspectors who suspect a driver doesn't understand what they're saying to administer an English proficiency test, which includes both an interview and a highway traffic sign recognition component.

In the past, some drivers used translation apps to communicate with federal inspectors. The updated policy bars the use of interpreters, smartphones, cue cards or other aids during interviews. Several truck drivers taking a break at Flying J Travel Center in New Jersey said they support Trump's order, adding that drivers who heavily rely on translation programs probably wouldn't be able to read important signs. "We try to ask them

responsible for ensuring a language violation is corrected before the driver hits the highway again, the Transportation Department said.

Truck drivers who practice the Sikh religion already face discrimination in hiring and at loading docks, according to Mannirmal Kaur, federal policy manager for Sikh Coalition, an advocacy group. Now they are worried about inspectors making subjective, non-standardized determinations about which of them are proficient in English, she said.

"A truck driver who does speak English sufficiently to comply with federal standards but maybe they speak with an accent, or maybe they use a different vocabulary that the inspector isn't used to hearing: Is that person then going to be subject to an English language violation?" Kaur asked.

"And under the new policy, are they then going to be designated out-of-service, which could result in unemployment?"

How Netanyahu has used Oct. 7 attacks to reshape Middle East

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been campaigning against Iran since the 1990s. He has used all possible excuses to demonize the Tehran regime, just as he incited Washington against Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Syria's Assad regime. Yes, Iran, Iraq and Syria were sworn enemies of Israel. But while Netanyahu used the US to threaten, penalize and eventually attack these regimes, he made sure no one raised the essential question about why such hostilities existed in the first place.

The tragedy of Palestine lay at the heart of all three conflicts. Netanyahu never made that connection. For him, these countries represented an existential threat to the state of Israel out of pure hatred and animosity toward his country.

The Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks provided a beleaguered Netanyahu with the excuse to wage war not only against the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank but also Iran's proxies in the region and, finally, against Iran itself on June 13.

On Saturday, he was able to lure the Trump administration into his war. The US attack on Iran's nuclear sites fulfilled Netanyahu's plan for what he has repeated several times: a new Middle East shaped by Israel. Since December 2023, the Israeli leader has been declaring that Israel is fighting a war on behalf of the Western world, seeking to reshape the Middle East. He has said many times that he is closer than ever to achieving this goal.

In order to end the latest Israel-Iran faceoff, Tehran had to de-escalate to preserve its regime and avoid a

wider war with the US. Only one party can claim an overwhelming victory: Netanyahu's Israel. But what does a humbled Iran mean in regional geopolitical terms?

If Iran's nuclear program has been gravely degraded, then there will be new terms when it returns to diplomacy. It may have to relent and accept stricter conditions on its ability to enrich uranium, which has been the main issue of disagreement. Any political route to a lasting settlement will have to resolve this point.

For Netanyahu, however, this is no longer the issue. For him, regime change is now the ultimate prize. For the Trump administration, this is a case where its position remains ambiguous. An Iranian capitulation — an issue the mediators will struggle to define — is highly unlikely. Netanyahu will

resist any political compromise between Washington and Tehran. But the Trump administration has to think of its "Make America Great Again" base, which has been against US involvement in a new Middle Eastern war. The US will also have to take into account the position of its regional Arab allies, which are anxious about an extended war in the region.

In all cases, one potential winner will emerge and ensure the world knows about it. Netanyahu will claim that, in less than two years, his army has destroyed Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, helped bring down the regime of Bashar Assad, degraded the power of the Houthis in Yemen, neutralized the pro-Iran militias in Iraq, and impeded Iran's

Osama Al-Sharif

ability to retaliate.

He will say that he did all this on behalf of the West, while reshaping the Middle East. And in many ways, he will be right.

If Iran and its proxies are sidelined, Israel will emerge as a significant regional power with virtually no enemies. That is becoming a likelier scenario. And one can go back to the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks to see how a grand geopolitical domino effect has taken place, serving Israel's interests.

But what does that mean for the region? With Iran humbled and out of the way, Israel will emerge as the region's supreme power with no real threat. Iran may rely on its regional proxies, but none can present a genuine challenge to Israel.

However, a triumphant Israel will not offer an olive

branch to the region. Even with Iran's nuclear threat averted, Israel is unlikely to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It will continue to be the only country in the region to possess nuclear weapons.

Also, an Israeli victory against Iran will only encourage Netanyahu and his extremist government to annex most of the West Bank, while carrying out the most extensive plan for ethnic cleansing in Gaza, with little international rejection.

The fact is that Israel has been gaslighting the international community for months about its genocidal war in Gaza. Now, it wants to tell the world that it is fighting Iran on behalf of the Western world.

The US is in a position to redraw the lines. Yes, Iran has a history of destabilizing the region, but so does

Israel. At the end of the first Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush called for the Madrid Conference. President George W. Bush tried to launch a peace process after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Can we expect something similar this time around?

At this crucial moment, President Donald Trump must initiate a new political process that addresses the root causes of all conflicts in the region. Defeating Iran will not eliminate the source of these hostilities. On the contrary, it will embolden Netanyahu and the Israeli extremists to push for biblical claims to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq as part of a so-called greater Israel.

Arab governments have had a complex relationship with Iran since 1979. But in the end, there will have to be a balance between where

Iran stands and what Netanyahu's new Middle East means.

If Netanyahu's new Middle East spells out Israeli hegemony, then the countries of the region should think deeply about what that means for the entire area. Does that allow Israel to expel 2 million Palestinians from Gaza? Or does it pave the way for Israel to expel almost 3 million from the West Bank? How would that affect Jordan and Egypt?

Netanyahu's new Middle East offers the Palestinians nothing. It assumes that life can go on with Israel as a regional hegemon, while giving nothing to the Palestinians. Even worse, it believes that it can push for a greater Israel that spans territories belonging to sovereign Arab states. At some point, the Arab world will have to respond.



Pakistan, Unites States embassy host webinar

— to promote investment in mining sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Government of Pakistan in collaboration with the USA Embassy in Pakistan, hosted a high-level webinar “Opportunities in Pakistan’s Mining Sector – Unlocking Mineral Potential” aimed at promoting investment opportunities in Pakistan’s minerals and mining sector to American investors and companies.

This direct line virtual event was hosted together by Federal Minister of Energy (Petroleum Division) Ali Pervaiz Malik and US Chargé d’Affaires to Pakistan Natalie Baker at Oil & Gas Development Company (OGDCL) Head Office in Islamabad.

According to a news release of the ministry, the webinar brought together senior officials from Pakistan’s Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division), leading Pakistani mineral and energy companies, representatives of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), and top USA diplomats and energy sector stakeholders.

Secretary Petroleum Momin Agha, MD OGDCL Ahmed Hayat Lak, Managing Directors of GHPL and Mari Energies, DG Mines, MD PMDC, and senior representatives from Ark Metals, BMEC, BMRL, and PPL, US Embassy’s Economic Counsellor, and Energy Officer participated, along with various American business representatives who virtually attended the event.

On the occasion, Ali Pervaiz Malik highlighted the vast potential of Pakistan’s mining sector. “Pakistan is richly endowed with mineral resources, including gold, copper, coal, rare earth elements and other critical minerals essential for renewable energy transition,” he said.

The Minister noted the international significance of the Reko Diq copper-gold project and pointed to recent discoveries in Balochistan’s Chaghi district and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Waziristan region.

He emphasized Pakistan’s role in global transition towards clean energy, citing the country’s abundant reserves of critical minerals as a foundation for its green transition. “Renewable energy development is central to our climate goals and economic future. We are facilitating this shift by supporting the mining of essential minerals and improving ease of doing business,” he added.

The Minister also acknowledged the success of the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum 2025 (PMIF25), held earlier this year, which attracted over 5,000 participants and brought global attention to Pakistan’s mineral wealth. “PMIF25 marked a turning point, showcasing Pakistan as a serious player in the global minerals economy,” he said, while inviting USA companies to explore public-private partnerships and joint ventures.

He stressed how Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif & COAS Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir are personally leading the development of mining sector in Pakistan. The Minister emphasised that Government of Pakistan and SIFC are fully committed to provide all kinds of facilitation to international companies in building partnerships aimed at unlocking Pakistan’s vast mineral reserves.

USA Chargé d’Affaires Natalie Baker reaffirmed the long-standing economic partnership between the United States of America and Pakistan.

“Pakistan offers immense opportunities in the minerals sector. With one of the world’s largest undeveloped copper and gold deposits at Reko Diq, and a strong commitment to economic reforms, this is the right time for USA investors to explore and engage,” she said.

Ms. Baker commended Pakistan’s recent policy efforts to unlock the mining sector’s potential and underscored the USA Embassy’s commitment to supporting American businesses looking to invest in Pakistan.

“We are here to facilitate connections and create win-win partnerships. USA investors have long contributed to Pakistan’s development, and we see great promise in this sector,” she added.

Participants were briefed on ongoing regulatory reforms, including the development of a National Minerals Harmonisation Framework aimed at streamlining investment procedures and aligning federal and provincial regulations.

The digitalization of geological data and the upgrading of the Geological Survey of Pakistan are also underway to improve transparency and data access for investors.

In her closing remarks, Ms. Baker reiterated the USA government’s commitment to supporting Pakistan’s economic development and deepening bilateral economic ties. “We believe in Pakistan’s potential, and we see shared opportunity in its journey toward inclusive, sustainable growth,” she concluded.

SLIC and Mall Maweshi E-Store Pvt Ltd sign strategic MOU



F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC), the country’s largest life insurance corporation, on Wednesday announced a strategic partnership with Mall Maweshi E-Store Pvt. Ltd., Pakistan’s leading digital livestock marketplace platform. The collaboration will integrate specialized life insurance products into Mall Maweshi’s digital platform, providing Pakistan’s livestock farmers with accessible, tailored insurance coverage for the first time.

The partnership addresses a significant market gap, initially targeting livestock farmers within Mall Maweshi’s 50,000+ user community who often serve as primary income earners for their families. Currently, these farmers have limited access to formal life insurance products despite facing substantial financial risks in their agricultural operations.

“This partnership represents a transformative step in extending life insurance coverage to Pakistan’s agricultural community,” said Raja Abdul Waheed, Divisional Head (Bancassurance) at State Life Insurance Corporation.

“By leveraging Mall Maweshi’s digital infrastructure and deep understanding of the farming community, we can deliver innovative insurance solutions that meet the specific needs of livestock farmers while maintaining our commitment to serving all sections of Pakistani society.”

Under the memorandum of understanding, SLIC will develop and provide specialized Farmer Life Insurance products optimized for distribution through Mall Maweshi’s digital marketplace. The platform will enable seamless integration of insurance offerings alongside livestock trading activities, creating a comprehensive ecosystem for agricultural commerce and risk management.

The collaboration will feature streamlined data sharing protocols to facilitate accurate risk assessment and pricing, with Mall Maweshi providing relevant user data including verified farmers information.

“Our livestock community deserves access to the same financial protection and security that urban professionals are availing,” said Nabil Irfan, CEO at Mall Maweshi E-Store Pvt. Ltd. “This partnership with SLIC allows us to offer comprehensive risk management solutions that protect farming families while supporting the growth of Pakistan’s agricultural sector.”

Pakistan’s agricultural sector employs approximately 42% of the country’s workforce and contributes significantly to the national economy. However, farmers have historically faced challenges

accessing formal financial services, including life insurance coverage. This partnership aims to bridge that gap through technology-enabled distribution and farmer-focused product design.

The strategic collaboration reinforces SLIC’s position as Pakistan’s leading insurer while establishing Mall Maweshi as a comprehensive agricultural services platform.

State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan

State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) is the largest life and health insurer in the country and stands as a pillar of reliability and excellence. SLIC was Established under the Life Insurance Nationalization Order of 1972. SLIC is committed to extending insurance benefits to all sections of Pakistani society while meeting commitments to policyholders and the nation. The corporation maintains its principal office in Karachi and operates nationwide.

Mall Maweshi E-Store Pvt. Ltd.

Mall Maweshi E-Store Pvt. Ltd. operates Pakistan’s leading digital livestock marketplace platform, serving the country’s agricultural ecosystem with innovative technology solutions. The platform connects farmers, traders, buyers, and other agricultural stakeholders through transparent pricing and efficient transaction systems. Based in Karachi, Mall Maweshi serves over 50,000 users across Pakistan’s livestock trading community.

PSX stays bullish, gains 515 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with a bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 515.00 more points, a positive change of 0.42 percent, closing at 122,761.64 points as compared to 122,246.64 points on the last trading day.

A total of 749,799,164 shares were traded during the day as compared to 804,779,730 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 28.030 billion against Rs 37.614 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 472 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 274 of them recorded gains and 161 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 37 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 102,387,162 shares at Rs 1.49 per share, Pak Refinery with 47,112,412 shares at Rs 35.27 per share and Cnergycio PK with 39,573,275 shares at Rs 7.25 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs1,104.23 per share closing at Rs12,146.53 whereas runner-up was Ismail Industries Ltd with Rs130.00 rise in its share price to close at Rs1,930.00.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 163.93 per share price, closing at Rs 23,457.50, whereas the runner-up was Sazgar Engineering Works Limited with Rs 36.58 decline in its per share price to Rs 1,094.77.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik and US Chargé d’affaires to Pak Natalie Baker co-hosting a Webinar to promote investment in Pak’s mining sector amongst American Investors.

SCCI Spots Critical FY 2025-26 Budget Anomalies

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry identified a number of critical anomalies relating to taxes and duties in the Federal Budget for Financial Year 2025-26.

The chambers described that anomalies will prove counterproductive if not rectified before the passage of the final version of the Finance Bill by the parliament. The most anomalies relate to irrational taxation measures, custom and others through finance bill 2025-26, said in a joint statement by office bearers and anomaly committee of the SCCI here on Wednesday.

Highlighting the several anomalies, SCCI strongly opposed the powers granted to tax officials in the Federal Budget 2025–26, calling them excessive, subjective, and a source of

potential harassment for the business community.

Office bearers said the new provisions allow tax authorities to withdraw funds from business accounts and raid premises without prior notice.

They demanded the federal government withdraw these measures before the budget is passed to restore business confidence.

In the recommendations for modification and changes in Finance Bill 2025–26, the SCCI called for abolishment of human interaction in the tax collection process to ensure transparency and fairness and impartiality.

The chamber urged tax authorities to adopt a respectful and facilitative approach rather than blaming businesses for tax evasion.

Office bearers strongly opposed the 10-year restriction on tax benefits

for Special Economic Zones or until tax year 2035, whichever comes first.

Lost & Found

I have lost 3 passport numbers AT1752641, AT1752642, AT1752643. CNIC # 1730169832641. If anyone finds please return it to Jehangir Alam S/o Gul Alam Khan R/o Hayatabad Phase-1 E-2, Contact: 03005831677

Correction of father name

My correct name is Najeib Ullah son of Mehmood Jan. However, due to an error, my father’s name has been incorrectly mentioned as Mahmood Khan in my educational documents. It is therefore requested that the necessary correction be made. Najeib Ullah S/O Mehmood Jan NIC No: 17301-0296935-1

Court Notice

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal. No. 14/13. Institution. 3/2/2025. Date of hearing. 8/7/2025. Title: Saidul Abrar etc VS Gul Feroz Shah etc. Notice to No.7/2.Muner Islam s/o Sher Muhammad. 8/2. Sajid Islam s/o Hamed resident of Sura teshel Mandanr district Buner .Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will /shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 8/7/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Javeria Sartaj Khan Additional District Judge II /Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal. No. 69/13.Institution. 25/5/2025. Date of hearing. 17/7/2025. Title: Mst Jamela etc VS Mian Darvesh etc. Notice to No.22/3/2.Hakim Khan s/o Javed. 25/1/2. Ahmed Zaren s/o Miraj.32/1/4. Mian Zafar Shah s/o Fazal Akbar. 32/1/5.Zorshah s/o Fazal Akbar.33/3. Shahzada s/o Bacha Gul.39/1/4.Fazal Said Bacha s/o Manjor. 22/1/2 .Nowshad s/o Permada r.22/3/1.Dilshad s/o Javed .18/1/2.Mst Bakht Roza .18/1/2. Shah Khan s/o Khanun Bibi resident of Towda Cheena Peerabi tehsel Gadezal district Buner .Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will /shall not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 17/7/2025 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

SNGPL organizes badminton tournament



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has organized its first All Pakistan Badminton Tournament. The tournament features participation from prominent teams across the country, including Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Azad Kashmir,

Pakistan Army, WAPDA, Police, Railways, POF Wah, and Sui Northern Gas. A total of 200 players are participating in the event, comprising 140 male and 60 female athletes.

Cash prizes will be awarded at the conclusion of the tournament among the players. Currently, Sui Northern is actively promoting various sports including cricket, badminton, tennis, squash, mountaineering, climbing and others.

The Vice President of SNGPL Sports Cell extended his heartfelt gratitude to all esteemed guests, players, coaches, referees, and organizers whose dedication and tireless efforts made this tournament a resounding success.

The ceremony emphasized the importance of selecting deserving heroes without bias, highlighting the significance of civil society awards like the Icon Award. Outstanding individuals and organizations were recognized in fields such as Film, TV, Entertainment, Business, Journalism, NGOs, Sports Engineering, and more.

Legendary film star Munawar Saeed, Mumtaz Begum and others were honored with the Icon of the Nation Award for Lifetime Achievement. Commitment to Excellence

Founder of Icon Awards and Chairman, Rahmatullah Memon, CEO Uzma Sabir and Mansoor Mugheri reiterated their commitment to merit-based awards, rejecting any monetary influence or favoritism. T

he event concluded with plans to continue and expand the awards series, emphasizing the need to provide opportunities for youth to utilize their potential.

Speakers at the event, including Chief Guest Saleem Balouch Adviser to Sindh Govt for Public

US, China and UK top 3 destinations of exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year 2024-25, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK).

Total exports to the US during July-May 2024-25 were recorded at US \$5552.615 million against the exports of US \$4999.608 million during July-May 2023-24, showing an increase of 11.06 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$2270.032 million against the exports of US \$2556.126 million last year, showing a decrease of 11.19 percent.

UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$1985.167 million during the month under review against the exports of US \$1863.566 million, State Bank of Pakistan data revealed.

Among other countries, Pakistani exports to UAE stood at US \$1979.847 million against US \$1879.640 million last year while the exports to Germany were recorded at US \$1549.055 million against US \$1383.763 million last year, data said.

During July-May 2024-25, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$1384.521 million against \$1275.110 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$1046.224 million against \$1032.472 million.

Icon of Nation Awards ceremony concluded

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 10th Icon of the Nation Awards ceremony was held, honoring outstanding achievements in various fields. This event organized by Icon PR & Communication, Standards Gazette International and Sindh Journalists Network. The event was attended by prominent personalities, including Adviser Sindh Government for Public Health, Saleem Balouch, Khair Muhammad Kalwar Secretary Culture of Sindh, Syed Hassan Naqvi Commissioner Karachi, and General Manager PTV, Amjad Shah.

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he event concluded with plans to continue and expand the awards series, emphasizing the need to provide opportunities for youth to utilize their potential.



Health, Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi, Khair Muhammad Kalwar Secretary Culture Sindh, and others, praised the merit-based selection process and highlighted the importance of recognizing deserving individuals.

The Icon of the Nation Awards have faced numerous hurdles over the past decade, but determination and perseverance have led to remarkable successes.

As they look to the future, they remain committed to promoting excellence and recognizing outstanding achievements.

The following entrepreneurs and individuals were awarded the Icon of the Nation Hamid Raza, Muhammad Irshad, Anjum Qureshi Naat Khuwan National Assembly, Businessman Haroon Nawaz, Saeed Hanifia, Rafia Mallah Registrar Education, Social Activist Aijaz Ali Chajro (Work for Interfaith and Harmony), Animal Right Activism Syed Faisal Rumi, Singer Waheed Khayal (Classical Singer), Jamal Akbar, Singer Faakhir Mahmood, TV Stars Aina Asif, Shaheen Khan, Asim Mehmood, Ahy Khan, Sarah Omair Siddiqui, Ilma Jaferi,

Danish Maqsood, Saleem Meraj, Lifetime Achievement Award Munawwar Saeed and Mumtaz Begum the others Khair Muhammad Kalwar (Secretary Culture, Tourism, Antiquities & Archives Department) in Sports Jahangir Khan (Junior Squash Player), Alia Soomro (Pakistan’s First Female Boxer), Arham Bin Farukh (Table Tennis Star), Investigative Journalist: Akhtiar Khokhar, Anchors Sahir Lodhi, Nadeem Molvi, TV Drama Director Syed Meesam Naqvi (Big Bang Entertainment), Drama Writer Amber Azhar, Akbar Khamiso Khan Algoza Nawaz, Ustaad Farhan Raees Khan (Sitar player), Art & Calligraphy: Syed Abdul Irfan, Environmentalist Masood Lohar, Best Healthcare Professional Professor Doctor Muri Lal (SIUT), Dr. Prof Javed Akbar Shah (SICVD), Amjad Shah (General Manager PTV), Rafiq Ur Rehman Memon (Commissioner Federal Board Revenue), Muhammad Saleem Baloch (Adviser for Public Health, Govt. of Sindh), Minhaj Gulfam (President Karachi Mobile & Electronics Dealers Association), Syed Hassan Naqvi (Commissioner Karachi).



In brief

Former midfielder Lallana retires

LONDON (Agencies): Former England midfielder Adam Lallana has retired from playing at the age of 37. Lallana, who won 34 caps for his country, returned to Southampton last season after making his name in his first spell there. He only made five starts as Saints were relegated to the Championship but also worked as a coach, a role he will continue at St Mary's under new boss Will Still. Lallana joined Liverpool from Saints for £25m in 2014 and went on to win the Premier League and Champions League. "As I call time on my playing career, I do so with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride," Lallana said on his social media accounts. "Southampton... the place where it all started, and fittingly where it ends. It's the club I ultimately owe everything to." Lallana came through Southampton's academy before making his debut for the first team as an 18-year-old in 2006. He featured almost 300 times for Saints across the two spells and was part of the squad that won back-to-back promotions from League One to the Premier League. Lallana was captain when he left for Anfield during a summer where he also played for England at the 2014 World Cup. After winning the Champions League with Liverpool in 2019 and the league title the following campaign, Lallana joined Brighton before returning to St Mary's in 2024. "I'm proud of the playing career I've had and have no regrets about any of it," Lallana added.

Rubiales to appeal fine

MADRID (AFP): Disgraced former Spanish football federation chief Luis Rubiales will appeal at the Supreme Court the confirmation of his 10,800-euro fine for forcibly kissing Jenni Hermoso, his lawyer said on Wednesday. After a keenly awaited trial that gripped the country, Spain's top criminal court in February found Rubiales guilty of sexual assault for the kiss at the 2023 Women's World Cup that generated global outrage. The Audiencia Nacional also cleared him of a separate accusation of coercion for allegedly forcing Hermoso to downplay the incident afterwards. Both parties contested the sentence, which fell short of the two and a half year prison term sought by prosecutors and infuriated feminist groups that condemned the punishment as too lenient. Rubiales maintained the kiss was a consensual "peck" between friends celebrating during the medal ceremony after star forward Hermoso had just helped Spain beat England in the final in Sydney, denying any coercion. The court said in a statement on Wednesday that it had rejected the appeals of the defence team and the prosecutors, maintaining the conviction and the fine. "The kiss was not consensual" and Hermoso "expressed her displeasure with what happened, as she herself confirmed in the trial, as well as her teammates", the court wrote. "It cannot be said that a kiss in those circumstances was frequent or common or usual." It also confirmed that Rubiales, former women's national team manager Jorge Vilda and two former senior federation officials, Albert Luque and Ruben Rivera, were cleared of the coercion charge.

Asif wins bronze medal in Asian 6 Red C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cueist Muhammad Asif lost to Malaysia's Thor Chun Leong in the semifinal of the Asian 6 Red and Team Snooker Championship 2025 Colombo, Sri Lanka. According to details, Thor Chun Leong beat Asif by 2-5 (39-5, 4-59(35), 41-0, 62(35)-0, 1-43(35), 34(33)-25), 78(70)-0). However Asif won a bronze medal in the Asian 6 Red Championship. Meanwhile, the team championship will start on Thursday in which 16 teams from 13 countries will participate. Pakistan will play two team in the championship, Pakistan 1 includes Awais Munir and



Muhammad Asif while Pakistan 2 comprise Shahid Aftab and Muhammad Sajjad. In the team championship, 16 teams have

been formed into four groups. Each team will play three matches after which the top two teams will qualify for the quarterfinals.

Raducanu misses out on Eastbourne quarter-final



E A S T B O U R N E (Agencies): Emma Raducanu succumbed to defeat by teenager Maya Joint in an edgy second-round match at Eastbourne. The 22-year-old lost 4-6 6-1 7-6 (7-4) to the Australian 19-year-old, who secured just the second grass-court win of her career. Former US Open champion Raducanu rallied from 5-2 down in the deciding set to force a tie-break. But the out-of-sorts Briton could not make it two comeback victories in as many days, having fought back from a set down in an emotional first-round win on the south coast. Earlier, defending Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova saved match points against a British player for the second day in a row to reach the quarter-finals. Jodie Burrage held three match points on Krejickova's serve in the deciding set but the Czech,

playing only her sixth match this year after a lengthy lay-off with a back injury, battled to a 6-4 4-6 7-6 (7-3) win. Raducanu arrived in Eastbourne as the British number one, having enjoyed a run to the quarter-finals at Queen's a fortnight ago. But as she prepares for her fourth Wimbledon appearance - where she has twice reached the fourth round - her performance at Eastbourne looked laboured. Some impressive serving in the opening set gave her the lead but the wheels seemed to come off in the second, and a commanding performance from Joint levelled the match. World number 38 Raducanu pulled out of the Berlin Open last week because of a back issue but, while she seemed uncomfortable at times, she did not call for the trainer at any point against Joint. Raducanu held back

tears after securing victory on Tuesday and said she was "mentally not really present" at points during the match. She slumped in her chair at the change of ends at times on Wednesday, shaking her head in frustration - but she dialled back in to produce a thrilling end to the third set. After breaking Raducanu in the first game of the decider, Joint saved break-back points at 3-2 then broke for a second time after Raducanu followed a double fault with a long forehand. But Raducanu rediscovered some momentum, twice breaking as Joint served for the match - and she even seemed to surprise herself with a remarkable break to love for 5-5. The to-ing and fro-ing continued, both players exchanging breaks before Raducanu denied Joint for a third time as she served for the match and forcing a tie-break. But an unfortunate net cord paved the way for Joint, who took the lead and sealed her place in the quarter-finals with an ace. Joint, who was ranked 684th in the world at the beginning of 2024, will face world number 69 Anna Blinkova in the last eight. She will also make her Grand Slam debut at Wimbledon when it begins on 30 June.

No need to rush Archer back to Tests - Vaughan

LONDON (Agencies): Jofra Archer should not play in England's second Test against India at Edgbaston, says former captain Michael Vaughan. Archer played in his first first-class match for four years this week as he seeks to prove his fitness for a return to the Test arena, where he has not featured since 2021. England selector Luke Wright said earlier this month that if Archer comes through the four-day game for Sussex he could be available for the second Test, which starts on 2 July. "The good thing is that Jofra is back in the equation - but I'd like to see him play another four-day game," said Vaughan, who is now a BBC Test Match Special pundit. "He's not played the longer format for four years so why, on the back of one game for Sussex against Durham, would you rush him back?" "We know the intensity at Test-match level is so different to county cricket. Let him play another four-day game - I would go with the same line-up, as long as the bowlers are fine and there are no niggles."



Farbrace told BBC 5 Sports Extra. "We would all love to see Jofra playing for England because he makes England a much better team, and he would give them a much better chance of winning the big series. "But let's look after him, let's be careful with him. The conversation we'd had [with England] was that he would play in this game, and then we'd reassess. "All I will report back to them is that he bowled nicely, he looks like he's in good rhythm, he's bowled 18 overs and it's up to them whether they pick him." Archer emerged as one of England's most exciting prospects in 2019 when he bowled the decisive super over in the home World Cup win, before taking 22 wickets at 20.27 across four Tests in the Ashes series that followed. But he has since been plagued by injury - an elbow issue first suffered in 2020 has required several surgeries and he also had a stress fracture in his back in 2022.

As a result, Archer's frequent attempts to return to international cricket have been stop-start. He was expected to play in the white-ball series against West Indies at the beginning of this summer but hurt his thumb while playing in the Indian Premier League. Sussex start another County Championship game against Warwickshire on Sunday, which would overlap with the second Test - and Vaughan has backed the bowlers who played in the first Test to be selected again. "Josh Tongue, the Hoover, let him do that again at Edgbaston," Vaughan said, referring to the Nottinghamshire seamer's ability to knock over the lower order as he did in both innings at Headingley. "Chris Woakes needs more of a run out, and then Ben Stokes and Brydon Carse have been fantastic. They're 1-0 up, played some great cricket, so go with the same again."

Pakistan storms into final of 2nd Asian Doubles Squash C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's dynamic squash duo, Noor Zaman and Nasir Iqbal delivered a thrilling performance to secure a place in the final of the 2nd Asian Doubles Squash Championships 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Wednesday. According to information made available here by Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF), Pakistani pair edged past hosts Malaysia in a fiercely contested semifinal. In the encounter that lasted 69 minutes, Pakistani pair bounced back after a narrow first-game loss to overcome the Malaysian team 2-1 with game scores of 10-11, 11-9, 11-9. In the final, they will take on traditional rivals and top-seeded India in what promises to be a nail-biting championship clash. The final will be played on Thursday.

Gambhir backs India bowlers

LEEDS (AFP): India coach Gautam Gambhir has backed his side's raw bowling attack to "deliver for us" despite a chastening defeat by England in the first Test at Headingley. India slumped to a dispiriting five-wicket defeat on Tuesday after they failed to stop England reaching a target of 371 in the 10th-highest run chase in Test history. Ben Duckett scored a superb century and shared an opening stand of 188 with Zak Crawley, with India's Jasprit Bumrah -- the world's top-ranked Test bowler -- unable to take a wicket in England's second innings. India have said they only plan to play Bumrah in three matches of this five-Test series against England, which continues at Edgbaston next week, in a bid to maintain his fitness following a back injury. Gambhir insisted that was still the plan, even though India are now under pressure to get back into the series with a victory in Birmingham. Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj are the senior members of India's pace attack. Prashidh Krishna and Nitish Kumar Reddy -- the latter left out at Headingley -- have just a handful of Test appearances behind them, with Arshdeep Singh yet to make his debut. How India, without veteran seamer Mohammed Shami, missing from this tour following knee trouble, take the 20 wickets needed to win a Test remains an open question.

Pakistan to play T20I series in BD next month



LAHORE (AFP): The Pakistan men's team will travel to Bangladesh next month to play three Twenty20 internationals as part of the build-up to next year's World Cup. Pakistan's tour will be a reciprocal one after they hosted Bangladesh for three T20Is in May-June this year, all won by the home team and

played in Lahore. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said it has arranged various series to build for the World Cup to be co-hosted in India and Sri Lanka next year. "Pakistan will arrive in Dhaka on 16 July before taking on the home side in the matches on July 20, 22 and 24 as part of the build-up for the World

Cup," the PCB said in a statement. All three T20Is will be held at the Sher-e-Bangla National cricket stadium in Dhaka. From Bangladesh, Pakistan team will fly to the West Indies to play three T20Is and as many one-day internationals the schedule of which will be announced later. Series schedule in Bangladesh 16 July — Pakistan men's team arrival 20 July — First T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka 22 July — Second T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka 24 July — Third T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka.

Kipyegon seeks history with four minute mile attempt



PARIS (AFP): Triple Olympic champion Faith Kipyegon of Kenya will attempt to make history by becoming the first woman to run a sub-four minute mile on Thursday, but to do so she must shave nearly eight seconds off her world record. Already the world record holder in this non-Olympic distance equivalent to 1.6km, Kipyegon will nevertheless have to smash her own benchmark of 4min 07.64sec by gaining almost two seconds per 400m. No woman has ever attempted the feat, which was first achieved in 1954 by Roger Bannister — in 3min 59.4sec — in what has gone down as one of track running's most momentous achievements. When Bannister ran a sub-four minute mile 71

years ago, racing conditions were very different. The Briton did it after a morning's work at a hospital during a meet on a cinder track in Oxford and wearing heavy spiked shoes. In the unofficial race in Paris organised by Nike, 31-year-old Kipyegon will benefit from the wealth of her sponsor's technological support. The "Breaking 4" project follows on six years after Eliud Kipchoge's "Breaking 2" — when the Kenyan became the first man to run a marathon in under two hours. For the attempt, Kipyegon will sport a custom-made suit as well as new Victory Elite FK shoes. She will also reportedly be accompanied by a team of male pacemakers around the

Stade Charlety track. Despite all this, some believe that the task of trimming nearly eight seconds off her world record time will be beyond the three-time Olympic 1500m gold medallist. "Spoiler alert. She's not going to break 4:00. And it's not going to be particularly close," said Robert Johnson, co-founder of the specialist site LetsRun.com. He highlighted Kipyegon's comeback race, when she ran a 1,000m in China at the end of April in 2min 29.21sec. "She was fantastic... To nearly break a world record in your season opener is amazing and shows you why Kipyegon is one of track & field's all-time greats," said Johnson. "If you run 2:29.21 1000m pace for 1609 meters — otherwise known as a mile — You get 4:00.08. To break 4:00, Kipyegon would have to run an extra 609 meters faster than what she ran (that) day." Kipyegon, nonetheless, has the backing of certain fellow long-distance Olympians, with Norway's double champion Jakob Ingebrigtsen telling AFP: "I'm really intrigued to see if it's possible.

Chelsea through to Club World Cup knockouts

PHILADELPHIA (AFP): Chelsea beat Esperance of Tunisia 3-0 on Tuesday to set up a Club World Cup last-16 tie against Benfica, who defeated Bayern Munich 1-0 earlier in searing heat. Elsewhere minnows Auckland City claimed a memorable draw against Boca Juniors while Los Angeles FC bowed out of the tournament with a stalemate against Flamengo.



In Charlotte, Andreas Schjelderup scored the only goal for Benfica in their Group C clash with Bayern in front of 33,287 fans, finishing first-time from a cutback by his fellow Norwegian Fredrik Aursnes in the 13th minute. The German champions, who left the likes of Harry Kane and Michael Olise on the bench at kick-off, were unable to come back in sweltering afternoon conditions in heatwave-hit North Carolina. Kane and Olise came on at half-time and Bayern did then look more dangerous, but Leroy Sane was denied when clean through by Benfica's Ukrainian goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin. A draw would have allowed Bayern to top the section but a Kimmich effort that found the net was ruled out for offside and Trubin denied Sane again while Kane mistimed a header late on. It was Benfica's first ever win in 14 competitive meetings with Bayern and it meant they finished first and will next play Group D runners-up Chelsea in

Charlotte in the last 16 on Saturday. "I think this was a very fair and important win, historic really," said Benfica coach Bruno Lage. "We were as straightforward and assertive as we should be and I think we were very effective in delivering our strategy today." Bayern finished second and so will go to Miami on Sunday to take on Brazilian giants Flamengo, with a potential quarter-final against European champions Paris Saint-Germain awaiting. "You could see that it was really tough conditions so respect to both teams for that," said Bayern coach Vincent Kompany. "Our first half was not good enough for sure, the second half was definitely more the level that we expected and good enough to score one or two or three goals."

Another weather delay That result meant whatever Boca did against Auckland City in Nashville would not be enough to qualify, but the Argentine giants were still expected to do better than draw 1-1 against the tournament minnows from New Zealand. Auckland had lost 10-0 to Bayern and 6-0 to Benfica but this time they recovered from falling behind in the first half when goalkeeper Nathan Garrow palmed a Lautaro Di Lollo header into his own net. Christian Gray equalised with a header in the second half to earn the sole representatives from Oceania a remarkable point. "You can't say we haven't learned from the experience of being at the tournament, I'm thrilled for the players and the club, it's wonderful. It's something to go home with," said City coach Paul Posa. "We're a tiny club with a huge heart and that's evident for all to see."

Delap off mark The game was the fifth so far at the tournament to be suspended due to a weather warning, with play stopping for almost an hour — when the action restarted not a drop of rain had fallen at Geodis Park. Chelsea eased through to their meeting with Benfica with a clinical 3-0 win over Esperance at Lincoln Financial Field in Group D in Philadelphia. New signing Liam Delap opened his account for the club with a deftly-taken finish in stoppage time at the end of the first half, just moments after Tosin Adarabioyo had headed the Blues in front. Teenage talent Tyrrique George added Chelsea's third deep into injury time at the end of the game with a low shot that crept under Esperance goalkeeper Bechir Ben Said. Flamengo, who had already assured themselves of top spot in the section after wins over Chelsea and Esperance, wrapped up their first-round campaign with a 1-1 draw against already-eliminated LAFC in Orlando. Los Angeles forward Denis Bouanga threatened to give the MLS side an upset win in their final game of the tournament after a cool finish in the 84th minute, only for Wallace Yan to equalise for Flamengo two minutes later. Elsewhere on Tuesday, FIFA opened a disciplinary investigation into Pachuca's Gustavo Cabral after allegations he made a racist comment to Real Madrid's Antonio Rudiger. The incident came towards the end of Sunday's game between the two teams which Real won 3-1.



In brief

IRSA releases 273,117 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 273,117 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 362,766 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1469.04 feet which was 67.04 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 229,300 cusecs and 153,800 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1172.05 feet, which was 122.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 29,149 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 197,677, 144,726, 86,236 and 35,045 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 31,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 40,444 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Mother booked for 'murder' of 3 children

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Bani Police had registered a case against the mother for allegedly murdering her three children in Mohallah Raja Sultan on the complaint of her husband. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, the plaintiff, in his complaint, accused his wife of killing her children, citing her threats in that regard during a quarrel between them a few days ago. He suspected that his wife had killed the children due to domestic discord, the spokesman added. The plaintiff's wife, he said, was already in protective custody of the police, and was undergoing treatment in the hospital. The spokesman said post-mortem of the bodies had been conducted and the report was awaited. He said the police would investigate the case on merit keeping in view the forensic evidence and the post-mortem report.

RWMC conducts cleaning operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) conducted extensive cleaning and desilting operations throughout the city during the recent rainfall to ensure the smooth operation of the drainage system. According to the RWMC spokesperson, the Company's special teams remained actively engaged in cleaning drains, manholes, and drainage channels in various parts of the city. With the help of heavy machinery and manual workforce, mud, stones, plastic and other waste materials were removed to ensure uninterrupted water flow during rainfall. Under this campaign, a special cleanliness operation was underway in commercial areas, residential localities, markets, parks, and densely populated zones. He said that Company officers and field staff were inspecting daily and promptly identifying and resolving drainage-related issues. Highlighting the importance of public cooperation, RWMC has appealed to citizens to avoid dumping garbage, construction debris, or household waste into drains, as such practices clog the drainage system, resulting in stagnant water and potentially causing urban flooding. He said that social and mobilisation teams were distributing pamphlets, making announcements in mosques, and engaging community leaders in various areas to create awareness about the importance of cleanliness.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Nagvi chairing a meeting regarding arrangements during Muharram in Islamabad. —APP Photo

Ayaz reaffirms unwavering support for Palestine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Dr. Zaher Zaid Wednesday called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at the Parliament House. Ayaz Sadiq has strongly condemned the grave human rights violations occurring in Gaza. He described the ongoing Israeli aggression as a major humanitarian catastrophe. The loss of over 50,000 lives due to Israeli attacks is a heart-wrenching tragedy for every Pakistani, he stated.

The Speaker emphasized that the continuous killing of innocent children in Gaza is a critical test for the conscience of the global community. He also expressed deep concern over Israel's obstruction of humanitarian

aid to Gaza, stating that using food as a weapon is utterly unacceptable.

Ayaz Sadiq reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, asserting that the country would continue to stand by its Palestinian brothers on moral and diplomatic fronts at every level. He also denounced Israel's attack on Iran, calling it a blatant violation of international law and a serious threat to regional and global peace.

Welcoming the ceasefire between Iran and Israel, the Speaker said that the world today needs peace, not war.

Ayaz Sadiq said that Pakistan has always given a firm and effective response to Indian aggression. He said that during the recent escalation, the alliance between India and Israel has

become visibly evident. He categorically stated that Pakistan does not recognize Israel as a state but regards it as a terrorist organization.

Ambassador Dr. Zaher Zaid expressed deep gratitude for Pakistan's consistent and principled support for the Palestinian cause. He said that the oppressed people of Gaza highly value the solidarity and sympathy shown by the people of Pakistan.

"We are proud to have Pakistan standing with us," said Ambassador Zaid, adding that he hopes Pakistan will continue to raise its voice for Palestine at international forums.

He further stressed that Palestine urgently needs humanitarian aid, diplomatic backing, and international pressure to stop the ongoing Israeli atrocities.

25 check post set up in Rawalpindi Division

RAWALPINDI (APP): With the looming threat of Congo virus across Punjab, about 25 inter-provincial and inter-district check posts have been established in Rawalpindi Division to prevent the spread of the deadly disease. Two Congo fever patients have already been reported in Rawalpindi.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Minister for Livestock Ashiq Hussain Kamrani have issued directives for taking steps to overcome the Congo fever emergency. According to the focal person of Livestock Department Rawalpindi, a public awareness campaign was being run by the Department to prevent the Congo virus.

He said the staff deployed at the check posts worked in three shifts, who applied tick spray and repellents to the cattle aboard transport vehicles entering Rawalpindi. The Director Livestock Rawalpindi made surprise visits to the check post to ensure the attendance of the staff, the focal persons added.

An information desk, he said, had been established in the Livestock Directorate Rawalpindi for awareness and prevention of the Congo virus. The focal person said on the instructions of the Attock

Deputy Commissioner had imposed Section 144 to close cattle markets in the district.

He said the main objective of the Livestock Department was to create awareness about the Congo virus, which was a dangerous disease. The public should take precautionary measures and cooperate with the staff of the Livestock Department so that life-threatening diseases like Congo virus could be eliminated, he added.

Police conduct search operation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Wednesday carried out a grand search and combing operation in various areas under the jurisdiction of Secretariat Police Station as part of its ongoing crackdown against criminal elements.

An official told APP that the operation was conducted under the supervision of SP City Zone and included the participation of lady police officers. Before the operation, all personnel were briefed regarding the objectives and procedures of the mission. He said the search operation led to the checking of 470 individuals, 188 houses, and 15 shops. Additionally, 73 motorcycles and 27 vehicles were also inspected during the operation.

He said 19 suspicious individuals were shifted to the police station for further investigation, while two suspects involved in illegal possession of weapons were arrested. The police also recovered arms along with ammunition from their possession.

He said the objective of the operation was to curb criminal activities and maintain peace in the area. Inspector General (IG) Police Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi has issued special directions to conduct grand search operations across the district to eradicate crime. The public has been urged to cooperate with police officials during the checking process.

Pakistan seizes \$12 bln worth of drugs in one year: Talal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said on Wednesday that Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) had seized drugs worth \$12 billion in the past year. While responding to opposition's cut motions during a National Assembly session, he said the international community now recognizes the ANF's efforts. "Pakistan is a transit country, and one of our neighbors produces 40% of the world's drugs. Despite this, the ANF has shown great alertness and success," he said.

He added that Pakistan had also hosted regional conferences with Central Asian countries. These meetings helped share expertise, build capacity, and provide important equipment to partner nations. Talking about human smuggling, he said Pakistan had made major improvements through new technology and reforms. "It is now impossible to get a fake passport in Pakistan. Our passports follow global

standards, and our immigration system is fully digital and linked with international systems," he said.

He said modern equipment had been installed at airports and borders, and FIA officers had received special training to stop illegal migration. He admitted that human smuggling had happened in the past, but said the government had taken strong steps to control it. "We have arrested 285 well-known human smugglers and removed over 100 FIA officials involved in illegal activities," he added.

He said the government was fully committed to a zero-tolerance policy, following the Prime Minister's orders. "Anyone deported or caught trying to leave the country illegally will face a five-year travel ban and will not be allowed to get a passport," he said.

Talal Chaudhry also praised the Islamabad Police for their handling of violent protests and their overall performance. He said crime in the capital had dropped by

19% over the past year. "If someone enters Islamabad with sticks and tries to attack, the police will respond. But action is only taken against attackers, not ordinary people," he added.

He said the police had solved all high-profile cases during the year and were improving with the help of new welfare programs, including the National Police Hospital. He thanked Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal for supporting these efforts.

The minister also discussed development projects in Islamabad. He said Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi had promised the Prime Minister that Islamabad would be developed into a modern city.

"This includes underpasses, overhead bridges built quickly and at low cost, as well as new hotels, resorts, and upgraded infrastructure," he said. He called the city's development a mix of speed and quality, backed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

181 processions, 965 majalis planned during Muharram

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 181 religious processions and 965 Majalis are scheduled to take place in Islamabad during the holy month of Muharram, as Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Naqvi was briefed during a high-level security meeting on Wednesday.

In preparation, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting to review security and administrative arrangements, emphasizing the government's commitment to ensuring peace, sectarian harmony, and the safety of citizens during this sensitive period.

The meeting, held at the Ministry of Interior, brought together senior officials including Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, the Additional Secretary Interior, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, ADCG, DIGs, all SPs, and Assistant Commissioners. The Deputy Commissioner and DIG Islamabad gave a comprehensive briefing on preparations made by the administration and law

enforcement agencies.

Interior Minister Naqvi directed authorities to enforce strict checking at all entry and exit points of processions and religious gatherings. A central control room has been set up at Islamabad Safe City to monitor events in real time through advanced surveillance systems. In addition, a multi-layered security plan has been finalized, covering all venues and procession routes. Officials confirmed that geo-tagging of Imambargahs, Majalis locations, and routes has already been completed to facilitate coordinated security efforts.

The minister underscored the need for close monitoring of social media, declaring zero tolerance for any provocative content or hate speech that could disturb public order. Digital surveillance teams have been tasked with actively tracking online platforms to prevent the spread of inflammatory material.

Acknowledging the extended hours and challenges faced by security personnel, Naqvi ordered that duty rosters be arranged in shifts to ensure proper rest for staff, along with provisions for food and refreshments during their deployment. He instructed all agencies to maintain high levels of coordination and vigilance, warning that any lapse could be exploited by anti-state elements.

Naqvi reiterated that foolproof security is non-negotiable and urged full implementation of the code of conduct. He called for continued engagement with religious scholars from all sects to foster unity and prevent misunderstandings during Muharram. Appealing to the public, he asked citizens to uphold mutual respect and religious tolerance throughout the month.

Officials confirmed that a detailed security audit has already been completed, and law enforcement agencies are fully mobilized to ensure peaceful observance of Muharram in the federal capital.

IHC suspends ban on ex-boxing federation officials

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday temporarily suspended the notification of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) for lifetime ban and a penalty of Rs. 1 million on former President and secretary general of Pakistan Boxing Federation.

The Court has referred the matter to the Panel of Adjudicators constituted under Clause 23 of the Constitution of the PSB. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case filed by former President of the Pakistan Boxing Federation and former Secretary General, Lt. Col. (R) Muhammad Nasir Ijaz. In a written order, the court said that since an effective appellate forum exists under the PSB Constitution, the filing of a writ petition before this Court at this stage is premature.

The Court accordingly converted the writ into a grievance petition and deemed it pending before

the Panel of Adjudicators, directing that the matter be decided strictly in accordance with law after affording fair hearing to all parties.

Counsel for the petitioners, Mr. Asad Javed Advocate and Mr. Syed Hassan Ali Raza Advocate, presented their arguments before the Court. On behalf of the PSB, Legal Advisor Mr. Saif ur Rehman Rao contended that an adequate appellate mechanism is available under the PSB Constitution and that the petitioners should avail the remedy provided therein.

The PSB assured the Court that the decision of the Panel of Adjudicators—whether in favour of or against the Board—shall be fully honored and implemented. It was further submitted that no member of the initial inquiry committee shall be included in the adjudicating panel to ensure impartiality, and that the proceedings shall be conducted in a fair, transparent,

and independent manner.

The controversy arose during a boxing tournament in Italy in February 2024, when PN boxer Mr. Zohaib Rasheed was alleged to have unlawfully entered the hotel room of UK-born Pakistani boxer Ms. Laura Akram, stolen cash and his own passport, and fled the scene. Following the incident, the PSB held the senior officials of the Pakistan Boxing Federation responsible and imposed disciplinary sanctions.

The Court, while refraining from expressing any opinion on the merits of the impugned orders, clarified that the operation of the impugned Notification dated 27 September 2024—regarding the lifetime ban and penalty—shall remain suspended until the final decision is rendered by the Panel of Adjudicators, in order to allow the panel to exercise its jurisdiction effectively.

Ninth Space Summer School to start at IST

ISLAMABAD (APP): As summer draws near, the Institute of Space Technology (IST) is once again preparing to welcome young science enthusiasts for the 9th edition of the Space Summer School (SSS 2025).

The initiative organized annually since 2017, has become a cornerstone in Pakistan's efforts to foster STEM education among school students. Held under the umbrella of the Space Education Research Lab (SERL) at the National Center for GIS and Space Applications (NCGSA), the week-long program brings together students from across the country for immersive learning in space science and technology.

This year's school will run from July 21 to 25, with sessions held daily from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at IST's Islamabad campus. Over the years, SSS has gained recognition for its experiential learning model, combining interactive lectures, hands-on activities, software simulations, STEAM-based space proj-

ects, lab visits, and even astronomy night sessions.

These activities aim to spark scientific curiosity and build foundational skills in disciplines such as rocketry, satellite engineering, aviation, astronomy, and climate science. The program is structured around two distinct academic streams: Abecedarian for students of grades 6–8, and Virtuoso for students of grades 9–12, allowing age-appropriate content delivery and project assignments.

Students are also encouraged to work on group projects, selecting specific domains for focused mentorship and collaborative exploration. With each passing year, the Space Summer School has grown in reach and reputation, often drawing participants from dozens of educational institutions nationwide. The program continues to evolve, and this year's edition includes enhanced digital engagement, with updates being regularly shared via Facebook (@SpaceOutreach) and Instagram (@serl.ncgsa).

The registration for SSS

2025 is currently open through the dedicated portals bit.ly/ssncgsa and www.ncgsa.org.pk/ss25. While seats are limited, organizers have advised students and parents to ensure early registration and confirmation to secure participation.

Beyond the classrooms and labs, the Space Summer School is seen as more than just a seasonal activity. It is part of a broader national vision to integrate space science into youth education, providing students with exposure to cutting-edge research environments and encouraging interest in science-led careers.

The aspiring students may contact the program coordinator, Daniyal Raza Kazmi at serl.ncgsa@gmail.com or on 0334-2949667 / 051-9075864 for further details.

The Space Summer School remains a unique platform in Pakistan's academic landscape—one that continues to nurture the next generation of scientists, innovators, and space explorers.

as at risk of overflowing. These vulnerable points included Katarian Bridge, Bangash Colony, Zia-ul-Haq Colony, Pirwadhai, Boring Road Dhoke Mangtal, PSO Pump area in Pirwadhai, Dhoke Najo Khayaban Sir Syed, Dhoke Dalal near Chungi No. 4, M. Hussain Bridge, Mehr Colony Dhoke Hassu, Hazara Colony Bridge in Ganjmandi, Dhoke Ratta, and Gawalmandi.

Rescue teams will also be deployed including Dhok Elahi Bakhsh, Sadiqabad, Javed Colony, Nadeem Colony, Tipu Road, Aslam Market, Tahl

Mori, Faisal Colony, Bakra Mandi, Jan Colony, Tench Bhata, Banaras Colony, Range Road, Sheron Colony, and Sujana Camp.

The District Emergency Officer said Rescue 1122 is fully equipped with gadgets to cope with flood including boats, life jackets, life rings, and other necessary tools. In addition, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) and Civil Defense working with coordination to protect lives and property during emergencies.

"We are ready to respond to any situation and ensure the safety of the public," he added.



RAWALPINDI: Vendors have occupied the Pirwadhai bus stop, forcing vehicles to stand on the road and disrupting traffic flow – a situation that demands immediate attention from authorities. —APP Photo

Man held for wife’s murder

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): A man has been arrested on the charge of killing his wife in southern Ghazni province, police said on Wednesday. In a statement, the police headquarters said the man allegedly killed his wife four days ago in the Chaltan area of Andar district. The statement linked the incident with domestic violence and said the accused had confessed to his crime. The detainee would be referred to judicial organs after initial investigation, the statement added.

Man stabbed to death

PARAKH (Pajhwok): A man was stabbed to death and his sister was injured as a result of a personal enmity in central Panjsher province, an official said on Wednesday. Police spokesman Haqmal Sa’ad told Pajhwok Afghan News the incident took place in Staicha village of Rukha district due to personal enmity last night. He said a man named Hayatullah was stabbed to death by Rahmatullah, a resident of eastern Nuristan province, and injured his sister.

Kabul residents struggle with power cuts amid rising heat

KABUL (Amu TV): As temperatures rise, many Kabul residents are struggling with prolonged power outages, often receiving insufficient hours of electricity per day, far short of meeting basic residential and commercial needs.

During increasingly hot days, households report frequent disruptions that hinder daily routines and productivity. “In this heat, our need for electricity is greater than ever,” said Zahra Ahmadi, a Kabul resident, reflecting a common con-

cern. Others voiced frustrations over kitchen appliances failing, water pumps shutting off, and children unable to study at night.

Economic experts warn that the rolling power cuts are having a ripple effect across the city’s fragile economy. “These outages disrupt businesses, slow down productivity and undermine people’s livelihoods,” explained Shir Qureshi, an economist in Kabul. Despite the severity of the disruptions, Da Afghanistan Breshna

Sherkat (DABS), the state-run electricity utility, has not provided a clear explanation for the increased interruptions.

Afghanistan currently imports about 80 percent of its electricity—approximately 760 megawatts—from neighboring Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran. With demand soaring in summer and regional supply strained, the city’s power infrastructure continues to struggle, challenging both residents and policymakers.

Fire erupts near MSF facility in Khost

KHOST (Amu TV): A fire broke out early Wednesday near a hospital operated by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in the southeastern city of Khost, according to local sources.

Witnesses said the fire started in a cluster of nearby shops adjacent to the MSF hospital. The cause has not been determined.

Emergency responders brought the fire under control, but the extent of the damage remains unclear, the sources said. The incident comes amid a series of recent fires across Afghanistan, which have resulted in heavy financial losses in several provinces.

Afghanistan strengthens ties with Norway

KABUL (BNA): Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwā, the country’s Minister of Information and Culture, welcomed Bjorn Tore Godal, Chairman of the Afghanistan-Norway Independent Commission, and his delegation to his office.

During the meeting, Tore Godal outlined the commission’s responsibilities, which include evaluating the Norwegian Royal Government’s political and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan from 2015 to 2021. He assured that Norway would continue its support across various sectors.

Minister Khairkhwā emphasized the progress made in Afghanistan over the past forty years, stating, “Today’s Afghanistan has a strong system that has



ensured security throughout the country, allowing people to travel freely.” He highlighted the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s commitment to develop-

ment and reconstruction projects, as well as its ongoing efforts to combat drug trafficking.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing

a desire to strengthen and expand bilateral ties, marking a hopeful step towards continued cooperation between Afghanistan and Norway.

18-km road widening kicks off

CHARIKAR (Pajhwok): A more than 18 kilometers of road is being reconstructed and widened at a cost of 21 million afghanis in Kafshan Valley of central Parwan province, an official said on Wednesday.

Head of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Mullah Abdul Samad Sadiq told Pajhwok Afghan News the six-meter-wide road was being reconstructed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

He said culverts and retaining walls along the road would also be built on a substantial scale.

In this project, six excavators are working on the road widening section and that work has been provided for dozens of residents, he added.



According to the director, more than 8,000 families would benefit from this project and 20 villages would be connected.

The Kafshan Valley is

one of the inaccessible areas of Shinwari District, whose residents previously suffered from the lack of a standard road.

“There was a narrow

road that needed repair. Small cars could not travel and people were facing a lot of problems,” Haji Jan Mohammad, an elder of the valley told Pajhwok.

He said the road should be built as a matter of principle because a large population lived in the area.

Badakhshan officials meets tajik embassy team

BADAKHSHAN (BNA): Local officials in Badakhshan province announced a significant meeting between Mawlawi Mohammad Ayoub Khalid, the governor of Badakhshan, and a delegation from the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Afghanistan. The meeting aimed to enhance friendly ties between the two nations.

According to a statement from the Badakhshan local administration, the discussions focused on strengthening and expanding bilateral cooperation in key areas such as economy, trade, culture, transit, and border security.

Governor Khalid expressed appreciation for Tajikistan’s contributions across various sectors and highlighted the importance of joint efforts between the two countries. He called for increased collaboration among the responsible institutions of both nations.

The Tajik embassy delegation responded positively, affirming their commitment to strengthening ties and fostering greater trust between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Food, agricultural aid provides for over 2,600 families in Nimroz

NIMROZ (BNA): A memorandum of understanding signed to provide food and agricultural assistance to more than 2,600 needy families across four districts of Nimroz province.

The initiative, coordinated by Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), aims to alleviate food shortages and support agricultural development in the region.

Under the MoU, 1,576 families facing immediate food insecurity will receive monthly food packages valued at \$160 for a duration of four months. Additionally, 1,070 families will benefit from agricultural supplies, including 50kgs of improved wheat seeds, diammonium phosphate, and urea fertilizer.

During the signing ceremony, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, the general director of ANDMA, emphasized the importance of ongoing humanitarian aid, highlighting the Afghan people’s urgent need for sup-

port across various sectors. He called for transparency in the aid distribution process and assured that the department would facilitate organizations in minimizing administrative costs.

Ahmad Zia Mayar,

deputy director of DRC, reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to delivering transparent and timely services to those in need, ensuring that assistance reaches the most vulnerable families effectively.

Afghanistan, British officials discuss bilateral relations

KABUL (BNA): In a meeting held in Doha, Mohammad Suhail Shaheen, the ambassador of the Islamic

Emirate of Afghanistan, engaged with Richard Lindsay, the newly appointed British Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

The discussions centered around strengthening

bilateral ties between Afghanistan and the United Kingdom.

Key topics included the provision of consular services for Afghan citizens residing in the UK and the ongoing humanitarian aid efforts directed towards Afghanistan.

Both officials expressed

a commitment to addressing mutual interests and enhancing cooperation in various sectors.

The embassy of the Islamic Emirate of Qatar highlighted the importance of this dialogue in fostering a collaborative relationship between the two nations.

Spectator seating being expanded at Khost cricket stadium

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Expansion work has commenced on the Rahmat Wali Masroor Cricket Stadium in southeastern Khost province, an official said on Wednesday.

Director Engineering Department at the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) Mumtaz Omarzai told Pajhwok Afghan News that the expansion project, aimed at increasing spectator seating, has begun at an estimated cost of 34 million afghanis.

He added that upon completion, the stadium’s seating capacity will increase from 8,000 to 15,000.

According to Omarzai, the project was expected to be completed within nine months. Following its completion, further developments will take place, including the installation of seats, lighting, and shade structures for spectators.

He noted: “Previously, foundational works were undertaken at the Rahmat Wali Masroor Cricket Stadium, including the construction of a modern



guesthouse and a cricket academy, as well as leveling and greening of the playing field. These projects were completed over the past two years.”

Meanwhile, several cricket enthusiasts and players in Khost urged the Cricket Board to take further steps to promote and support the game in the province.

One cricketer, Izatullah, told Pajhwok: “We request the ACB to pay more atten-

tion to cricket in Khost. There are many passionate fans here, but only a few pitches. We need more facilities.”

Another resident, Siraj Haqmal, said the province has tens of thousands of cricket supporters and thousands of players, stressing the need for greater investment in cricket development.

He added: “I believe large-scale projects should be implemented in Khost. I appreciate the relevant

authorities for initiating such valuable efforts.”

At the same time, officials from the ACB say they are working to implement various projects and strategic plans to promote cricket and improve facilities across the country.

The board also plans to construct four major cricket stadiums in different regions of Afghanistan to be aligned with international standards and equipped with modern amenities.

Farmers seek support amid severe drought

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Some farmers in northern Jawzjan province say they are facing sharp declines in agricultural yields amid severe drought, calling for urgent support from the caretaker government and aid organizations.

Officials estimate that the drought has affected 80 percent of farmland in the province, where agriculture and livestock are the backbone of the local economy.

Farmers voice concern

Mohammad Amin, a farmer from Qara Darya village in Shiberghan, said the situation is dire. “This year, we haven’t even harvested a single sack of wheat,” he said, adding that he sowed 125 kilograms of wheat seed across three acres of land, but the harvest completely failed due to a lack of rainfall.

“Unlike previous years, there was no rain or snow-fall this winter. The soil was too dry, and all the seeds we planted with high hopes dried up before sprouting,” he added.

Amin, who also keeps livestock, said the land has dried and cracked, and animals are falling ill due to the ongoing water shortage. “There’s no hope left for this land,” he lamented, calling for emergency assistance from the Islamic

Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) and humanitarian agencies.

Abdul Aziz, a 70-year-old farmer from Dushanbe village, echoed similar concerns.

“In my lifetime, I have never seen such a drought. I’ve farmed this land all my life, but never faced such harsh conditions. We’ve lost all hope,” he said.

Aziz planted 700 kilograms of wheat this season, but the crops failed due to the extreme drought and lack of rainfall.

“The well has dried up, the scorching sun has burned everything, and the earth is lifeless. Our crops died before reaching maturity,” he said. He also urged support and recommended introducing modern irrigation techniques such as drip irrigation.

In Aqcha district, livestock owner Abdul Hai said he had not witnessed a drought this severe in the past 50 years.

“This year, all our crops dried up. There isn’t even fodder for our animals,” he said.

“There are no food or fodder reserves, and the animals are starving. Without urgent help, many will perish before winter—or we’ll be forced to sell them at very low prices out of desperation.”

Officials acknowledge impact

Rustam Karimi, head of agricultural affairs at the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock in Jawzjan, told Pajhwok that around 80 percent of the province’s farmland has been impacted by drought this year.

He projected an 8 percent decline in overall wheat yields compared to last year.

“In 1404, certified wheat seed was sown on 43,859 hectares, with an expected yield of over 7.9 million tonnes. In comparison, last year’s area was 46,533 hectares, producing over 8.4 million tonnes,” he said.

Karimi added that rainfed wheat yields had dropped by around 23 percent, while the cultivated area shrank by roughly 9 percent.

In response, he said the department, in cooperation with partner organisations, has distributed over 102,000 tonnes of seed and chemical fertiliser during the past and current years—a process still underway.

To address the crisis and improve efficiency, the department is also providing technical training and practical guidance to farmers on water conservation and modern farming practices.

Autism in children: Symptoms, diagnosis, treatment in Afghanistan



KABUL (Pajhwok): Doctors in Afghanistan report that a lack of awareness among families about autism often leads to delayed diagnosis in children. They stress that if symptoms such as speech delays, difficulties in social interaction, or limited eye contact are noticed, the

child should be taken to a doctor immediately.

What is Autism?

Dr. Sayed Shabir Ahmad Sediqi, a neurologist at the French Medical Institute for Mothers and Children, explained to Pajhwok Afghan News that autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects a child’s

communication, social interaction, behaviour, and learning.

It typically appears before the age of three and lasts throughout a person’s life.

He stated: “Autism is not a disease. A child with autism is not considered ill—they simply perceive and interact with the world

differently due to how their brain functions.”

Causes: Genetics, nutrition or unknown?

While the exact cause of autism remains unclear, Dr. Sediqi pointed to genetic factors as among the most likely contributors. These may include inherited genes, vitamin deficiencies—such as zinc and vitamin D—during pregnancy, and insufficient breastfeeding.

However, he clarified that these are still theories and not yet scientifically confirmed.

Dr. Mohammad Aman Khan Abdali, a specialist in mental and neurological disorders at Amiri Complex, also noted that autism is a brain disorder, but it remains uncertain whether genetic or environmental factors are responsible.

He added that autism can improve with time and support but requires considerable effort and patience.

Symptoms to take seriously

Dr. Sediqi noted that autism symptoms usually emerge between the ages of one and three. In some cases, they appear later, delaying the child’s diagnosis.

Common signs include speech difficulties, trouble interacting with others, and lack of eye contact.

“Such children often cannot perform daily tasks on their own. For instance, if they are hungry, they may not say so but will guide their mother’s hand toward the food,” he explained.

“These children often fixate on one specific toy, ignoring others, even if several are available.”

Types of Autism

According to Dr. Sediqi, autism manifests in three levels of severity: severe (requiring full assistance with communication, dressing and toileting), moderate (partially independent) and

mild (able to perform daily activities independently).

He stressed that autistic children were not ill but simply different and they may excel in areas such as mathematics or art.

Treating Autism

When asked whether autism is curable, Dr. Sediqi said there was no direct cure. However, speech and behavioural therapy could significantly help manage symptoms. The involvement of parents, family, and society plays a vital role.

“These children are different, not less. Even those with severe symptoms can improve with the right support,” he said.

“We have seen children with autism go on to become doctors, artists, and entrepreneurs. This proves they can live full lives and build families—with support from those around them.”

Recommendations of doctors

Dr. Sediqi recommended that if a child is not speaking, avoids eye contact, or shows no interest in interacting with peers by the age of three, parents should seek medical advice immediately.

He added that Afghan children abroad were more likely to develop autism due to social isolation, but their condition often improves upon returning to Afghanistan and engaging with other children. He expressed concern about the lack of awareness in Afghanistan, which results in many cases going undiagnosed.

“Numerous neurological disorders in children remain unidentified here. Many autistic children never receive proper diagnosis or treatment,” he said.

At his hospital, he noted, two out of every 100 children examined were suspected to have autism.

Dr. Abdali also advised that if a baby does not make eye contact with their parents, does not smile or cry normally within six months and shows signs of aggression by age three, they should be assessed by a doctor.

He urged parents to treat their autistic children with patience and kindness.

A mother’s experience

Fahima Stanikzai, the mother of an autistic child, shared her experience: “I noticed my son’s behaviour when we were living temporarily in Japan. He was two years old and showed signs like spinning around, walking on tiptoes and not responding to his name.”

“Based on articles I’d read, I suspected autism. But when we returned to Afghanistan, I couldn’t find any specialist centres.”

She said her son was now receiving care at a speech therapy centre in Kabul.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on power sector reforms.

SBP releases third quarterly payment systems review for FY25

F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has released its Quarterly Payment Systems Review for Q3 FY25, providing summary on the payment systems, and presenting notable changes in the digital payment landscape of the country.

The digital payments in the country continued its upward trajectory during Q3-FY25, with substantial increase in transactional volume and value. Retail payment volumes climbed 12% to reach 2,408 million transactions, while the overall transaction value grew by 8% to PKR 164 trillion. Further, number of transactions through digital channels accounted for 89% of all retail transactions. Mobile app-based platforms, including mobile banking apps, branchless banking (BB) wallets, and e-money wallets, collectively processed 1,686 million transactions valuing PKR 27 trillion, reflecting a 16% growth in volume and a 22% surge in value.

The number of users of digital banking services also witnessed a steady rise. Mobile banking app users grew to 22.6 million (up by 7%), e-Money and BB wallet users increased to 5.3 million (up by 12%) and 68.5 million (up by 6%) respectively, while internet banking users reached 14.1 million (up by 7%).

E-commerce payments increased by

40% in volume to 213 million and 34% by value to PKR 258 billion, as compared to the previous quarter. Digital wallets were the largest contributor in e-commerce payments i.e. 94% (199.1 million) by value, while card-based online payments accounted only 6% (13.5 million) only. For in-store purchases, 140,861 merchants processed 99 million (up 12%) transactions of PKR 550 billion (up by 8%) using a network of 179,383 point-of-sales terminals. Further, merchants accepting QR codes also processed 21.7 million transactions valued at PKR 61 billion.

SBP operated payment systems, Raast (Instant Payment System) and RTGS (Real-time Gross Settlement System) have been instrumental in accelerating digital payments. Raast processed 371 million transactions worth PKR 8.5 trillion during the quarter, bringing cumulative volumes since launch to 1.5 billion in volume and more than PKR 34 trillion in value. Large-value payments via RTGS handled 1.5 million large-value payments amounting PKR 347 trillion.

The shift towards a digital economy is well-supported by SBP's strategic initiatives as well as the concerted efforts of banks, fintechs, and payment service providers. As digital payments expand, SBP remains dedicated to promoting financial inclusion and improving payment efficiency for all stakeholders.

FO dismisses speculation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Wednesday dismissed speculation circulating in the media, confirming that no meeting is scheduled between Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting being held in Qingdao, China.

In an official statement, the Foreign Office clarified that Khawaja Asif will attend the two-day SCO meeting beginning today, but no bilateral engagement with the Indian side is on the agenda.

This clarification came after Turkish media reports hinted at the possibility of the first direct interaction between defence officials of the two South Asian neighbours since their recent military confrontation. The reports noted that both ministers were attending the SCO summit alongside other high-level delegations, including from China and Russia.

Meanwhile, Pakistani government sources confirmed that Asif has already reached China for the event. Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is also present at the forum, where member states will discuss regional security, counterterrorism cooperation, and military ties.

PHC issues notice to NHA

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to the Chairman National Highway Authority (NHA), Secretary Communications, Finance Division, and other relevant authorities for submission of response to a petition regarding the poor condition of the Hazara Motorway and the prevention of traffic accidents, on Wednesday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Sadiq Ali Mohmand heard the petition filed by Advocate Amjad Hassan Tanoli. The petitioner, Amjad Hassan Tanoli advocate resident of Mansehra, highlighted the frequent accidents on the Hazara Motorway due to substandard construction materials and lack of maintenance, resulting in loss of lives.

The petitioner alleged that the motorway's construction involved substandard materials, leading to accidents that were previously uncommon. The authorities were accused of turning a blind eye to the issue, failing to take action against those responsible for the substandard work, the lawyer pleaded.

The lawyer stated that motorways and highways are crucial for economic development, and their deterioration would hinder growth.

ing teacher training programs. Scholarships will also be provided to 400 female students for teacher training. Project Team Leader Inga Afanasieva stressed the project's strategic importance in addressing critical gaps in access to and quality of education in Balochistan.

ADB okays \$350m loan package for Pakistan

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has greenlit a substantial \$350 million loan package to bolster women's access to financial resources in Pakistan, aiming to bridge the considerable gender gap in the nation's economy. According to ADB information today, the initiative seeks to empower over two million Pakistani women through improved financial access, inclusive policy adjustments, and enhanced entrepreneurial capacity building. The funding comprises a \$300 million policy-based loan and a \$50 million financial intermediation loan, designed to facilitate credit lines and guarantees for women-owned businesses. This dual approach aims to tackle the persistent 37% financing gap faced by women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, as reported in 2024. ADB Director Sani Ismail emphasized the program's ambitious objective of assisting women in realizing their full potential. — Agencies

seeks to benefit 250,000 students by enhancing enrollment and improving literacy and numeracy skills in primary education. The scheme will focus on early childhood education, expanding school capacity, providing safe transportation, constructing resilient classrooms, and implement-

SC orders LLB program be reduced to four years

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered that the duration of the LLB program be reduced from five years to four years.

A five-member constitutional bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, heard the case regarding legal education reforms. The court also directed that the CLE

(Competency Licensing Exam) requirement be abolished for those who have obtained their law degrees from abroad.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that necessary steps should be taken to improve the standard of law colleges. He added, "If there are shortcomings in SM Law College, they should be addressed, not used as a reason to shut down the college.

SM Law College has existed even before the creation of Pakistan." The constitutional bench adjourned further proceedings indefinitely.

Notices issued to parties: The Supreme Court issued notices to all parties in response to former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry's petition seeking the consolidation of 35 cases registered against him related to the events of May 9.

Israeli forces killed 64 including 14 waiting for aid

GAZA CITY: Israeli attacks have killed at least 64 people in the Gaza Strip, including 14 Palestinians who were waiting near aid distribution centres, medical sources told Al Jazeera. even as United States President Donald Trump said "great progress" was being made to bring an end to the war.

Sources at al-Awda and Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospitals in Gaza told Al Jazeera that at least nine Palestinians were killed and several others injured by Israeli fire early on Wednesday while waiting for aid near the Netzarim Junction in central Gaza. The deaths are the latest in a wave of violence near aid distribution points established late last month by the controversial Israel- and US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which critics have slammed as "human slaughterhouses" and "death traps".

The GHF has come under fierce criticism from aid agencies and the United Nations, which says the group is not able to meet the population's needs and turns food into a weapon for Israel to carry out its military operations. Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud said aid distribution centres run by GHF are typically established very close to where Israeli forces are stationed, with their tanks, armoured vehicles and surrounding snipers.

"So when large crowds gather, they are vulnerable to Israeli fire," he said. "Disturbingly, people are given just 20-minute windows at the aid centres to get their hands on whatever is available, such as food parcels. Once that 20-minute period ends, shooting often starts. That is one of the reasons we're seeing large numbers of people dying at these centres," he added.

There is growing pressure on the GHF, which was brought into the Palestinian territory at the end of May, to look into the attacks. But the organisation has denied responsibility. Israel has said previous shootings near GHF aid sites have been provoked by the approach of "suspects" towards soldiers.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, in the meantime, has said that the health and humanitarian con-

ditions in the besieged enclave have reached catastrophic levels due to the punishing Israeli blockade preventing urgent medical supplies reaching those in desperate need. The remaining hospitals operating do not have much more time to continue functioning, given the severe crises they face, it added. Hospitals are overwhelmed by overcrowding of the injured beyond capacity, especially in inpatient wards and intensive care units.

In addition to the killings near aid distribution points, Al Jazeera's Mahmoud said five people were killed in the bombing of a home in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza. "Five family members were killed instantly by a bomb dropped there. Three other family members were killed in the Nuseirat refugee camp," he said. Ramzi Khaled, a Gaza City resident who was close to a building sheltering displaced people when Israeli forces attacked it overnight told the Reuters news agency: "Suddenly, without any previous warning, people who are staying and living in a shelter that is al-Shawwa [fuel] station ... Without any previous warning, the place was hit."

"The ceiling was toppled to the ground. They are all in pieces. Approximately 12 people [were] present in this building; they are all in pieces. We retrieved what we could, three people in pieces, and here we are trying to retrieve some, a martyr and the rest who are under the rubble," he added. Israel's war on Gaza has killed at least 56,077 people and wounded 131,848, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health.

An estimated 1,139 people were killed in Israel during the October 7 attacks, and more than 200 were taken captive. As Israel continues with its assault, its military said seven soldiers were killed in combat in Gaza on Tuesday. The military released the names of six of them, but withheld one as the seventh soldier's family was yet to be notified of his death.

Those killed were aged between 19 and 21, according to the military. They were all members of the 605th Combat Engineering Battalion. An eighth soldier from the same unit was severely wounded and was medically

evacuated to Israel, the military said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was "a very difficult day for the people of Israel".

As the fighting in Gaza continues, there have been signs that diplomatic efforts to end the war are gaining momentum. Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani said on Tuesday that indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas could begin in the next two days. A senior Hamas official told the AFP news agency on Wednesday that talks had "intensified in recent hours" with mediator countries.

"Our communications with the brother mediators in Egypt and Qatar have not stopped and have intensified in recent hours," Taher al-Nunes said, adding that the group had "not yet received any new proposals" to bring an end to the war now in its 21st month. Trump, who is currently in The Hague for a NATO summit, also told reporters that "great progress" was being made to bring an end to the war in Gaza. "I think great progress is being made on Gaza, I think because of this attack that we made," said Trump, suggesting the US strikes on Iran could have a positive effect on the Middle East, adding that his special envoy to the region, Steve Witkoff, had told him "Gaza is very close" to a peace deal.

Yossi Meckelberg, a senior consulting fellow at Chatham House in London, told Al Jazeera that many Israelis are also questioning the wisdom of continuing the war in Gaza. "Trump is more popular in Israel right now than Netanyahu ... and especially on the Iran issue," he said, referring to the US president's involvement in brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Iran.

He noted that Israelis want the remaining captives in Gaza released and are holding on to hope that Trump can achieve that faster than Netanyahu. "They know that Netanyahu is ... trying to continue the war in Gaza to maintain his coalition," he said. "Trump has a different agenda that might actually, in this case, match what Israelis want to see." — Aljazeera

NA approves 136 demands for grants worth Rs9.011 trillion

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday approved 136 demands for grants, totaling over Rs 9.011 trillion, to cover government spending for the financial year ending June 30, 2026.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presented the demands in the House for approval. All cut motions submitted by opposition members were rejected by a majority vote.

The allocation approved by the house for Cabinet, Cabinet Division, Defence Production, Law, Education, Health, Emergency Relief and Repatriation, Atomic Energy, Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Naya Pakistan Housing Development Authority and Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister's office (internal and Public), National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Board of Investment, Prime Minister's Inspection Commission, Special Technology Zone, National Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing Terrorism Authority, Cannabis Control and Regulatory Authority, Establishment Division, Federal Public Service Commission and National School of Public Policy, Civil Services Academy, National Security Division, Council of Common Interest, Special Investment Facilitation Council Division (SIFCD), Intelligence Bureau Division, Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Division, Commerce Division, Communication Division, Other Expenditures of Communication Division, Pakistan Post Office Department, Defence Division and Federal Government Educational Institutions, Airport Security Force, Defence Services, Defence Production Division, Economic Affairs Division, Miscellaneous Expenditures of Economic Affairs Division, Power Division, Petroleum Division, Geological Survey of Pakistan, Federal Education and Professional Training Division, Higher Education Commission, National Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen Wa khatamun Nabiyyin Authority and

Rs34.046b for National Food Security, Research Division okayed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday approved three demands for grants amounting to Rs. 34.046 billion for the National Food Security and Research Division to meet expenditures for the financial year ending June 30, 2026. The demands were presented by Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb during the budget session. All 98 cut motions moved by the opposition lawmakers were rejected. The approved allocations included Rs. 23.068 billion for the National Food Security and Research Division, Rs. 6.724 billion for Pakistan Agricultural Research Council and Rs. 4.253 billion for the National Food Security and Research Division. Winding the debate on cut motions, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized that under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, agriculture has been placed at the top of the government's priority list. He said that the Prime Minister is personally chairing daily meetings on agriculture and issuing clear directives for the sector's uplift.

National Vocational & Technical Training Commission, National Heritage and Culture Division, Finance Division, Other Expenditure of Finance Division, Controller General of Accounts, Superannuation Allowances and Pensions, Grants Subsidies and Miscellaneous Expenditure, Revenue Division, Federal Board of Revenue, Foreign Affairs, Division, Foreign Missions, Housing and Works Division, Human Rights Division, National Commission for Human Rights, National Commission on the Rights of Child, National Commission on the Status of Women, Industries and Production Division, Information and Broadcasting Division, Miscellaneous Expenditure of Information and Broadcasting Division, Information Technology and Telecommunication Division, Interior and Narcotics Control Division, Other Expenditure of Interior and Narcotics Control Division, Islamabad Capital Territory, Combined Civil Armed Forces, National Counter Terrorism Authority, Inter-Provincial Coordination Division, Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit Baltistan And States And Frontier Regions Division, Law and Justice Division, Federal Judicial Academy, Federal Shariat Court, Council Of Islamic Ideology, National Accountability Bureau, District Judiciary, Islamabad Capital

Territory, Maritime Affairs Division, National Assembly, The Senate, National Food Security And Research Division, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, National Health Services, Regulations And Coordination Division, Overseas Pakistanis And Human Resource Development Division, Parliamentary Affairs Division, Planning, Development And Special Initiatives Division, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division and Benazir Income Support Programme, Benazir Income Support Programme, Pakistan Bait-Ul-Mal, Privatization Division, Railways Division, Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Division, Science and Technology Division, Water Resources Division, Federal Miscellaneous Investments and Other Loans and Advances, Development Expenditure Of Cabinet Division, Development Expenditure Of Board Of Investment, Development Expenditure Of Special Technology Zones Authority Division, Development Expenditure Of Establishment Division, Development Expenditure Of Suparco and Development Expenditure Of Special Investment Facilitation Council Division, Development Expenditure Of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Division, Development Expenditure Of Commerce Division etc.

Israel and Iran are 'both tired', says Trump

(Continued from Page 1)

Trump said he will speak to Putin about it soon. "Look, Vladimir Putin really has to end that war," Trump said. Trump also spoke about his meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, describing it as cordial. "It was very nice, actually. We had little rough times, but he couldn't have been nicer," he said. While a ceasefire was not discussed, Trump said he plans to speak with Putin to explore ways to end the conflict. "They do want to have the anti-missile missiles, as they call them 'The Patriots', and we're going to see if we can make some available," Trump said of Ukraine's request for the Patriot missile systems equipment.

"You know, they're very hard to get. We need them too. We were supplying them to Israel and, they're very effective, 100% effective," Trump added. The Patriot, which stands for Phased

Array Tracking Radar for Intercept on Target, is a theater-wide surface-to-air missile defense system built by Raytheon. It is considered one of the most advanced air defense systems in the US arsenal. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday he had discussed a ceasefire in Ukraine with US leader Donald Trump on the sidelines of NATO's summit in The Hague. Zelenskyy said on social media that the meeting was "long and substantive" adding: "We discussed how to achieve a ceasefire and a real peace. We spoke about how to protect our people." US President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened to punish Spain on trade over Madrid's resistance to commit to NATO's new headline defence spending target of five percent of GDP.

"They want a little bit of a free ride, but they'll have to pay it back to us on trade, because I'm not going to let that happen. It's unfair," Trump told jour-

nals at the end of NATO's Hague summit. Highlighting outcomes of the NATO summit, Trump said a major achievement was convincing allies to increase their defense spending to 5% of GDP—something he claimed "no one thought possible." He praised this as a "monumental win" for the US, which he said had been bearing more than its fair share. He emphasized that the additional funding should be directed toward military hardware, and that Europe taking more responsibility for its own security could help prevent future conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine war. Earlier, US President Donald Trump compared the impact of American strikes on Iranian nuclear sites to the end of World War Two on Wednesday, arguing that the damage was severe even though available intelligence reports were inconclusive.

His comments followed reports by Reuters and other media outlets on

Tuesday revealing that the US Defense Intelligence Agency had assessed that the strikes had set back Iran's nuclear program by just a few months, despite Trump and administration officials saying it had been obliterated. "The intelligence was ... very inconclusive," Trump told reporters while meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte ahead of a summit in The Hague.

"The intelligence says, 'We don't know, it could have been very severe.' That's what the intelligence says. So I guess that's correct, but I think we can take the 'we don't know.' It was very severe. It was obliteration," Trump added. Trump has an uneasy relationship with the US intelligence community, and the success of the strikes is politically critical to him.

His right-leaning supporters had argued loudly beforehand that such military intervention was inconsistent with Trump's domestic-focused "Make

America Great Again" agenda and his promise to avoid foreign entanglements. Trump has countered by insisting that Iran must never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon - a line that an accurate, decisive attack would support.

Trump said the US strikes were responsible for ending the war between Israel and Iran and compared them to the United States' use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, which brought an end to World War Two in 1945. "I don't want to use an example of Hiroshima, I don't want to use an example of Nagasaki, but that was essentially the same thing. That ended that war. This ended the war," Trump said. Trump argued that Iran's nuclear deal had been set back "basically decades, because I don't think they'll ever do it again" and he turned to top advisers to reinforce that message. Trump, who arrived in the Netherlands late on Tuesday for NATO's annual sum-

mit, was sitting beside Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, who both also cast doubt on the reliability of the DIA assessment. "When you actually look at the report - by the way, it was a top secret report - it was preliminary, it was low-confidence," Hegseth said. "This is a political motive here."

He said the FBI was investigating a potential leak. Rubio suggested that those responsible for sharing the report had mischaracterized it, saying: "This is the game they play." All three men criticized media reports about the intelligence assessments. At the summit, NATO member states were set to announce their joint intention to raise defense spending to 5% of gross domestic product. While some countries have suggested they may not in fact reach that threshold, the Trump administration has pointed to the expected commitment as a significant foreign policy victory.