

ATC writes for jail trial
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Judge Tahir Abbas Sapra Thursday wrote a letter again for the jail trial or the presence of the PTI founder in the cases registered against him and others on the Azadi march protest case. During the hearing, Sardar Muhammad Masroof Khan and Zahid Bashir Dar Advocate appeared in the court.



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NA passes Finance Bill

MPs okays budget 2025-26 with majority votes

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday passed the Finance Bill 2025 after a clause-by-clause consideration, incorporating specific amendments. Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb moved the motion for consideration of the Finance Bill, 2025 to give effect to the financial proposals of the federal government for the year, commencing on July 1, 2025.

The motion was passed with majority vote which led to the passage of Finance Bill-2025 after clause-by-clause reading and adopting amendments after due process of voting. All the amendments presented by the opposition were rejected.

The total outlay of the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, is Rs 17.573 trillion. The budget outlines a comprehensive fiscal plan for building competitive economy focusing to enhance exports, improve foreign exchange reserves, reduce fiscal imbalances and encourage economic productivity. The budget projected economic growth rate at 4.2% for the fiscal year 2025-26. The inflation is expected to remain at 7.5%, while the fiscal deficit has been estimated at 3.9% of GDP and the primary surplus is projected to reach 2.4% of GDP.

The revenue collection target by Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has been set at Rs 14,131 billion, showing an increase of 18.7 percent compared to fiscal year 2024-25. The federal excise duty has been calculated at Rs 8,206 billion while the non-tax revenues are project at Rs 5,147 billion. The net income of federal government would be Rs11,072 billion whereas its expenditures have been estimated at Rs17,573 billion, out of which Rs8,207 billion would be spent on mark up payments. The current expenditures of federal government were Rs16,286 billion.

As many as Rs1,000 billion have been earmarked for the Public Sector Development Programme while total Annual Development Plans (ADPs) exceeds Rs 4,000 billion. Since defence of the country was top priority of the government and Rs 2,550 billion would be provided for it whereas Rs 971 billion were kept for civil administration expenditures; Rs 1,055 billion for pension expenditures and Rs 1,186 billion for subsidy on electricity and other sectors.

Likewise, Rs 1,928 billion would be provided for BISP grants, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The government intended to increase the coverage the flagship initiatives of Benazir Income Support

Programme under which the number of beneficiary families will be increased to 10 million. The government has increased the allocated amount for this by 21% to Rs 716 billion.

The budget raised salaries of employees from Grade 1-22 by 10 percent and enhanced pension of retired employees by 7 percent. The disparity reduction allowances have also been raised by 30 percent for eligible employees while special relief allowances for military officers and soldiers/JCOs has also been provided in the budget. Meanwhile, many tax and relief measures were introduced in the budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 as the income tax rate for those earning upto Rs 3.2 million were slashed. The government reduced income tax rate for those earning between Rs 0.6 million and Rs1.2 million annually to just 1 percent.

As per the finance bill the digital sales tax on services would remain within the jurisdiction of provinces, while the GST tax on solar panels would be charged at 10%. It would be applicable on the imported parts of solar panels that constitute 46 percent. Hence solar panels' prices would increase by only 4.6 percent. Tax will not be imposed on pension commutation or gratuity however, only those individuals receiving pensions above Rs 10 million would be taxed. Those over 75 years of age are fully exempted.

The government has proposed imposing sales tax on the import of raw cotton and yarn, to reduce the price gap between imported and local products and support the domestic agriculture sector. The new tax measures have been carefully designed to avoid burdening the common man. Instead, the focus is on high-income segments and wealthier businesses.

Export-oriented industries have been largely exempted from new taxes to preserve global competitiveness. In terms of income tax reforms, tax rate on inter-corporate dividends derived from mutual funds and similar instruments has been raised from 25% to 29%, bringing it in line with other sources of income. The government also announced upcoming policy measures, including a new Industrial Policy, progress on the Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy, and comprehensive energy sector reforms aimed at achieving sustainable growth.

It is pertinent to mention here that the budget for fiscal year 2025-26 is a balanced plan focused on providing public relief, promoting industry, curbing government expenditures, enhancing revenues, and ensuring fair tax enforcement—all aimed at fostering sustainable growth and driving an export-led economy.

Muharram moon sighted, Ahura on July 6

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Thursday officially announced the commencement of the Islamic New Year, following the sighting of the Muharram-ul-Haram moon.

According to a notification issued by the ministry, the announcement came in line with the decision of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, which convened earlier in Quetta to observe the new moon. The committee confirmed that the crescent marking the beginning of Muharram 1447 AH has been sighted.

Consequently, the first day of Muharram-ul-Haram 1447 AH will fall on Friday, June 27, 2025, marking the start of the new Islamic year for Muslims across Pakistan. Muharram is the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar and holds profound religious significance, particularly for commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) and the tragedy of Karbala.

PPP supported budget 2025-26, says Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed the National Assembly to explain why the PPP is supporting the federal budget.

He stated that the government has increased the allocation for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), a scheme envisioned by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto by 20 per cent. He criticised the previous PTI government for attempting to undermine BISP in every budget, and commended the current Prime Minister for consistently increasing its funding since assuming office. He further noted that the government has raised the income threshold for tax exemption from Rs 600,000 to Rs 1.2 million annually. Additionally, he highlighted that the tax on solar panels was reduced from 18 per cent to 10 per cent following objections raised by PPP members.

Chairman Bilawal also welcomed the decision to curtail the arrest powers of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). Under the new policy, arrests in tax cases can now only be made in instances of proven fraud, and not during the inquiry stage. Moreover, such offences have been declared bailable. "These are the reasons why the PPP is supporting this budget," he concluded.

Earlier Bilawal Bhutto Zardari chaired a meeting of PPP parliamentary party held in committee room number 5 of the National Assembly attended by all the PPP members of the National Assembly including Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari.

Members of the PPP briefed Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on their proposals regarding the federal budget. He was also informed about the amendments incorporated into the budget as a result of PPP's input.

Chairman Bilawal was given a detailed briefing on the acceptance of the party's demand for a 20% increase in the budget of the Benazir Income Support Programme, a flagship initiative of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto.

In response to PPP's consistent advocacy, the tax on solar panels has been slashed by nearly 50%. The Chairman was also apprised of this development. Owing to PPP's strong reservations, the government withdrew the controversial amendments related to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) law. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari received a comprehensive briefing on this matter as well. On PPP's suggestion, the federal budget now includes a 10% increase in government salaries and a 7% rise in pensions.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shaking hands with Chairman PPP, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during budget session in National Assembly.

PM lauds economic team for balanced budget

— highlights Pakistan's role in Iran-Israel ceasefire

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday lauded the entire economic team, particularly Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, for their hard work and dedication in preparing the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025-26.

He also expressed gratitude to the federal cabinet and the allied political parties for their support in finalizing the budget. Chairing the Cabinet meeting here, the prime minister also spoke on the recent regional developments and welcomed the ceasefire between Israel and Iran, terming it a crucial step in avoiding further escalation and loss. He thanked God for the peaceful resolution and acknowledged the important role played by various countries, including Saudi Arabia, in ensuring the ceasefire.

He said Iran openly thanked the people of Pakistan, its political parties, military, and political leadership for their role in the ensuring ceasefire between the two countries. "The Iranian leadership specifically named the President of Pakistan-himself, and the Field Marshal for their contribution to the ceasefire efforts", the prime minister said.

As regards the attack by Iran on Qatar, the prime minister said Pakistan had also issued a condemnation statement, reiterating Pakistan's strong ties with the brotherly nation. Regarding Muharram ul Haram, Shehbaz Sharif directed the concerned authorities to ensure strict law and order during processions and majalis across the country. He also instructed the interior minister to coordinate with provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to maintain peace and security during the month.

Earlier the cabinet offered Fateha for Major Moez Abbas Shah Shaheed who embraced martyrdom in an operation against the terrorists in South Waziristan. The prime minister on the occasion, reaffirmed the nation's resolve in the ongoing war against terrorism.

Meanwhile, different federal cabinet

Premier speaks with US Secy of State

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received a telephone call from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, this evening. During their warm and cordial conversation, the Prime Minister appreciated President Trump's bold and decisive leadership that led to the ceasefire between Iran and Israel. He also thanked Secretary Rubio for the key role played by the US in the Pakistan-India ceasefire. The Prime Minister and Secretary Rubio agreed to continue working closely to strengthen Pakistan-US relations particularly through enhanced trade. While exchanging views on the current situation in the Middle East, the Prime Minister stated that Pakistan would continue to play a constructive role for bringing peace to the Middle East. While appreciating these efforts, Secretary Rubio said the US would like to work with Pakistan for promoting peace and stability to the region.

members and Members of the National Assembly from various constituencies called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and congratulated him for presenting a pro-people budget in the National Assembly.

In a meeting, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry along with MNA Raja Khurram Shehzad Nawaz and MNA Anjum Aqeel Khan called on the prime minister to congratulate him on presenting a pro-people budget and assured him of their full support for its approval.

Progress of the ongoing projects in Islamabad came under discussion during the meeting. In a separate meeting, Minister of State for Climate Change Shezra Mansub also congratulated the prime minister on presenting a budget that truly represented the aspirations of the people.

During the meeting, discussions were held regarding national-level precautionary measures and other arrangements in view of the upcoming monsoon rains. Meanwhile MNAs Raja Osama Sarwar, Begum Tehmina Daultana, Ehsan ul Haq Bajwa, Waseem Qadir, Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, Azhar Khan Leghari, Muhammad Usman Awaisi, Makhdoom Syed Sami ul Hassan Gillani, MPA Malik Khalid Warran and Former MPA Qazi Adnan Fareed also called on PM Shehbaz Sharif.

Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana

Mubashir Iqbal, Minister of State for Power Abdul Rehman Kanju, and Special Assistant Talha Barki were also present in the meetings. Earlier in the National Assembly, the prime minister himself approached the opposition benches in National Assembly and greets Chairman PTI Barrister Gohar and PTI leader Asad Qaisar.

Shehbaz reaffirms support for MSMEs on International Day: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed the government's firm commitment to empowering Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), recognizing their pivotal role in promoting sustainable economic growth, innovation, and inclusive development.

In a message marking the International Day of MSMEs, observed annually on June 27, the prime minister underscored the importance of enhancing the contributions of small businesses alongside large-scale industries. "While large-scale manufacturing remains essential, MSMEs ensure that economic prosperity reaches all segments of society," he noted. This year's global theme, "Enhancing the Role of MSMEs as Drivers of Sustainable Growth and Innovation," resonates with Pakistan's development goals, the prime minister said, adding that facilitating entrepreneurs through improved access to finance, technology adoption, and stronger market linkages is a key government priority.

US to offer new defense of strikes on Iran nuclear sites

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday said he was unaware of any intelligence suggesting Iran had moved any of its highly enriched uranium to shield it from US strikes on Iran's nuclear program over the weekend. "I'm not aware of any intelligence that I've reviewed that says things were not where they were supposed to be, moved or otherwise," Hegseth said.

After the strikes, several experts also cautioned that Iran likely moved a stockpile of near weapons-grade highly enriched uranium out of Fordow before the strike early Sunday morning and could be hiding it and other nuclear components in locations unknown to Israel, the US and UN nuclear inspectors. They noted satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies showing "unusual activity" at Fordow on Thursday and Friday, with a long line of vehicles waiting outside an entrance to the facility. A senior Iranian source told Reuters on Sunday most of the near weapons-grade 60 percent highly enriched uranium had been moved to an undisclosed location before the US attack. Hegseth's comments denying those claims came at a news briefing where he accused the media of downplaying the success of US strikes on Iran's nuclear program following a leaked, preliminary assessment from the Defense Intelligence Agency suggesting they may have only set back Iran by months.

Hegseth said the assessment was low confidence, and, citing comments from CIA Director John Ratcliffe, said it had been overtaken by intelligence showing

Iran's nuclear program was severely damaged by recent US strikes, and that it would take years to rebuild. Meanwhile, Senators are set to meet with top national security officials Thursday as many question President Donald Trump's decision to bomb three Iranian nuclear sites — and whether those strikes were ultimately successful.

The classified briefing, which was originally scheduled for Tuesday and was delayed, also comes as the Senate is expected to vote this week on a resolution that would require congressional approval if Trump decides to strike Iran again. Democrats, and some Republicans, have said that the White House overstepped its authority when it failed to seek the advice of Congress and they want to know more about the intelligence that Trump relied on when he authorized the attacks. "Senators deserve full transparency, and the administration has a legal obligation to inform Congress precisely about what is happening," said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, who said Tuesday that it was "outrageous" that the Senate and House briefings were postponed. A similar briefing for House members was pushed to Friday.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth are expected to brief the senators on Thursday. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard was scheduled to be at the Tuesday briefing, but will not be attending, according to a person familiar with the schedule. The briefing could be contentious as ques-

tions have swirled around Trump's decision to strike Iran and whether the attacks were successful. A preliminary US intelligence report found this week that Iran's nuclear program had been set back only a few months, contradicting statements from Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the status of Iran's nuclear facilities, according to two people familiar with the report. The people were not authorized to address the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

On Wednesday, Gabbard and Ratcliffe sent out statements backing Trump's claims that the facilities were "completely and fully obliterated." Gabbard posted on social media that "new intelligence confirms what @POTUS has stated numerous times: Iran's nuclear facilities have been destroyed." She said that if the Iranians choose to rebuild the three facilities, it would "likely take years to do."

Ratcliffe said in a statement from the CIA that Iran's nuclear program has been "severely damaged" and cited new intelligence "from a historically reliable and accurate source/method that several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be rebuilt over the course of years." Most Republicans have staunchly defended Trump and hailed the tentative ceasefire he brokered in the Israel-Iran war. House Speaker Mike Johnson even went as far as to question the constitutionality of the War Powers Act, which is intended to give Congress a say in military action. — Arab News

Khamenei says Iran 'dealt severe slap' to US

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Thursday claimed victory over Israel and said that his country had "dealt a severe slap to the face of America" during his first televised speech since a ceasefire between Iran and Israel was declared following their 12-day war.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Thursday that the US had "gained nothing" from its attacks during the Islamic republic's 12-day war with Israel that saw nuclear sites hit. In a video broadcast on Iranian state television, Khamenei said the US "engaged in the war directly, convinced that its refusal to intervene would lead to the complete destruction of the Zionist regime".

"It has gained nothing from this war," Khamenei said of Washington, adding that "the Islamic republic won, and in retaliation dealt a severe slap to the face of America". "Should any aggression occur, the enemy will definitely pay a heavy price," he said. The comments came in the wake of an attack on Sunday in which American forces hit three Iranian nuclear facilities with bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles.

Iran retaliated on Monday with a missile attack on a US base in nearby Qatar, but caused no casualties. The 86-year-old Khamenei hasn't been seen in public since taking shelter in a secret location after the outbreak of the war June 13 when Israel attacked Iranian nuclear facilities and targeted top military commanders and scientists. Following the US attack on Iranian nuclear sites, US President Donald Trump was able to help negotiate a ceasefire that came into effect on Tuesday.

In his appearance on Thursday, he sat in front of plain brown curtains to give his address, similar to his June 19 message. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday said that US strikes in Iran were "highly successful". Addressing a press conference at the Pentagon, Hegseth says Trump directed "the most complex and secretive military operation in history" and it was a "resounding success".

US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth is holding a news conference at the Pentagon, where he is addressing last weekend's US strikes on Iran. In the United States, leaked intelligence this



week opened up a Pandora's box of accusations and counter-claims over the extent of the damage caused by the strikes. Later on Thursday, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is due to offer a fresh assessment of the attacks.

To display this content from YouTube, you must enable advertisement tracking and audience measurement. After waves of Israeli attacks on nuclear and military sites and retaliatory missile fire from Iran since June 13, the United States bombed three key Iranian atomic facilities. An initial classified assessment, first reported by CNN, was said to have concluded that the strikes did not destroy key components and that Iran's nuclear programme was set back only months at most.

Another key question raised by experts is whether Iran, preparing for the strike, moved out some 400 kilograms (880 pounds) of enriched uranium — which could now be hidden elsewhere in the vast country. The US administration has hit back furiously, with Trump saying the attack "obliterated" Iran's nuclear facilities, including the key site of Fordo buried inside a mountain, and that it had set the programme back by "decades".

Trump said that Hegseth, whom he dubbed "war" secretary, would hold a news conference at 8am (12:00 GMT) on Thursday to "fight for the dignity of our great American pilots". CIA chief John Ratcliffe said in a statement on Wednesday that "several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be rebuilt over the course of years". The Israeli military said it had delivered a "significant" blow to Iran's nuclear sites but that it was "still early" to fully assess the damage.

Iran emerges strategic victor, says Masood Khan

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and senior diplomat, Sardar Masood Khan, has stated that despite sustaining some losses, Iran emerged as the strategic victor in the recent 12-day conflict between Israel and Iran. He emphasized that the true casualty of the war was peace and regional stability, as the hostilities triggered widespread unrest across the region, fueled an economic crisis, and exposed the United Nations Security Council's inability to uphold global peace.

Speaking to various media outlets on the post-ceasefire scenario, Khan said, "Iran was subjected to external aggression but exercised its right to self-defense in a highly effective manner." He added that Iran not only defended its territorial integrity but also inflicted damage on an adversary that had long claimed to be invulnerable behind impenetrable defenses. "Through calculated diplomacy and resilience, Iran averted a full-scale regional catastrophe," he remarked.

Khan noted that Iran's response undermined the credibility of Israel's longstanding defense assertions, particularly its claims of immunity from external threats. In contrast to Israel's state-of-the-art military—

heavily funded and supported by the United States—Iran operated under decades-long economic sanctions and military restrictions, unable even to freely sell its oil. Despite these constraints, he said, Iran demonstrated a robust defense that the world witnessed firsthand.

According to Khan, Iran maintained composure under pressure, countered Israeli military action, and simultaneously engaged in strategic diplomacy with regional powers, especially the Gulf states, and with international bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"This multidimensional approach is what sets Iran apart in this confrontation," he asserted. Responding to questions about Iran's nuclear program in the aftermath of the conflict, Khan expressed skepticism about U.S. claims of having destroyed three Iranian nuclear facilities. "The U.S. military leadership has been notably cautious in confirming such claims," he said, referencing a statement from France that suggested the threat of Iran developing nuclear weapons had actually increased post-conflict.

Khan also warned that the war may lead Iran to reduce cooperation with the IAEA, given that international non-proliferation treaties failed to shield it from military aggression. He cautioned that such developments could trigger a shift in global nuclear policy, with other signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) beginning to question whether their sovereign rights to peaceful nuclear energy are adequately protected.

On the sustainability of the ceasefire, Khan credited Qatar with playing a key mediating role, particularly through the diplomatic efforts of its Emir and Prime Minister of Qatar. However, he said, "The ultimate credit goes to President Donald Trump, who played a paradoxical yet pivotal role." According to Khan, the United States not only participated directly in the conflict but also positioned itself as a mediator and guarantor of the ceasefire.

"The only true guarantor of this truce can be the United States," he said, adding, "Any potential breach of the ceasefire would likely come from Israel, and such a move cannot occur without Washington's consent." He revealed that President Trump had expressed strong displeasure and reprimanded Israel for a ceasefire violation that occurred shortly after the truce was declared. Concluding his remarks, Khan expressed cautious optimism that the United States would play a constructive role in ensuring that the fragile peace holds.

Admn failed to facilitate tourists

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: The district administration of Haripur has come under severe criticism for its complete failure to provide basic facilities to tourists visiting the picturesque area of Makhnial, a popular destination in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Despite being one of the region's most beautiful locations and attracting visitors from far-flung areas, Makhnial remains neglected by the authorities. There is no presence of administrative officers or traffic police to manage the influx of tourists, ensure safety, or regulate local services.

Adding to the misery, petrol is reportedly being sold at an outrageous rate of Rs. 420 per liter due to the absence of regulatory checks, making travel even more burdensome for visitors. Local sources claim that the Deputy Commissioner of Haripur appears to be confined to the DC office and has taken no visible steps to address the growing concerns of both tourists and residents in Makhnial.

The negligence not only risks the safety and comfort of tourists but also undermines the tourism potential of this naturally rich and strategically important area.



ABBOTTABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sanaullah Khan presenting shield to Adviser to KP CM on Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Saif at a ceremony.

Experts stressed implementation of global security initiative

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) launched a dialogue series titled "South-South Network of Policy Experts on China's Global Security Initiative (GSI)" here in Islamabad on June 25, 2025. The session featured senior diplomats, academics, and policy experts from across the Global South. The inaugural session opened with welcome remarks by Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, who underscored the ongoing overlap of global crises and the failure of traditional zero-sum security structures.

He emphasized that China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Development Initiative (GDI) offer a compelling and coordinated alternative based on common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, with Pakistan well-positioned to benefit through regional policy coordination and shared innovation.

Ambassador Masood Khalid, Pakistan's former ambassador to China outlined China's three key global initiatives, the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Civilization Initiative (GCI) emphasizing their roots in China's 5,000-year-old civilizational values of peace, mutual respect, and inclusive development. He viewed GSI as a Chinese quest for rejuvenation to reclaim its identity from the past. He elaborated on the six foundational principles of the GSI: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, adherence to the UN Charter, peaceful resolution of disputes, security through dialogue and cooperation, commitment to indivisible security, and opposition to unilateral sanctions or bloc confrontations. He stressed that China's peaceful rise and commitment to multilateralism reflect a shift toward a multipolar world, where no single power can dictate the global order.

Building on this, Mahdi Mohammed Gulaid, a former Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia emphasized that South-South cooperation is not just relevant, it is imperative and timely framework driven by inclusive approach. He underscored that the South-South Network of Policy Experts is not only strategic but essential, enabling co-develop solutions grounded in shared experiences and collective insight. To guide the platform's future, Mr. Gulaid proposed three priorities: bridging security and development, sharing policy innovations, and investing in institutional connectivity. He concluded by urging that the Global South must move from declarations to implementation of GSI through collaborative mechanisms.

Mr. Hussein Askari, who Iraqi-Swedish scholar and Vice-Chairman of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden highlighted the crises in Gaza and Iran to stress that the world is at a crossroads between war and peace. He warned of a return to the law of the jungle if tensions go unmanaged. Citing GSI he highlighted symbiosis between security and development contrasting with the Western view that security must come first. He criticized the zero-sum nature of Western security models and praised China's win-win approach, where resources are expanded through knowledge and science. He also commended China's role in promoting peace in West Asia.

Commenting on this, Mr. Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director CRSS praised the GSI as a noble cause but argued that today's fragmented international order is a challenge to its operationalization. He added that one of the key barriers to the execution of GSI is the incoherent governance model practiced in developing countries, as countries in the global south are unable to

match the pace of Chinese development. The Chinese development is prospering because of the singularity in its power center, which enables the practice of policy in all segments of Chinese society.

Moreover, Dr. Huang Yunsong, Professor at Sichuan University began his remarks by framing GSI not merely as a harmonious vision, but as a strategic policy framework for a more just and peaceful world order. He criticized the militarized nature of the current global system, particularly NATO's expansionist posture, and positioned the GSI as a peace-first alternative rooted in the de-westernization of global security norms. Emphasizing the need for institutionalizing the GSI, he advocated for its advancement through regional cooperation, highlighting the potential for resolving longstanding issues such as Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Middle Eastern conflicts through diplomacy. Dr. Huang called for the creation of Networks of Strategic Institutions to drive South-South cooperation for practical and action-oriented alternative.

Mr. Moises Lopes Dos Santos who is Director General of the International Cooperation Department at Guinea-Bissau's Ministry of Foreign Affairs described GSI's principles vital for international cooperation and effective diplomacy to deal with autonomous weapons race and armed conflicts. China is Africa's second largest trading partner and partnership between them is a path to collective approach to security and economic development, he emphasized. China's support to African Union Development Agency's initiatives underlines its commitment to enhancing intelligence sharing and coordination against international terrorism and ensuring the security of sea lanes.

KKKUK initiates RIPE

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak (KKKUK) on Thursday commenced its crucial Self-Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement (RIPE), a two-day rigorous process aligned with the stringent guidelines set forth by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. This internal evaluation, which will continue until tomorrow, June 26, 2025, underscores the university's commitment to continuous quality improvement and academic excellence.

The RIPE initiative aims to critically assess the university's overall performance across various parameters, ensuring adherence to national quality standards and identifying areas for further enhancement. This systematic self-assessment is a vital component of HEC's framework to foster a culture of quality assurance within higher education institutions across the country.

The review panel comprises esteemed Quality Assurance experts from leading Pakistani universities, Dr. Muhammad Asghar Khan, Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Development at the International Islamic University Islamabad, and Dr. Obaid Ullah, Manager QEC at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, are leading the comprehensive evaluation of KKKUK's performance.

In recognition of their invaluable expertise and dedication to upholding academic standards, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Tahir Khalili honored the visiting experts with shields during the inaugural session.

The internal team, including Dr. Muhammad Anwar, Director QEC KKKUK, Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Deputy Director QEC, and Mr. Sadiq Ullah, Deputy Director QEC (Affiliated Colleges), provided detailed briefings to the external reviewers, showcasing the university's progress and performance across various domains.

Punjab govt warns over misuse of internet in Muharram

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister, Azma Bokhari, warned on Thursday that social media users will face immediate arrest if they post fake or inflammatory content during Muharram.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Azma Bokhari said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has issued clear directives for strict action against any social media content that incites hatred, sectarianism, or violence during the sacred month.

"For the first time in Punjab's history, a dedicated cyber security force will monitor social media platforms in collaboration with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA)," she said.

She added that action will be taken against those responsible for spreading false information, including account suspension and legal prosecution.

Punjab Information Minister also announced a complete ban on the use of drones during Muharram, warning that anyone caught operating drones will be arrested immediately.

Rain-related incidents claim 4 lives

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Four people lost their lives and 27 others sustained injuries in rain and storm-related incidents across Punjab on Thursday.

According to Rescue 1122 spokesperson, in Okara, five-year-old Dua Fatima died when the roof of her house collapsed in Basti Riiazabad while two others were injured. An incident of lightning injured a man in the district. In Depalpur, two people were injured in a roof collapse. In Sheikh Basti, a girl was injured when a roof caved in, and another injury was reported in Adda Gamber due to a similar incident.

In Sohawa, Jhelum, one man drowned in a seasonal stream while two others were injured. In Kot Barkat Ali, Khanewal, a man died from a lightning and another was injured. In Bahawalnagar (Bolewala), one fatality occurred due to a roof collapse.

In Faisalabad, separate roof collapse incidents in Jaranwala (240 Mor) and Peepal Colony left one person injured in each location. In a village near Sahiwal, two more people were injured due to falling of roofs. In Malakwal, Mandi Bahauddin, two children were injured after receiving electric shocks.

In Kasur's Kot Piran and Talwandi areas, two more were injured due to roof collapses. In Murree, five people were injured in a collision between a van and a tanker during rainfall. In Lalian, Chiniot, four people were injured when the roof of a house collapsed during heavy rain.

Pakistan grapples with growing environmental threats

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Prominent scholars and environmental advocates today voiced their anxieties over escalating plastic and noise pollution, along with shifting seasonal patterns and crop yields in Pakistan.

Experts at a seminar titled "Echoes of Earth: Voices Against Plastic Pollution," organized by the Sindh Madressatul Islam University's (SMIU) Department of Environmental Sciences in partnership with the Red Crescent Society (Sindh Branch) on Thursday, stressed the urgency of the situation. They emphasized that despite its minimal contribution to global environmental damage and carbon emissions, Pakistan ranks fifth among the most environmentally impacted nations.

The gathering, held in observance of World Environment Day, underscored the need for every Pakistani to become an active environmental steward. The repercussions of environmental and climate change, they cautioned, extend beyond extreme weather events like floods and cyclones, rapidly impacting public health, economic stability, natural assets, and societal well-being.

SMIU Vice Chancellor Dr. Majeed Sahrai highlighted the seeming ineffectiveness of numerous environmental departments in universities and organizations nationwide. Despite their efforts, the threat to the planet continues to intensify. He criticized policymakers, lawmakers, environmental bodies, and academia for failing to adequately educate the public and students about climate change and its consequences. Dr. Sahrai called for practical environmental action, increased funding for environmental protection and awareness campaigns, and a nationwide push for environmental literacy.

Dr. Sahrai pointed to the declining quality of traditional crops like mangoes, rice, wheat, vegetables, and dates as evidence of climate change's impact on Pakistan's agricultural sector. He expressed concern over the lack of awareness among farmers about these shifts, stressing the need for education on evolving seasonal patterns and suitable crops.

“ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPTION”

**TransPeshawar**

www.transpeshawar.pk | TransPeshawar | TransPeshawar

Request for Proposal

Hiring of External Auditor for TransPeshawar

Procurement No. TPC/FD/OCB/CS/EA/2024-25/005 | Date: June 27, 2025

1. TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company) is a Company set up under Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017, and is responsible for project implementation, management and maintenance of urban rapid transit projects assigned by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority.

2. TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company) invites sealed proposals, technical and financial, from eligible consultants/firm for “Hiring of External Auditor for TransPeshawar”.

3. The consultant/firm shall be registered with FBR for NTN and KPRA and reflected on active taxpayer list of FBR. Detailed scope of consultancy services is provided under Request for Proposal documents.

4. National Competitive Bidding (NCB) will be conducted in accordance with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement of Goods, Works and Services Rules, 2014 under Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) through Single-Stage: Two Envelope bidding procedure.

5. A complete set of Request for Proposal document may be downloaded by interested Consultants/firms from website of TransPeshawar (<http://transpeshawar.pk>) from publishing of this advertisement in the newspaper till last day for submission of proposals.

6. A pre-proposal meeting will be held on July 3, 2025 at 11:30 AM (PST) at the office of undersigned for the Consultants/firms who wish to attend.

7. Proposals must be delivered to the undersigned on or before July 15, 2025 at 11:30 AM (PST).

8. Technical Proposals will be opened on the same day (July 15, 2025) at 11:45 AM (PST) in the presence of consultants who choose to attend whereas Financial Proposals of only technically responsive and qualified Consultants will be opened at later communicated date and time.

9. The advertisement is also available both on the websites of TransPeshawar (<http://transpeshawar.pk>) and KPRA (<http://kppra.gov.pk>). TransPeshawar reserves the right to cancel any or all proposals by assigning cogent reason.

Chief Executive Officer

TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company)

TransPeshawar Head Office, First (1st) Floor, Main BRT Depot, Opposite NHA Complex, Chamkani, Peshawar

Ph: +92 91 2621393

Man murders stepfather

F.P. Report

BAHAWALNAGAR: In a startling development from Bahawalnagar, Liaqat Ali, a local gunman whose whereabouts remained an unsettling mystery, has been discovered dead in the courtyard of his own house.

As per the initial investigations, the deceased's life song was silenced by his own stepson. Reports suggest that a long-standing land feud has probably been the motive behind the killing.

Investigators say that the stepson, with full support of his mother and two co-conspirators, strangled Liaqat Ali to death. Later, in order to hide their crime, they buried his lifeless body in the very place he once called home. Two months after Liaqat's disappearance, an FIR was registered at B Division Police station on the complaint of the victim's brother, Nasir Mehmood. The investigation yielded little progress until recently, when the police involved Liaqat's stepson and wife in the investigation on the request of his brother.

“ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPTION”

**TransPeshawar**

www.transpeshawar.pk | TransPeshawar | TransPeshawar

Request for Proposal

PROVISION OF HELPLINE SERVICES FOR ZU PESHAWAR OPERATION

Ref No: TPC/OPS/OCB/Helpline/2025-25/013 | Date: June 27, 2025

1. TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company) is a Company set up under Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017, and is responsible for project implementation, management and maintenance of urban rapid transit projects assigned by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Mobility Authority.

2. TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company) invites sealed proposals from eligible service providers reflected on the Active Tax Payer List (ATL) of FBR and registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA) for sales tax on services for “Provision of Helpline Services for Zu Peshawar Operation”. Detailed scope of services is provided in Request for Proposal.

3. A complete set of Request of Proposal may be downloaded by interested service providers from website of TransPeshawar (<http://transpeshawar.pk>) from publishing of advertisement in the newspaper till last day for submission of proposals.

4. Procurements will be carried out as per Act and Rules of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPRA). Competitive bidding will be conducted in accordance with the Single Stage: One Envelope bidding procedure.

5. A pre-bid meeting will be held on July 4, 2025 at 11:30 AM (PST) at TransPeshawar office (address given below) for the service providers who wish to attend.

6. Proposals must be delivered to the undersigned on or before July 16, 2025 at 11:30 AM (PST).

7. Proposals shall be opened on the same day July 16, 2025 at 11:45 AM (PST) in the presence of service providers who choose to attend.

8. The advertisement is also available both on the websites of TransPeshawar (<http://transpeshawar.pk>) and KPRA (<http://kppra.gov.pk>). TransPeshawar reserves the right to cancel any or all bids by assigning cogent reason.

Chief Executive Officer

TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company)

First (1st) Floor, KPUMA Building, Main BRT Depot, Opposite NHA Complex, Main GT Road, Peshawar, KPK, Pakistan

Ph: +92 91 2621393

PHC restrains NAB from arresting Azam Swati in Kohistan scandal case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has restrained the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from arresting PTI leader Azam Swati in connection with a corruption scandal in Kohistan, while directing him to join the investigation.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal restrained NAB from arresting Azam Swati.

The court directed Azam Swati to join the investigation and cooperate with NAB.

The counsel Barrister Waqar, informed the court that NAB had issued a notice to former Senator Azam Swati in connection with the Kohistan corruption scandal.

The counsel argued that the notice did not specify the capacity in which Azam Swati was being summoned, which is a requirement under the law.

Deputy Prosecutor General NAB Muhammad Ali informed the court that NAB would file a reply to the petition.

The court directed Azam Swati to join the investigation and cooperate with NAB to facilitate the inquiry.

The court restrained NAB from arresting Azam Swati, allowing him to participate in the investigation without fear of arrest.

Youth empowerment: A gateway to economic prosperity

PESHAWAR (APP): Spanning the breadth of KP—from the remote valleys of Chitral to the arid plains of Dera Ismail Khan and the rugged terrain of South Waziristan—the Prime Minister Youth Program (PMYP) is unlocking potential, fostering entrepreneurship, and addressing systemic challenges such as unemployment, skill gaps, and educational inequalities.

PMYP has emerged as a transformative initiative, particularly impacting the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by equipping them with the required tools, resources, and opportunities necessary to shape a brighter and self-reliant future.

Launched last year with the aim of targeting youth between 18 and 35 years of age, the PMYP takes a multifaceted approach, integrating education, entrepreneurship, digital and vocational skills training, and civic engagement. It is part of the Prime Minister's broader vision of inclusive economic growth and youth-led development.

At its core, the initiative provides interest-free and low-interest loans, helping thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs—particularly those from underserved areas—overcome financial barriers to establish start-ups and microenterprises.

One such success story of PMYP is Sheraz Khan, a 30-year-old educationist from Nowshera district. A postgraduate of the University of Peshawar, Sheraz was struggling to find a dignified job despite repeated attempts to secure a lecturer's position. The PMYP changed his trajectory. "This landmark program gave me the push I needed the most," he said.

With the support received under the PMYP, Sheraz established the Alsufa Model School in his native village, Khushmaqam, in memory of his late mother. The school now educates over 300 children, including 100 out-of-school children (OSC), bridging gaps in access to quality education in a region where infrastructure is minimal.

"Teaching these children brings me inner happiness and strength," he shared, adding "The PM's Youth Program turned my dreams into a reality."

The major component of PMYP is its Digital and Skills Development Initiative benefiting thousands. Partnering with premier platforms such as Google for Education and Teleschool Pakistan, the program provides free training in information technology, artificial intelligence, agriculture, and green technologies—fields increasingly critical in Pakistan's evolving economy.

To extend these benefits to KP's remote and rural communities, mobile training units and community learning centers have been set up, serving as hubs of innovation and digital empowerment.

Wisal Khan, a diploma-holder in electronics from Bannu, described the program as a "ray of hope" for jobless youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With support from PMYP, he launched his own electronics repair firm, employing two additional technicians.

"I always had the skills, but no means to start my business. This program changed everything," Wisal said.

The PMYP encompasses over 15 sub-programs, ranging from digital education and startup funding to higher education scholarships and sports development. Key highlights include 60,000 paid internships across diverse sectors, 100,000 vocational training opportunities, distribution of 100,000 laptops to deserving students, 5,000 scholarships for students from Balochistan and former FATA, 1,000 PhD scholarships at the world's top 100 universities, establishment of 21 new university campuses in remote areas, of 250 sports complexes nationwide.

The program also funds 500 innovation grants worth Rs5–20 million each, supports student councils promoting peace and civic leadership in 80 universities, and backs significant research initiatives, including 12 Seerat Chairs and seven Centers of Excellence.

Muhammad Ibrahim, former Director Education KP said the PMYP was a landmark initiative for the socioeconomic empowerment of youth. Talking to APP, he said people of KP are largely benefiting from this great initiative of the Prime Minister.

Despite hurdles, he said PMYP is proving to be a beacon of hope for thousands of young Pakistanis.

Experts and educators agree that its impact in KP is tangible, fostering a culture of innovation, self-employment, and inclusive education in a region.

As Pakistan continues to grapple with socioeconomic challenges, initiatives like the PM's Youth Program are positioning the nation's youth not merely as beneficiaries, but as architects of a more resilient and progressive future.



PESHAWAR: Ihtisham Ali, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Health, addressing a function of the Insaaf Doctors Forum.

KP can use Surplus budget as buffer for tough times and Debt: Muzammil

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the KP Chief Minister on finance and interprovincial coordination Muzammil Aslam, in a statement regarding the surplus budget, said that the surplus amount belongs to the provincial government, remains with the provincial government, and it is the province's prerogative to keep the surplus as a buffer for tough times, for major future projects, or for provincial debt.

Muzammil Aslam said that for the past 15 months, the province has been operating far more independently than under federal pressure, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with PTI are now in a position to present their stance more boldly.

The Finance Advisor said that the province had set a surplus target of Rs. 100 billion for the current fiscal year, but, by the grace of God, we are going to show a surplus of over Rs. 120 billion.

He further said that, in addition, Rs. 35 billion were spent on the Sehat Card (Health Card) and more than 30% was spent on the ADP Plus (Annual Development Program Plus). He stated that old liabilities were paid off and over Rs. 60 billion in bridge financing was provided for development needs of the merged districts. Muzammil Aslam said that for the next year, we have estimated a surplus budget of Rs. 157 billion, with record funds allocated for the ADP and current expenditures.

He said that a surplus budget is not guaranteed—it depends on how much tax the federal government collects and how much of it is transferred to the province. This year, the federal government collected less than Rs. 1 trillion in taxes, due to which our transfers were reduced by Rs. 90 billion. If tax revenues decrease further, our surplus will be wiped out.

Muzammil Aslam expressed hope that by the end of next year, 40-50% of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's total debt will be funded, adding that it was Imran Khan's vision to free the country from debt.

He clarified, for the sake of record, that those claiming only Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is generating a surplus while all other provinces are in deficit are misled by propaganda. He said that by March 2025, Punjab will have a surplus of Rs. 441 billion, Sindh Rs. 395 billion, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rs. 111 billion, and Balochistan Rs. 105 billion.

Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation resolves land disputes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation, in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, has legally resolved all longstanding land disputes in its residential project in Peshawar.

Following this development, tenders for the construction of 885 residential units have been published in newspapers. After the scrutiny of bids, work on 445 residential units has been awarded.

The provincial government has legally addressed the concerns of all affected parties, and construction activities are now progressing rapidly. The schedule for installment payments will soon be issued to allottees.

The Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation has written to the provincial government (KPK) requesting the deployment of police personnel 24/7 to ensure the security of the PHA residential project in Peshawar.

A temporary police checkpoint has already been established, while construction of a permanent police station is underway at a fast pace.

This project spans an area of 8,500 kanals and had previously faced delays due to land disputes. Now that these issues have been legally resolved, efforts have been intensified to ensure the timely completion of the project. According to a spokesperson for the provincial government, road infrastructure work is in its final stages, and the tendering process for the construction of model houses will soon be completed.

It is noteworthy that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the Pakistan Housing Authority share the common stance that this project will not only meet the housing needs of the city but will also promote developmental activities in the region.

Both entities are taking all possible measures to ensure the timely completion of the project.

Furthermore, this week, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Standing Committee on Housing decided to issue directives to the Police Department for the deployment of permanent personnel on-site to ensure full-time security for the workforce, engineers, and experts engaged in the project.

PHC orders release of PML-N leader arrested under 33 MMPO

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has declared the detention of PML-N leader Haider Bacha under 3 MPO (Maintenance of Public Order) as null and void and ordered his release.

The counsel Ashfaq Dawoodzai, argued that Haider Bacha detention under 3 MPO was illegal and politically motivated.

The counsel pointed out that Haider Bacha had obtained pre-arrest bail from the Peshawar High Court, but was still detained.

The Advocate General informed the court that Haider Bacha was detained under 3 MPO.

PHC observed that Haider Bacha's detention was in violation of the court's earlier order directing not to arrest him.

The court held that detaining Haider Bacha under 3 MPO without registering an FIR was illegal and unjustified. The court directed the authorities to release Haider Bacha forthwith.

The court emphasized that if Haider Bacha had committed any offense, the authorities should have followed due process and registered an FIR instead of detaining him under 3 MPO.

Prof Dr Liaqat Ali - The unsung hero of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The four papers of internationally acclaimed urologist, clinician, researcher and medical educationist Prof Dr Liaqat Ali have been accepted in International Conference in Urology (SIU) to be held in Edinburgh, UK, while two papers have been accepted in 42nd World Congress of Endourology and Uro Technology to be held in Arizona, USA without any government support, which shows his commitment to his profession that "Without research you are another person with an opinion."

A press release states that Dr Liaqat Ali's services are comprised of more than three decades. His dedication to serving the ailing humanity at the Institute of Kidney Diseases (IKD), Hayatabad since 2007 is laudable, however, till date he has not been supported by the government or any office regarding his medical research and representing Pakistan globally, and without any encouragement and support, he did marvelous efforts in the field of medical sciences and presented a very soft image of Pakistan worldwide.

During the last 9 months, he attended 14 national conferences, did more than 1,100 complex surgeries, and attended 13,000 plus OPD cases. He also managed 1,050 patients in emergency. He along with his team of fellows, residents and undergraduate students made it possible to publish 25 articles since July 2024 in reputed national and international journals. This mega publication is due to fostering research ecosystem by initiating more and more collaborations, adds the press release.

The colleagues and people close to him have strongly recommended the KP and federal governments to encourage and support such talented and devoted medical professionals, so they may serve the ailing people with more energy and confidence, as government support is highly important for progressing the society.



PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud chairing meeting to review security arrangements for Muharram

Commissioner Mehsud reviews security arrangements for Muharram

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Divisional Intelligence Coordination Committee was held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mehsud to review security and administrative arrangements for the upcoming holy month of Muharram. Acting on the directions of the Home Department, the meeting focused on improving law and order across all five districts of Peshawar Division.

Key decisions taken during the meeting included stricter measures against extortion calls, enhanced security for foreign nationals, particularly Chinese workers engaged in various projects, a crackdown on vehicles with tinted windows, and strict action against sectarian and provocative speeches and social media content. The committee also decided to speed up ongoing search operations and conduct thorough checks of hotels and inns.

A significant decision was made to repair and seal the breach in the wall separating Hayatabad from the tribal district of Khyber, in order to prevent smugglers and criminals from entering the city. Instructions were issued to the district administrations of Peshawar and Khyber to implement this security measure.

Deputy Commissioners and District Police Officers from Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mohmand, and Khyber attended the meeting, along with senior officials from various law enforcement agencies. They briefed Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud in detail about the preparations and current situation in their respective districts.

Commissioner Mehsud emphasized that long-term and sustainable security measures must be implemented in light of the current security situation. He stressed the importance of enhanced coordination and communication among all departments and agencies to ensure that anti-state elements are not given any opportunity to disrupt peace.

He also announced a forthcoming visit to District Nowshera to personally review the Muharram security arrangements there.

GLOFs Alert issued for five KP districts

PESHAWAR (APP): An alert has been issued by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) warning of potential glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the PDMA alert on Thursday, there is a risk of glacier lake bursts in Upper and Lower Chitral, Dir, Swat, and Kohistan until July 1. The threat is linked to intense rainfall, which could trigger the bursting of glacial lakes in these mountainous regions. Authorities have been instructed to remain fully prepared to handle any emergencies resulting from the expected heavy rains. PDMA has also advised tourists and local residents to avoid unnecessary travel during the rain spells to prevent any untoward incidents.



In brief

Employees union election completed F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Mukhtiar Khan was re-elected as president for the third consecutive term, while Yasir Arafat was elected general secretary of the Malakand Board of Education Employees Coordination Council following peaceful elections held under official supervision here. The polling process was conducted under the supervision of Deputy Controller of Examinations Naeemullah and IT Director Murad Ali. Board employees actively participated in the democratic process, which remained peaceful throughout. Mukhtiar Khan once again secured the presidency, reflecting the continued trust of the board employees in his leadership. Yasir Arafat was elected general secretary by a significant majority, marking his strong support among colleagues. In their post-election address, both leaders thanked the staff for their confidence and pledged to uphold their trust. They assured employees that their rights would be safeguarded at all costs and vowed to raise their voice on every platform for the protection and promotion of employee interests.

Police signs MoU with schools F.P. Report

BANNU: Police have signed an agreement with the owners of 28 private schools to provide free and quality education to the children of martyred police officials. District Police Officer Saleem Abbas Kulachi and heads of private schools signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) at a ceremony held in the district police offices. SP City Tauheed Khan and SP Traffic Ihsanuddin were also present on the occasion. Saleem said that the agreement had been signed with the leading educational institutions on the special instructions of IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed and RPO Sajjad Khan to pave the way for provision of free and quality education to the kids of martyred police cops. He thanked schools' bosses for offering free education to the children of martyrs and said that the initiative was aimed to provide social protection to the martyrs' families. "The entire nation is indebted to the martyrs who laid down their lives to let others live with peace, prosperity and safety", he maintained. The district police chief said that the supreme sacrifices offered by police men in line of duty would not go in vain. He said that the police department was committed to provide free education and health facilities to the kids of martyrs and launch other welfare incentives for their families.

Ceremony arranged F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The District Administration Kurram has arranged a grand ceremony in honor of the young tribal cricketer Muhammad Naeem Mengal from tribal district Kurram at Sports Complex Parachinar for his outstanding performance in the PSL and bringing glory to the area across the country. The Lahore Qalandars owner Atif Rana specially graced the ceremony in Parachinar, where he was warmly welcomed according to the tribal traditions. Deputy Commissioner Kurram Ashfaq Khan, Deputy Commander 73 Brigade Colonel Shoaib, Additional DC Shaukat Ali, DPO Malik Habib Khan, officers of Pak Army and Police, District Sports Officer, Anjuman-e-Hussainiya Parachinar, Tehreek Hussaini Parachinar, journalists, teachers, students, players and various People belonging to different schools of thought participated in large number.

Higher education guarantee for bright future: Gillani

F.P. Report

SWABI: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani here Thursday said that higher education was imperative for fast track development and guarantee of our country's bright future. Addressing convocation at Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Science and Technology (GIKI), the Chairman Senate said that a skilled workforce was essential for sustainable progress and development.

While paying tribute to GIKI for its overall performance and exemplary services in various fields, the Chairman Senate said that institutions like GIKI are striving to enhance the skills of such a workforce. He said that the technology sector plays a vital role in accelerating the pace of development and significant improvements observed in Pakistan's digital economy.

Yousaf Raza Gillani said that Pakistan ranks fourth globally in the freelancing sector and students of GIKI

should use their acquired skills and expertise to serve the nation and contribute significantly in the country's development process. "Through research and innovation, we can address local and global challenges like climate change, food security, and sustainable energy," He said that students should use their knowledge and abilities for the betterment of humanity and to ensure a bright and sustainable future for coming generations.

"Transformation is also taking place in the education sector," he said, adding "we must increase our reliance on technology." The Chairman Senate said the goal of establishing a Digital Nation Pakistan and Special Technology Zones is to promote growth and investment in this vital sector. He said a convocation marks the beginning of a new journey in students' lives.

The Chairman Senate thanked President of the Society for Promotion of Engineering Sciences and

Technology and Board of Governors, Engineer Saleem Saifullah Khan, Executive Director Shakeel Durrani and other organizers. He also paid tribute for their contributions to science education, research, and development.

Chairman Senate distributed degrees among students. President of SOPREST, Engineer Saleem Saifullah Khan while thanking the Chairman Senate said that Pakistan must adopt a self-reliance strategy for sustainable economic progress. He said that Ghulam Ishaq Khan founded this institution with a mission and students bear a great responsibility, adding efforts of faculty are commendable.

Saleem Saifullah Khan said that students from diverse cultures of the country are studying at the institute. He said parents of graduating students deserve heartfelt congratulations upon successful completion of studies of their loved ones.

Local elders voice grievances at open forum

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Residents and elders of Talash Doshekhil on Thursday voiced serious concerns over long standing civic and infrastructure issues during an open forum arranged by the Lower Dir district administration at Government Commerce College Talash.

The event, convened on the request of the Qaumi Islahi Jirga Talash Doshekhil, was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif Khan and attended by heads and representatives of various government departments. These included District Police Officer Abdul Salam Khalid, Assistant Commissioner Timergara Zaid Safi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance Gohar Ali, Deputy District Education Officer Fayazuddin, Divisional Forest Officer Shabbir Jan, Executive Engineer Public Health Zahid Hussain, SDO Highways Sajjad Khan, SDO Pesco Muhammad Idrees, XEN Irrigation Shahid Khan, and SDO Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority Engineer Iftikhar, among others.

Representing the local community, speakers including Qaumi Islahi Jirga president Mohammad Ibrahim, General Secretary Dr. Noor Mohammad, for-

mer tehsil nazim Riaz Mohammad, retired principal Aftab Alam, Haji Amir Zaman, Qazi Sirajuddin, former UC nazim Mohammad Israr, Sher Mohammad Utmankhel, Mufti Razzaullah, Malik Taj Mohammad Khan, and Malik Shah Hasan highlighted a host of unresolved issues affecting the area.

The demands put forward included the completion of long-pending development schemes, construction of Talash bypass road, establishment of girls' and boys' degree colleges, repair of link roads, restoration of stalled water supply schemes, and measures to curb the increasing drug abuse in the area. Electricity load shedding on the Talash Express Feeder and delays in the Gopulum irrigation scheme also drew concern.

Some speakers complained that while open forums were held frequently, little follow-up action was seen on the issues raised. Former tehsil nazim Riaz Mohammad noted the disproportionate power outages on the local feeder and called for immediate attention.

Responding to the grievances, Deputy Commissioner Arif Khan directed officials of the concerned departments to address the issues on the spot and brief the public on steps being taken. He acknowledged the concerns

and assured participants that the administration was committed to resolving local problems.

The DC explained that while some matters fell under the district administration's jurisdiction and would be resolved promptly, others required coordination with the provincial or federal governments. He added that funding constraints due to the province's financial challenges were a key hurdle in executing development projects.

He urged the public to stay in close contact with their local elected representatives to help push development schemes through to completion. "I regularly raise Lower Dir's key issues during meetings with the chief minister and chief secretary," he said. Khan added that the Talash bypass road was the district's top infrastructure priority among ten major issues currently identified by the administration. He stressed the importance of peace and law and order for sustainable development, urging community elders to help keep an eye on criminal elements and inform state institutions of any suspicious activities. The DC said elements trying to spread terrorism in certain areas were being closely monitored and warned that neither militancy nor its facilitation would be tolerated in Lower Dir.

Admn imposes on bathing at natural resources

F.P. Report

KARAK: Deputy commissioner Shakil Ahmad Jan has banned swimming and bathing in natural water bodies and use, sale and distribution of plastic bags in commercial and public places across the district during the month of July.

According to an office

order, the restrictions have been imposed on the directives of the provincial government to mitigate flood risks during monsoon season and save precious human lives.

It said that the loss of life due to swimming in natural water bodies particularly by youths during high flow conditions had been observed in the

month of July while improper disposal of plastic bags caused blockage of the drainage system and paved the way for urban flooding. The office order added that the imposition of restrictions was inevitable to mitigate risks and safeguard precious human lives and that the violators would be punished under the law.

Mashal Rehman

AS Pakistan's agriculture struggles under the weight of climate change, water scarcity, and shrinking profit margins for smallholder farmers, the time has come to seriously rethink the crops we choose to cultivate. While major crops like wheat, sugarcane, and cotton dominate policy and public discourse, lesser-known crops with remarkable resilience and economic promise remain largely ignored. Among them is guar, a hardy legume commonly known as cluster bean (*Cyamopsis tetragonoloba*) quietly grown in the arid zones of southern Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan.

Guar's importance lies in its low input requirements, adaptability to harsh conditions, and high economic value. It grows well in sandy soils and with limited irrigation; a quality that makes it ideal for areas facing

increasing drought frequency and depleting water tables. Its deep-rooted system, short growing season, and heat tolerance allow it to thrive where other crops fail. As a leguminous plant, guar also enriches the soil by fixing atmospheric nitrogen, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers and enhancing the productivity of succeeding crops.

Yet, the real value of guar lies in its seed more specifically, the gum derived from it. Guar gum is a powerful natural thickener used in a wide range of industries: food processing, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, textiles, and even the oil and gas sector, where it plays a key role in hydraulic fracturing. This industrial versatility makes guar gum a globally traded commodity, with rising demand across developed and emerging economies. Unfortunately, despite its ideal growing conditions, Pakistan has barely scratched the surface of this market.

India, with similar agro-cli-

matic zones, currently dominates more than 70 percent of global guar gum production and export. It has built an entire industry around guar from high-yielding varieties to local processing plants and global export chains. In contrast, Pakistan continues to treat guar as a secondary crop, often exporting raw seed with minimal value addition. A lack of dedicated processing units, certification systems, and export channels has kept Pakistan out of the high-value guar gum market.

From a research standpoint, the potential is undeniable. Over the years, Pakistani institutions have developed promising guar varieties with improved yields and gum content. However, these remain confined to research farms due to the weak link between public research and private sector investment. Farmers often continue using traditional varieties with low returns, unaware of the improved lines available. Moreover, without

Traders observe shutter down strike F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Like other districts of Malakand Division, a complete shutter-down strike was observed in Shangla district on the call of Abdul Rahim Khan, President of the Traders Association of Malakand Division. The protest was held against the government's decision to impose taxes in the region, which has historically enjoyed a tax-free status.

All markets, shops, and commercial centers across the district remained closed throughout the day, bringing business activities to a standstill. Roads wore a deserted look as the trader community and civil society expressed their resentment over the move.

Speaking to the media, local traders emphasized that Malakand Division is a backward and underdeveloped region already grappling with poverty, unemployment, and lack of basic infrastructure. Imposing taxes in such conditions is seen as a gross injustice to the people.

The protestors demanded immediate withdrawal of the tax decision and restoration of Malakand Division's tax-exempt status. They warned that failure to meet their demands would lead to a region-wide escalation of protests in the coming days.

Anti-dengue awareness seminar held F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Following special directives from the Punjab Government, comprehensive measures are underway to combat dengue fever. A strong focus is being placed on surveillance, guided by the Health Department. However, social cooperation is paramount to keeping the dengue issue under control.

This statement was made by Additional Director General Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Qaisar Abbas Rind, while addressing an anti-dengue awareness seminar held at the FDA Complex conference room. The seminar, organized by the Health Department, specifically invited representatives of private housing societies to educate them on effectively implementing precautionary and protective measures against the dengue virus within residential colonies.

Asma Mohsin, Director Town Planning and Usman Ramey, Focal Person for Anti-Dengue / Assistant Director IT, along with other officials, were also present at the seminar. Health experts including District Health Officer Dr. Azmat Abbas, Dr. Zain Umar, Entomologists Sajid Aslam and Zaheer ul Hassan, and other specialists from the Health Department, informed participants about identifying dengue larvae and mosquitoes, methods for preventing their breeding and precautionary and protective measures to avoid the virus.

Additional Director General FDA Qaisar Abbas Rind stated that anti-dengue surveillance is regularly ongoing at the FDA Complex and its sub-offices under the supervision of Director General FDA Muhammad Asif Chaudhry.

Int'l day against drug abuse, awareness walk held



F.P. Report

ZHOB: Like elsewhere in Balochistan, in solidarity with global observances, the 'International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking' was also marked with an impactful awareness walk in Zhob, the northern district of the province.

The walk, organized by the Excise, Taxation, and Anti-Narcotics Department Balochistan, aimed at raising awareness about the devastating consequences of drug addiction, particularly its insidious grip on the young generation. The walk took place along Jail Road on Thursday amid scorching heat, drawing participation from a diverse cross-section of society. Participants carrying a banner emblazoned with a poignant anti-drug slogan, symbolizing a collective commitment to combating this growing societal menace.

Rustam Mandokhel, Deputy Director of the Excise, Taxation, and Anti-Narcotics Department, Zhob Zone, led the walk. He was flanked by prominent figures including Excise Officer Moazzam

Baig, Bazaar Union Divisional President Malik Gul Zaman Nasar, President of Zhob Bazaar Union Abdul Jabbar (alias Tor) Mandokhel, head of the 'Drug Addiction Hospital' Abdul Hameed Mardanzai, Director of 'Dua Drug Rehabilitation Center' Sheikh Ajab Khan Mandokhel, journalist Rafiullah Mandokhel, tribal elders Babu Gul Nasar, Daulat Khan Mandokhel, Abdul Rehman Kharoti, Abdul Latif Sherani, Inspectors Muhammad Naeem Nasar, Abdullah Kakar, Stenographer Quttub Mandokhel and Abdul Malik Appozai.

Addressing the participants, speakers underscored the significance of observing this day through awareness walks and seminars. They stressed that such initiatives are critical instruments in fostering public awareness about the devastating toll of narcotics, especially on youth.

They lauded the contributions of local rehabilitation centers, the 'Drug Addiction Hospital' and 'Dua Rehabilitation Center', commending their tireless efforts in treating addicts

and restoring their broken lives.

Describing the drugs as a silent parasite, the speakers issued a stark warning about the corrosive effects of drug dependency, stating that the drugs eat away at the individual's potential and corrode the moral fabric of society. They called for a holistic and multi-sectoral approach, one that extends beyond governmental action and includes parents, teachers, religious leaders, civil society, and the media.

A heartfelt appeal was made to every walk of life to engage youth in meaningful, healthy, and constructive activities to prevent them from falling prey to substance abuse. They urged communities to embrace this cause not only as a legal duty but as a moral imperative. Moreover, there was a resolute call for stringent, impartial action against drug peddlers and those complicit in this abhorrent trade. The speakers envisioned a peaceful, secure, and drug-free future, a legacy of safety and well-being for coming generations.

WSSCM approves setup of employees welfare fund

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The Board of Directors of Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) has approved the establishment of a welfare fund for employee benefits, the opening of an Easypaisa account for customer convenience, and the audited financial statements for the fiscal year 2023-24.

The 76th meeting of the Board of Directors was chaired by Chairman Board of Directors Engr. Adil Nawaz other members Javed Hussain, Mubeena Raziuddin, Regional Municipal Officer Zeeshan Arif, Ishqat Ahmed from the Deputy Commissioner's office, the company's legal advisors Nayab Alam, Abbas Khan, Budget

Officer Qazi Zia-ur-Rehman from Finance Department and Section Officer Azam Khan from the Local Government Department participated through zoom.

The board reviewed the audited financial statements for FY 2023-24 as approved by the Audit Committee. Speaking during the meeting, Chairman Engr. Adil Nawaz emphasized the importance of recovering outstanding dues from consumers to further improve water supply and sanitation services. He expressed satisfaction with the audited financial statement and directed the management to enhance internal controls.

In a key development, the chairman approved the establishment of a welfare

account dedicated to the well-being of sanitation workers. The fund will be utilized for medical assistance, scholarships for employees' children, and support in case of accidents and emergencies.

Chairman Adil Nawaz also announced that his meeting fee would be contributed to the welfare fund and urged company staff to donate a portion of their salaries towards the initiative.

To facilitate consumers, the board directed the concerned section to open an Easypaisa account, enabling consumers to pay their utility bills from home. "We are committed to utilizing all available resources to provide essential services at the doorstep of our citizen."

Police finalizes security plan for Muharram

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Police has finalized the security plan for Muharram and issued a security order. In this regard, a statement said that 3,300 police officers and personnel have been appointed for the security of 129 mourning processions and 302 gatherings in the district, including 200 women.

From the beginning to the end of Muharram, 8 DSPs, 82 inspectors, 150 sub-inspectors, 350 ASIs, 500 head constables and 1,910 constables will per-

form their duties on the routes of various Imambargahs and mourning processions, while officers and soldiers of the Pak Army and Sindh Rangers will also be present at all times. In this regard, the SSP Larkana further said that the police headquarters will be on standby to deal with any untoward situation.

Anti-riot reserve platoons have been put on standby in Larkana. Expert snipers with modern cameras will be deployed on major buildings along the route of the central mourning proces-

sions. A joint control room of the police and civil administration is being set up to monitor the entire situation. A command and control room has also been set up in the office of the SSP Larkana.

CCTV and video recording of all mourning processions and gatherings will also be ensured. Orders have also been issued to make it mandatory for temporary residences, legally displaced persons, hotels, boarding houses or guests from outside to enter the nearest police stations.

Guar — Pakistan's overlooked crop with tremendous potential

Mashal Rehman

AS Pakistan's agriculture struggles under the weight of climate change, water scarcity, and shrinking profit margins for smallholder farmers, the time has come to seriously rethink the crops we choose to cultivate. While major crops like wheat, sugarcane, and cotton dominate policy and public discourse, lesser-known crops with remarkable resilience and economic promise remain largely ignored. Among them is guar, a hardy legume commonly known as cluster bean (*Cyamopsis tetragonoloba*) quietly grown in the arid zones of southern Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan.

Guar's importance lies in its low input requirements, adaptability to harsh conditions, and high economic value. It grows well in sandy soils and with limited irrigation; a quality that makes it ideal for areas facing

increasing drought frequency and depleting water tables. Its deep-rooted system, short growing season, and heat tolerance allow it to thrive where other crops fail. As a leguminous plant, guar also enriches the soil by fixing atmospheric nitrogen, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers and enhancing the productivity of succeeding crops.

Yet, the real value of guar lies in its seed more specifically, the gum derived from it. Guar gum is a powerful natural thickener used in a wide range of industries: food processing, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, textiles, and even the oil and gas sector, where it plays a key role in hydraulic fracturing. This industrial versatility makes guar gum a globally traded commodity, with rising demand across developed and emerging economies. Unfortunately, despite its ideal growing conditions, Pakistan has barely scratched the surface of this market.

India, with similar agro-cli-

matic zones, currently dominates more than 70 percent of global guar gum production and export. It has built an entire industry around guar from high-yielding varieties to local processing plants and global export chains. In contrast, Pakistan continues to treat guar as a secondary crop, often exporting raw seed with minimal value addition. A lack of dedicated processing units, certification systems, and export channels has kept Pakistan out of the high-value guar gum market.

From a research standpoint, the potential is undeniable. Over the years, Pakistani institutions have developed promising guar varieties with improved yields and gum content. However, these remain confined to research farms due to the weak link between public research and private sector investment. Farmers often continue using traditional varieties with low returns, unaware of the improved lines available. Moreover, without

guaranteed buyers or stable pricing, there is little motivation to adopt guar on a commercial scale.

In the broader policy landscape, guar remains almost invisible. It does not figure in national crop zoning strategies, minimum support price schemes, or climate-resilient agriculture plans. This oversight is especially striking given that guar not only conserves water and improves soil fertility but also provides fodder making it a dual-purpose crop for both cropping and livestock systems. In regions where fodder shortages are acute, this trait alone should be reason enough to promote guar more vigorously.

What is needed is a multi-pronged approach: first, recognizing guar as a strategic crop for arid zones, followed by targeted research funding, farmer outreach, seed multiplication, and local processing infrastructure. Public-private partnerships can play a vital role in developing guar gum extraction units and

linking growers to industrial buyers. Creating awareness among farmers through training programs, field demonstrations, and media campaigns can also help shift the perception of guar from a marginal crop to a high-value alternative.

At the Agricultural Research Station in Bahawalpur, where I currently serve, we have recently sown promising guar varieties including BR-17, BR-21, BR-22, and Thal Guara in June 2025 to meet the rising demand from farmers. Interest in guar cultivation is steadily increasing due to its economic benefits and its dual role in seed production and livestock fodder. Notably, this institute remains the only dedicated research station in Punjab working exclusively on the improvement and development of the guar crop. The increasing adoption of improved varieties reflects a slow but encouraging shift in farmer behaviour one that deserves institutional support and national recognition.

Guar is not just a crop; it is a climate solution, an economic opportunity, and a way forward for sustainable agriculture in Pakistan's arid and semi-arid regions. At a time when our traditional cropping systems are being challenged by environmental and economic pressures, it is essential to look beyond the usual suspects and invest in alternatives that are both resilient and profitable.

It is time to bring guar out of the margins and into the mainstream. With the right policy focus, value chain development, and farmer-centric support, this neglected crop could become a cornerstone of Pakistan's agricultural resilience and rural prosperity.

The author is a senior scientist (BS-18) specializing in guar crop improvement at the Agricultural Research Station, Bahawalpur. She has previously served at RARI, Bahawalpur, and the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), Islamabad.



Cambodia ex-leader, Thailand's PM make visits to border areas

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP): Cambodia's powerful former leader Hun Sen and Thailand's prime minister, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, made separate visits to border areas as the two countries remain locked in an ongoing dispute that has resulted in strict land crossing restrictions and several economic boycotts.

Hun Sen and Paetongtarn didn't meet. Relations between the neighboring nations have deteriorated following an armed confrontation on May 28 in which one Cambodian soldier was killed in contested territory along their border. While the two sides have agreed to de-escalate their dispute, they have continued to implement or threaten measures that have kept tensions high.

Hun Sen posted on his social media after the visit that more troops and weapons have been mobilized to several border areas between Cambodia and Thailand after the clash. He said that soldiers "are constantly prepared to defend the territory in case of any invasion by the Thai army." He did not elaborate on when exactly the reinforcement happened, or how many soldiers and what kinds of weapons were deployed. But days after the dispute erupted, several videos of tanks and armed forces were filmed and posted on social media as they moved past Phnom Penh.

Hun Sen, who ruled Cambodia for nearly four decades, was seen wearing a military uniform, shaking hands with military commanders and government officials who waited to greet him as he got off a military helicopter. It was the first time that he paid a visit to the border since the latest conflict was triggered. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet visited the troops and civilians at the border. Hun Sen remains powerful although he stepped down as Cambodia's prime minister in August 2023 and handed over power to Hun Manet, his oldest son. Hun Sen continues to hold several major positions in the country, including Senate president.

Thai regional army commander Boonsin Padklang, who's in charge of the area where the clash happened, told reporters earlier this week that he was aware of Cambodia's reinforcements along the border, and that the Thai forces were

also ready to secure the border situation if necessary. He didn't say whether Thailand had also deployed more troops and weapons to the border. The Thai army this week imposed heightened restrictions at border checkpoints with Cambodia following an order from Paetongtarn to allow only students, medical patients and others with essential needs to enter or leave Thailand. That also makes it impossible for thousands of tourists to cross between the two countries.

Paetongtarn made a visit to the border town of Aranyaprathet, a major trade hub between Thailand and Cambodia that has felt much of the impact from retaliatory measures from both sides. She met with troops and local authorities, and visited a school to discuss the effects of the new restrictions Cambodia's government has accused Thailand of escalating tensions with new land crossing restrictions. Cambodia has boycotted some Thai internet services, banned Thai fruits and vegetables, and blocked electricity and fuel supplies from Thailand in response to the border dispute. Prior to the boycott, Cambodia imported 30% of its gasoline and other fuel from Thailand.

Last week, a leaked phone call between Paetongtarn and Hun Sen set off political turmoil in Thailand, shattering Paetongtarn's already fragile coalition government and triggering a string of investigations that could lead to her removal. There is a long history of territorial disputes between the two countries. Thailand is still rattled by a 1962 International Court of Justice ruling that awarded Cambodia the disputed territory where the historic Preah Vihear temple stands. There were sporadic though serious clashes there in 2011. The ruling from the UN court was reaffirmed in 2013.

Cambodia said that it's seeking a ruling for several border dispute areas again from the ICJ. Thailand has said that it doesn't accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ and called for Cambodia to resolve the conflict through existing bilateral mechanisms. Officials from the two countries have scheduled a joint committee meeting for September to resolve the border tensions. Both sides met earlier this month, but failed to achieve any major breakthrough.

China hosts Iran, Russia defence ministers

BEIJING (AFP): China hosted defence ministers from Iran and Russia for a meeting in its eastern seaside city of Qingdao against the backdrop of war in the Middle East and a summit of NATO countries in Europe that agreed to boost military spending.

Beijing has long sought to present the 10-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a counterweight to Western-led power blocs and has pushed to strengthen collaboration between its member countries in politics, security, trade and science. The Qingdao meeting of the organisation's top defence officials comes as a fledgling ceasefire between Israel and Iran holds after 12 days of fighting between the arch-foes.

It is also being held the day after a summit of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) leaders in The Hague, where members agreed to ramp up their defence spending to satisfy US President Donald Trump. Beijing's ties with Moscow are also in the spotlight.

China has portrayed itself as a neutral party in Russia's war with Ukraine, although Western governments say its close ties have given Moscow crucial economic and diplomatic support.

port. Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov painted a bleak picture of a world seeing "worsening geopolitical tensions" when he addressed his counterparts at the meeting. "The current military and political situation in the world remains difficult and shows signs of further deterioration," he said, according to a Russian defence ministry statement.

His Chinese counterpart Dong Jun also framed meeting in Qingdao, home to a major Chinese naval base, as a counterweight to a world "marked by intertwined turmoil and changes". "It is all the more important for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to play its role as an anchor of stability," he said, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Recent fighting between Israel, Iran and the United States was also likely discussed in Qingdao. Beijing refrained from offering anything more than diplomatic support to its close partner Tehran throughout that conflict, reflecting its limited leverage in the region and reluctance to worsen relations with the United States. "Public backing for Iran will come in the form of words, rather than deeds," James Char, an expert on the Chinese army at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, told AFP.

"Other than condemning the US strikes on Iran, Beijing can be expected to continue treading cautiously in the Middle East's security issues and would not want to be dragged into the region's security challenges," he said. Iran's defence minister will likely "discuss with China the supply of weapons but I doubt China would agree", said Andrea Ghiselli, an expert in China foreign policy and a lecturer at Exeter University.

"It would be seen as provocative by both Israel... and, even more important for China, the US, with which Beijing is trying to stabilise relations," Ghiselli said. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, also in attendance in Qingdao, said SCO members should "collectively aspire to fulfil the aspirations and expectations of our people as well as tackle today's challenges". "The world we live in is undergoing a drastic transformation. Globalisation, which once brought us closer together, has been losing momentum," he said in comments his office posted on social media.

Taiwan says it determined to defend itself

TAIPEI / BEIJING (Reuters): Taiwan is determined to defend itself and protect its free way of life, the island's defence minister said discussing next month's annual exercises, as China's military vowed to boost combat readiness to stop "separatist" activities.

China, which views democratically-governed Taiwan as its own territory, has ramped up its military threats over the past five years, staging several rounds of war games and sending its forces into the skies and waters near the island on a daily basis. Speaking to a committee set up by President Lai Ching-te to boost resilience in the face of a possible Chinese attack, Defence Minister Wellington Koo outlined Taiwan's annual Han Kuang exercises which start next month.

The military drills will begin with rehearsals to counter potential "high-

intensity grey zone incursions" from China evolving into an assault, and Taiwan's armed forces will practice repelling a Chinese landing, Koo said. New High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, made by Lockheed Martin, will be used at Han Kuang for the first time, along with Taiwan-developed Sky Sword surface-to-air missiles, he added.

The drills will "let the international community know that we are determined to defend ourselves, and to pass on to China that the nation's military has the confidence and ability to defend a free and democratic life", Koo said. Earlier, the defence ministry reported that China had held another "joint combat readiness patrol" involving warships and 21 military aircraft around Taiwan, including Su-30 fighters.

China labels Lai a "separatist" and its government

Verdict expected in Italy 'forever chemicals' trial

ROME (AFP): A verdict is expected in the trial of 15 managers of a chemical plant accused of knowingly contaminating the water of hundreds of thousands of people in Italy.

The now-shuttered Miteni factory near the northeastern city of Vicenza is alleged to have polluted one of Europe's largest groundwater basins with PFAS, dubbed "forever chemicals" because they never break down. The prosecution alleges that the plant in Trissino, which produced PFAS from 1968 and was run by three companies until its closure due to bankruptcy in 2018, leaked chemical-laced wastewater into a waterway, polluting a vast area between Vicenza, Verona and Padova.

Fifteen managers from Mitsubishi, International Chemical Investors (ICIG) and Miteni are charged with contaminating nearly 200 square kilometres (77 square miles) of drinking water, as well as soil. Prosecutors in the trial, which began in 2021, have called for the managers to be sentenced to a total of 121 years in jail, lawyer Edoardo Bortolotto told AFP.

Over 200 civil plaintiffs have joined the trial, including Greenpeace and local mothers who united after discovering their families had the chemicals in their blood. PFAS have been used since the late 1940s to mass produce the nonstick, waterproof and stain-resistant treatments that coat everything from frying pans to umbrellas, carpets and dental floss.

But chronic exposure to even low levels of the chemicals has been linked to liver damage, high cholesterol, reduced immune responses, low birthweights and several kinds of cancer. The contamination was discovered in 2013 after Italy's environment ministry ordered tests of the Po River following a 2006 European project assessing exposure to such chemicals in rivers. Of all the rivers studied, the Po had the highest concentrations of one specific PFAS called PFOA, a known carcinogen. Further investigation identified Miteni as the source. At the time, there were no Italian or EU thresholds for PFAS content in drinking water, according to a regional report by the World Health Organization (WHO).

NK may send workers to Russia

SEOUL (AP): North Korea's planned dispatch of thousands of military construction workers and deminers to Russia's Kursk region will likely take place as early as July or August, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers.

After a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang last week, top Russian security official Sergei Shoigu said Kim decided to send 1,000 sappers and 5,000 military construction workers to help rebuild the war-torn area. North Korea has already provided combat troops and ammunition to support Russia's war efforts against Ukraine. South Korea's National Intelligence Service told a closed-door parliamentary committee meeting that the dispatch of those 6,000 additional military personnel will likely come as early as July or August, according to Lee Seong Kweon, one of the lawmakers who attended the meeting.

Lee cited the NIS as saying that North Korea has begun recruiting soldiers to be sent to Russia. He told reporters the NIS noted that North Korea's dispatch of combat troops last year came about one month after Shoigu visited North Korea and signed an agreement with Pyongyang officials. In April, Pyongyang and Moscow announced that their soldiers fought together to repel a Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Kursk border region. The two countries haven't disclosed how many North Koreans soldiers have been deployed in Russia, but South Korea, US and Ukraine officials said North Korea last fall sent about 10,000-12,000 troops to Russia.



BEIJING: Residents clean up mud after a flood in Congjiang county, Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, Guizhou province, China.

India recovers data from black boxes

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian investigators have successfully retrieved data from the black boxes of a Boeing plane, after it crashed in one of the deadliest air disasters in decades, the government said.

All but one of the 242 people on board the Air India flight were killed on June 12 when the jet crashed in the western city of Ahmedabad, where at least 19 others were left dead. Two weeks after the disaster, the civil aviation ministry said investigators have started "the data extraction process" from the plane's cockpit voice and flight data recorders.

"The analysis... is underway. These efforts aim to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the accident and identify contributing factors to enhance aviation safety and prevent future occurrences," a ministry statement said. The two black boxes were found within days of the crash, but were only flown to the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau in New Delhi.

One of the victims' relatives said they were waiting for answers. "For now, all

we know is the plane took off and then fell. How? Why? Nobody knows. And we want to know. We deserve to know," said Imtiyaz Ali, whose brother was on the plane with his wife and two children.

"I refuse to believe that our aviation sector is this bad that we still don't have even a slight indication about what went wrong," he told AFP. Air India said last week that the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner was "well-maintained" and that the pilots were accomplished flyers.

Investigators have recovered more than 100 mobile phones with the aim of retrieving any recordings that "may provide clues about the final moments of the flight", Ahmedabad police commissioner GS Malik said last week. The plane was being reconstructed at an undisclosed location "to detect any signs of mechanical failure, structural faults, or explosions", he told journalists.

Forensic scientists have meanwhile been analysing hundreds of DNA samples in order to identify the victims. Despite the jet bursting into a fireball when it smashed down moments

after takeoff, a forensic dentist told AFP the team has been able to find matches through teeth. "A protected molar tooth can withstand a temperature of over 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit," or 980 degrees Celsius, Jayasankar P Pillai said.

The painstaking forensic process has enabled the majority of victims to be identified. "So far 260 deaths have been confirmed through DNA and police identification," Gujarat health minister Rushikesh Patel said. One victim remains unidentified, a member of the forensic team told AFP on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

A police source told AFP two days after the disaster that 279 bodies had been recovered from the crash site. The plane slammed into accommodation for medics, killing four doctors and injuring at least 24 as it hit the canteen. Smit Patel, a medical intern, joined a gathering this week to open a makeshift kitchen. "For us, reopening the mess is symbolic... despite everything, we are moving forward," he said.

Argentine woman and British man go on trial

DENPASAR (AP): An Argentine woman and a British man went on trial on charges of smuggling cocaine to the Indonesian tourist island of Bali. If convicted, they could face up to 12 years in prison.

Prosecutors say Eleonora Gracia, 46, was arrested in March at Bali's airport with 244 grams (half a pound) of cocaine wrapped in a condom hidden in her vagina. Authorities alleged that she handed over the cocaine to Elliot James Shaw, 50, during a police sting operation at a hotel near a Bali beach. Prosecutors at the District Court in Denpasar, Bali's provincial capital, said they violated anti-narcotics laws that carry a penalty of up to 12 years in prison.

After the charges against Gracia and Shaw were read out in the Bali court, a panel of three judges adjourned the trial until July 3. The court is expected to deliver its verdict next month. Gracia and Shaw wore face masks as they sat next to each other in court. Neither they nor their lawyers spoke in court or to reporters covering the trial. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime says Indonesia is a major drug-smuggling hub despite having some of the strictest drug laws in the world, in part because international drug syndicates target its young population.

Indonesian authorities arrested 285 people suspected of drug trafficking, including 29 women and seven foreigners, and seized over half a ton of narcotics during a two-month crackdown. About 530 people are on death row in Indonesia, mostly for drug-related crimes, including 96 foreigners, the Ministry of Immigration and Corrections' data showed last month. Indonesia's last executions, of a citizen and three foreigners, were carried out in July 2016.

Nigeria and Brazil sign \$1b deal

ABUJA (Reuters): Nigeria and Brazil signed a \$1 billion agreement to boost agriculture, food security, energy and defence in the West African nation, Nigeria's vice president Kasim Shettima said. Both countries aim to "deploy over \$1 billion to deliver mechanised farming equipment, training, and service centres across Nigeria," Shettima said in a statement posted on X.

Much farming in Nigeria is subsistence and land is owned by families or individuals which makes large-scale acquisition problematic. Nigeria also imports food for its 200 million plus population. "We are moving from subsistence to scale in agriculture, and in energy, we are taking long-overdue steps to attract serious investment into gas production, refining, and renewables," Shettima added. The agreements were signed in Abuja during a visit by Brazil's vice president Geraldo Alckmin to Africa's most populous nation. Shettima told his Brazilian counterpart that reforms embarked upon by President Bola Tinubu have helped reshaped Nigeria's economy.

Departing US top official in Hong Kong criticises reach of national security law

HONG KONG (Reuters): The top American diplomat in Hong Kong criticised Hong Kong's use of the national security law to jail prominent campaigners for democracy, including media tycoon Jimmy Lai, and engage in the "transnational repression" of activists abroad.

Gregory May, the departing consul general of the United States in Hong Kong, who is coming to the end of a three-year stint in the city, spoke about recent turbulence in the U.S.-China relationship and highlighted various "friction points" including Lai's case. Lai, 77, has pleaded not guilty to two charges of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces under the national security law, as well as a separate charge of conspiracy to publish seditious material. He has been held in solitary confinement for more than 1,500 days since December 2020.

"President Trump himself has mentioned Jimmy Lai several times now and he's very concerned about the fate of Mr. Lai," May told reporters after a speech at a US Independence Day reception. "But I just want to emphasise the US government concern is not just on this one individual. There are many other people, unfortunately, in Hong Kong who are in jail for peaceful expression of political views." Lai, whose family say his health is fragile, faces a possible life sentence under a China-imposed national security law that was implemented in 2020 in response to mass pro-democracy protests the year before.

US President Donald Trump has previously said he would "one hundred percent" get Lai, who also has British citizenship, out of the country. May, who

will be leaving to take up a position as deputy head of the US mission in Beijing, also criticised attempts by Hong Kong authorities to pressure overseas Hong Kong activists including the issuing of arrest warrants for national security violations and offering bounties of HK\$1 million (\$127,393) each.

"The other friction point in my time here has been transnational repression, and it's very disappointing to see over my three years here, attempts by Hong Kong authorities to enforce the national security law within the borders of the United States against US persons," May said. These are "attempts to restrict the free speech of people in the United States and unfortunately we're seeing Hong Kong authorities go after the family members of these overseas activists and that's a very disturbing development," he added.

Why Trump needs the world to believe Iran’s nuclear program is ‘obliterated’

THERE are two reasons why President Donald Trump needs the world to believe his adamant claims that Iran’s nuclear program has been obliterated.

First, his entire presidency is set up to reflect glory on his own strong-man persona, fueling a narrative of courageous, unique and infallible leadership. Information that contradicts the myth is not welcome.

Second, any evidence that Iran retains the capability to manufacture nuclear weapons or to restart its program after daring US bombing raids would raise an uncomfortable question: Should the United States use military action again to try to finish the job and meet any future advances in Iran’s capabilities with more strikes? This would potentially open a years-long period of quasi-war with Iran for which Trump has no appetite; raise the risks of a wider conflict; and anger his MAGA base.

Trump and his top lieutenants are conjuring amped-up outrage and slamming the media for reporting an initial, “low confidence” assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency that US attacks on three of Iran’s facilities failed to destroy the core components of its nuclear program and likely only set it back by months.

Trump redoubled his efforts in a news conference at the NATO summit to portray the raid as “very, very successful.” He added, “It was called obliteration. No other military on Earth could have done it.”

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth launched a theatrical outburst against CNN and The New York Times after they reported on the assessment. Such outlets “try to find a way to spin it for their own political reasons to try to hurt President Trump or our country, they don’t care what the troops think.” Hegseth said, showing the performative zeal that prompted the president to lift him from Fox News to head the Pentagon.

The White House highlighted an assessment from Israel’s military chief of staff Wednesday that Iran’s nuclear program suffered “systemic” damage and was set back years, and CIA Director John Ratcliffe said in a statement that the agency had evidence it had been “severely damaged.”

But these statements, while suggesting Iran has suffered a serious blow, do not yet fully support Trump’s expansive claims.

The president’s tactics were familiar. He is going global with his strategy of creating his own narratives whether or not there is yet evidence to prove them. He showed how successful this could be with his false claims of election fraud in 2020.

If the world believes that Iran’s nuclear pro-

gram is destroyed and all sources suggesting otherwise are discredited, Trump has a rationale for taking no further action.

Everything that involves intelligence is, by definition, opaque. And lasting judgments, from technical or human sources, on how far the US set back Iran’s nuclear program could take months. It’s also not possible to know whether the administration does have more information on the aftermath of the strikes that it is not releasing for operational reasons.

A more judicious initial White House response to the raids might have avoided the current controversy. But its frantic spin was inevitable, since Trump declared while B-2 bombers were still aloft that Saturday’s mission was a total, overwhelming success. Any contrary

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth launched a theatrical outburst against CNN and The New York Times after they reported on the assessment. Such outlets “try to find a way to spin it for their own political reasons to try to hurt President Trump or our country, they don’t care what the troops think.” Hegseth said, showing the performative zeal that prompted the president to lift him from Fox News to head the Pentagon. The White House highlighted an assessment from Israel’s military chief of staff Wednesday that Iran’s nuclear program suffered “systemic” damage and was set back years, and CIA Director John Ratcliffe said in a statement that the agency had evidence it had been “severely damaged.” But these statements, while suggesting Iran has suffered a serious blow, do not yet fully support Trump’s expansive claims. The president’s tactics were familiar. He is going global with his strategy of creating his own narratives whether or not there is yet evidence to prove them. He showed how successful this could be with his false claims of election fraud in 2020. If the world believes that Iran’s nuclear program is destroyed and all sources suggesting otherwise are discredited, Trump has a rationale for taking no further action. Everything that involves intelligence is, by definition, opaque. And lasting judgments, from technical or human sources, on how far the US set back Iran’s nuclear program could take months. It’s also not possible to know whether the administration does have more information on the aftermath of the strikes that it is not releasing for operational reasons. A more judicious initial White House response to the raids might have avoided the current controversy. But its frantic spin was inevitable, since Trump declared while B-2 bombers were still aloft that Saturday’s mission was a total, overwhelming success. Any contrary evidence would mean an embarrassing reversal and challenge his ego and credibility. But the hyper-emotional response to honest questioning over whether Iran’s nuclear program has truly been wiped out makes the White House look defensive, raising doubts about its truthfulness.

evidence would mean an embarrassing reversal and challenge his ego and credibility.

But the hyper-emotional response to honest questioning over whether Iran’s nuclear program has truly been wiped out makes the White House look defensive, raising doubts about its truthfulness. And it is distracting from aspects of the mission for which Trump can claim credit – a flawless round-the-world bombing raid with no US casualties and his effective pressure on Israel and Iran to stop fighting as well as his success in not being pulled into a longer war.

Growing controversy over Iran also overshadowed an undeniable achievement by Trump at the summit in the Netherlands in getting a commitment from member states to spend 5% of GDP on defense by 2035. The target will be hard to reach. But no other president came close to achieving anything similar.

The White House only has itself to blame.

Its failure to properly explain to Americans why Trump’s administration suddenly came to believe Iran was weeks away from building a nuclear weapon created

Stephen Collinson

suspicion over its motives. Its failure to inform some top Democrats that the B-2 bombing mission was underway needlessly politicized an issue on which Trump could expect substantial support across the aisle. The administration then postponed Capitol Hill briefings on the strikes until Thursday. It’s unclear whether those sessions will be productive.

Trump’s intelligence chiefs rushed to bolster his claims on Wednesday. Ratcliffe’s statement said the CIA had obtained “a body of credible evidence” that Iran’s nuclear program had been “severely damaged.” This included intelligence from a “reliable source/method that several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be

bombs, used in action for the first time, really did penetrate the Fordow nuclear facility, buried under hundreds of feet of rock and cement, and destroy centrifuges that spin uranium. And it’s about whether Trump is truly fulfilling his duties as president if he ignores any evidence the objectives were not fully met.

The administration’s wild reaction to the preliminary, low-confidence Pentagon intelligence report creates another dangerous possibility – that it’s pressuring the intelligence community to tailor intelligence to meet its political needs.

This corrosive trend has been disastrous to US national security in the past. Such behavior is a major concern with huge national security implications under a president who has trashed the US intelligence community and appointed officials to

lead it who share his politicized views. Future intelligence reports – which could take months to conduct – might well conclude that Iran’s nuclear program has been destroyed or set back far from the point of approaching a weapon.

If they don’t, Trump has a huge political and diplomatic problem. Now that the United States has taken military action alongside Israel in an attempt to eradicate Iran’s nuclear program, he has created a standard for himself.

If credible evidence emerges that Iran has salvaged aspects of its program, either centrifuges or stocks of enriched uranium, as has been reported, the president – or Israel – will come under pressure to take new action to stop it.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has said it’s possible that Iran moved uranium, which is easily portable, before US and Israeli raids.

Future US action against Iran could create the conditions for the prolonged war or deeper low-level conflict in the Middle East that Trump has sworn to avoid, and that would threaten to create a new fracture in his “Make America Great

Again” political base.

There is a precedent for such prolonged and expensive engagements. After the 1991 Gulf War, the US-led coalition maintained no-fly zones in Iraq to protect the Kurdish minority in the north and Shiites in the south and to contain Saddam Hussein’s military for more than a decade.

Uncertainty over the fate of Iran’s nuclear program could also complicate efforts to reach a diplomatic solution with the Islamic Republic. Trump said at the NATO summit on Wednesday that US and Iranian negotiators would meet next week. Trump’s special envoy Steve Witkoff told CNBC on Wednesday that his boss was looking for a “comprehensive peace agreement” with Iran that would go beyond the nuclear question. It would be an extraordinary breakthrough after 45 years of antagonism. If Trump could end the US estrangement with the Islamic Republic – perhaps after breaking the foundation of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s power with military action – he could rightfully claim a major legacy achievement.

“I think that they are ready; that is my strong sense,” said Witkoff.

Yet such hopes are dependent on developments in the opaque Iranian system: political forces that the US cannot control; and extremist elements, including in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, that have a lot to lose in terms of prestige and economic power if the regime changes or falls.

Some experts believe that Iran will respond to the US and Israel assault by reasoning that it is even more imperative to develop a nuclear bomb to ensure the regime’s survival. And if Tehran rejects cooperation with the IAEA and its inspectors, it might be able to evade outside monitoring.

Trump, however, played down expectations for a lasting agreement with Iran on Wednesday. “We may sign an agreement. I don’t know. To me, I don’t think it’s that necessary. I mean, they had a war. They fought, and now, they’re going back to their world. I don’t care if I have an agreement or not,” the president said.

He implied that a statement by Iran not to seek nuclear weapons would undercut his own claim that their program was obliterated.

The complete truth may not be known for months.

But it would be a deep irony if, 20 years after a war provoked by cherry-picked intelligence on a weapons of mass destruction program that did not exist, another White House tweaked intelligence to misrepresent a program in Iran that was active.

In praise of empathy, a lamentably rare commodity

Ross Anderson

ONE Saturday evening in March 1988, in my office at the Northern Ireland newspaper that I edited at the time, I was sitting with my news editor watching the TV news.

It was at the height of a 30-year period in Irish history euphemistically known as “the Troubles,” which had begun in the late 1960s with civil rights marches in protest at systemic discrimination against the minority Catholic and nationalist population by the Protestant and unionist majority and the local government. It later morphed into a full-blown civil war that pitched the militant Irish Republican Army and various offshoots against the (mostly unionist) police, loyalist paramilitaries and the British army.

That day, March 19, had been an eventful one and we were not short of content for the following day’s edition. At the funeral of an IRA fighter in West Belfast, attended by thousands of sympathetic mourners, two off-duty British army corporals in civilian clothes had been identified as such when, apparently unaware that the funeral was taking place, they drove by accident almost head-on into the procession. Their unmasking in a staunchly republican area was in itself a death sentence – but even by Northern Ireland standards, the manner of their deaths was horrific.

The two soldiers were dragged from their car and taken to a nearby sports field, where they were stripped to their underwear and questioned, tortured, stabbed numerous times, their bodies beaten to a pulp, and eventually they were shot dead. The entire incident was filmed from army and news helicopters, and the footage has been described as the most harrowing of the entire conflict.

Back in my office, the news editor, Tony, and I watched an interview with a politician from Sinn Féin, then the political wing of the IRA, in which – as was the futile custom – he was invited to condemn the murders despite almost certainly supporting them. Tony, a newspaper veteran, told me: “Just listen: the first words out of his mouth will be ‘Well, yes, but what about...’” So, I listened. The first words out of the politician’s mouth were: “Well, yes, but what about...” followed by a lengthy and well-rehearsed litany of atrocities committed against his constituents by the forces of the state and their paramilitary allies.

Tony explained: “It’s called ‘whataboutery.’ I first encountered it in Dublin about 10 years ago.”

He did indeed: the word itself is thought to have been coined by The Irish Times in 1974, although the practice it describes is commonplace anywhere there is armed conflict.

Attempting to deflect criticism by pointing to wrongdoing by someone else rather than addressing the original issue is a temptation that can be dif-

ficult to resist. I have been guilty of it myself, most recently when an Iranian missile attack on a hospital in the Israeli city of Beersheba provoked outrage from Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz.

My first response was: “Outrage?” Seriously? Where was this outrage when the armed forces this man directs rained death and destruction on 34 of Gaza’s 36 hospitals, killing patients and medical staff indiscriminately, leaving at least 15 of those hospitals crippled and the rest shut down, unable to provide desperately needed healthcare of any

kind?” But that would be whataboutery. It should go without saying that any attack on any hospital is just plain wrong, regardless of who are the attackers and who are the victims. What is much more useful than whataboutery is its opposite: an ability to place yourself in the shoes of your adversary in an attempt to understand why they think and behave as they do. If there were a single word to sum that up, it might be “empathy.” It sounds easy, but it isn’t and, in this part of the world, it is in lamentably short supply.

For example, in Israel there is no evidence of an understanding that denigrating Iran as a theocracy under the malign influence of a gang of religious fundamentalists is a bit rich given the composition of the current Israeli government. Or that Benjamin Netanyahu’s interminable whingeing, without evidence, about Tehran being “weeks away” from a nuclear weapon – a phrase he first used in 2015, having voiced similar sentiments for at least a decade before that – risks making him the boy who cried wolf.

Or that Iran is a proud nation with a rich cultural heritage, one of the world’s oldest uninterrupted civilizations dating back more than 6,000 years, and it does not take kindly to being bullied – ask Saddam Hussein. Equally, in Iran there is

no evidence of an understanding that chanting “death to Israel” and threatening to wipe a UN member state off the map, while simultaneously enriching uranium to a level of purity – 60 percent – for which there is no known civilian use, are mutually exclusive actions. No sane adversary would permit both.

So, you will look in vain for much empathy in the Middle East, but perhaps there is cause for optimism from an unlikely source. Consider the following two statements: 1. “The repeated refusal by Palestinian groups to accept the existence of Israel is a major obstacle

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The event, in a British grammar school, was organized by Parallel Histories, an educational charity that helps teenage students navigate complex and divisive issues, learning in the process that conflict can be more complicated than good-vs.-evil narratives may suggest. The format is that teams of young debaters argue one point of view and then, after a short break, they switch sides. The charity says: “In the process, stereotypes are disrupted and preconceptions challenged. Students learn how to question historical assertions and identify the difference between proportionate and disproportionate claims.”

In other words, although they may not be aware of it, they are learning empathy. Now, couldn’t we do with some of that in the Middle East?

DRC’s peace deal with Rwanda risks swapping war for resource exploitation

THE United States-mediated peace agreement to be signed between the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda on June 27 – a development ostensibly aimed at quelling decades of brutal conflict in Africa’s Great Lakes region – casts a long and familiar shadow. While the immediate cessation of hostilities provides a desperately needed respite, the deal, brokered by the Trump administration and witnessed by the State of Qatar, arrives with an unsettling undertone: The spectre of resource exploitation, camouflaged as diplomatic triumph. This emerging “peace for exploitation” bargain is one that African nations, particularly the DRC, should

never be forced to accept in a postcolonial world order.

For too long, eastern DRC has been a crucible of human suffering, its vast mineral wealth – including coltan, cobalt, lithium, copper and gold, indispensable for global technologies – serving as both a prize and a curse. This mineral richness has led to relentless conflict, contributing to one of the world’s most protracted humanitarian crises, with nearly three million people displaced and regular outbreaks of disease. The M23 rebel group, widely believed to be backed by Rwanda despite Kigali’s denials, has been a key player in this cycle of violence, reportedly earning significant monthly sums through illicit taxation and control of mining areas such as Rubaya. The

group’s resurgence, coinciding with a spike in global demand for these strategic minerals, underscores how deeply entrenched economic interests are in the region’s instability.

The joint statement from the Washington peace talks outlined standard provisions for territorial integrity, disarmament, and the return of refugees. Yet the official text remained conspicuously silent on the mineral sector. That omission speaks volumes.

According to multiple reports, the Trump administration’s renewed diplomatic push followed Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi’s offer to facilitate direct US investment in the country’s mineral wealth. Indeed, informed sources suggest that parallel but related negotiations

for a broader US-DRC minerals agreement are under way. The aim? To bolster US access to critical resources and counter China’s entrenched dominance in Africa’s supply chains – a clear geopolitical play in the global race for strategic minerals.

The intertwining of peace and mineral interests is deeply alarming, echoing a tragic and persistent pattern in the DRC’s history. From the rubber and ivory atrocities under Belgium’s King Leopold II – where millions perished under forced labour regimes – to the systematic extraction of cobalt, copper, and uranium under Belgian colonial rule, the Congolese people have rarely been the beneficiaries of their own land’s bounty. After

Lindani Zungu

independence, Mobutu Sese Seko presided over a kleptocratic regime that channelled mineral wealth into personal and elite enrichment, further weakening governance. The Congo Wars, often referred to as “Africa’s World War”, were similarly driven by the quest to control mineral-rich territories, with both regional and international actors competing for illicit access.

This is the essence of the so-called “resource curse” that has long plagued the DRC: Immense natural wealth leading not to development, but to poverty, conflict, and systemic corruption. When resource deals are struck in the shadow of conflict, exploitation takes the form of opaque con-

tracts that favour foreign corporations, enable tax avoidance, and exclude local communities from fair revenue-sharing. The consequences are devastating: The violent displacement of people, environmental degradation, and the reinforcement of corrupt networks that siphon off national wealth. The human cost is immeasurable – communities uprooted, forced into unsafe mining work (including children), and exposed to widespread sexual violence used as a weapon of control.

This “peace deal” risks becoming another instrument of neo-colonialism. As political philosopher Kwame Nkrumah warned, neo-colonialism allows foreign powers to dominate not through direct occupation, but via economic means. In this con-

text, foreign capital is used not to build, but to extract – deepening the divide between resource-rich African nations and wealthy consumer economies.

The global demand for critical minerals – from smartphones to electric vehicles – spurs an insatiable appetite that routinely trumps human rights, environmental protections, or national sovereignty.

For the Congolese people, genuine peace must mean more than the end of war. It must mark the beginning of self-determination, where the country’s resources are managed transparently and equitably for the benefit of its citizens – not wielded as bargaining chips in global power struggles. The international community, particularly the medi-

ating powers – including the US under Secretary of State Marco Rubio – bear a profound responsibility to ensure that any accompanying economic agreements are subject to rigorous scrutiny. They must demand full transparency, robust environmental and social safeguards, and a firm commitment to equitable wealth distribution that empowers local communities.

Anything less would be a tragic continuation of a colonial legacy – a cynical exchange of temporary calm for sustained plunder – undermining the very principles of justice and sovereignty that a truly postcolonial world must uphold. The Congolese people deserve a peace that liberates both their lives and their land – not one that merely reshuffles the chains of exploitation.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy arranging wooden boxes of mangoes after unloading from delivery trucks at Fruit and Vegetable Market, Pirwadhai.

Replacement of bank guarantees with insurance for transit trade: SCCI concerned over undue delay

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed grave concerns over undue delay in implementation of the replacement of the existing banking guarantees with insurance guarantees for transit trade through Pak-Afghan border.

Fazal Moqem Khan, president of the SCCI in a statement here on Thursday urged the government to take concrete steps for the replacement of bank guarantees with insurance guarantees to boost Pak-Afghan bilateral and transit trade.

Earlier this year, he stated the policy was announced by the government to facilitate transit trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Traders associated with the cross border trade have serious concerns over the unnecessary and prolonged delay in implementation of the replacement of bank guarantees with insurance guarantees for Afghan transit trade, SCCI chief said.

Fazal Moqem Khan reminded a policy was announced over five months ago, which yet not to be implemented, what, he says further delay would hamper the regional trade, disproportionately affecting businesses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that rely heavily on commerce with Afghanistan.

He continued to say that unjustified delay in enforcement of the policy, would have serious impacts on transit trade, besides raising cost of businesses,

disrupts trade continuity, and undermine the KP strategic role in Afghanistan and Central Asian.

The SCCI senior office bearer urged the Ministry of Commerce and FBR to operationalize the insurance guarantee without further delay, backed by clear guidelines and inclusion of KP-based traders in the implementation process.

Similarly, he asserted the government in assistance with relevant authorities should take pragmatic steps to remove hurdles in implementation of the policy at earliest.

Fazal Moqem Khan said the proposed reform is essential for restoring trade flow, lowering costs, and strengthening KP's role in regional commerce.

Advisor welcomes PBA support

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad on Thursday welcomed and thanked the Pakistan Banks Association (PBA) for their strong and thoughtful support of the Federal Budget 2025-26.

This endorsement, coming from the very sector most directly impacted by fiscal and financial decisions, is a powerful validation of the government's reform direction and approach toward sustainable growth, fiscal consolidation, and inclusive development, he said in a statement issued by the finance ministry.

The PBA's support reflects confidence not only in the policies announced, but also in the spirit of collaboration that has enabled landmark achievements—from resolving the Rs1.275 trillion circular debt without burdening consumers, to launching first-of-its-kind digital agri-loans and outcome-based skills financing.

These initiatives demonstrate that banks and DFIs are no longer just lenders, but strategic partners in driving inclusive growth, green transition, SME empowerment and rural development.

The banking sector's readiness to lead on these fronts is a tremendous asset for Pakistan's economic future, and we look forward to deepening this public-private partnership for results that matter. "Financial sector on board. Pakistan on track" he added.

Mobile phone imports decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The import of mobile phones into the country has witnessed a decrease of 16.31 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$ 1.356 billion during July-May (2024-25) as compared to the imports of US \$ 1.620 billion during July-May (2023-24), according to the PBS. Meanwhile, on a year-to-year basis, the import of mobile phones also dipped by 35.83 percent during the month of May 2025 when compared to the same month of last year.

The import of mobiles into the country during May 2025 was recorded at \$ 101.131 million against the exports of \$157.592 million in May 2024.

On a month-on-month basis, the imports of mobile phones came down by 19.61 percent during May 2025, as compared to the imports of US \$125.103 million during April 2025, according to the data.

It is pertinent to mention here that the overall merchandise exports from the country increased by 5.15 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding months of last year.

Exports during July-May (2024-25) were recorded at \$29.564 billion against \$28.117 billion during July-May (2023-24). On the other hand, imports into the country went up by 7.50 percent by growing from \$49.815 billion last year to \$53.550 billion during the first eleven months of the current year.

Stock Exchange turns bearish, loses 715 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bearish trend on Thursday, losing 715.18, a negative change of 0.58 percent, closing at 122,046.46 points as compared to 122,761.64 points on the last trading day.

A total of 758,542,306 shares were traded during the day as compared to 749,799,164 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 29.934 billion against Rs 28.030 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 473 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 200 of them recorded gains and 237 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 36 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pak Int. Bulk with 37,503,501

shares at Rs 8.52 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 33,285,442 shares at Rs 1.45 per share and Pervez Ahmed Co with 32,962,174 shares at Rs 3.29 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs1,214.65 per share closing at Rs13,361.18 whereas runner-up was S.S.Oil Mills Limited with Rs71.57 rise in its share price to close at Rs787.28.

Ismail Industries Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 125.74 per share price, closing at Rs 1,804.26, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Services Limited with Rs 77.38 decline in its per share price to Rs 849.03.

Rupee gains 06 paisa against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 06 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and

closed at Rs 283.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.72.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 284.85 and Rs 285.95 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs3.69 to close at Rs 332.67 against the last day's closing of Rs 328.98, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen went up by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.97, whereas an increase of Rs3.67 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 390.04 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 386.37.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 02 and 01 paisa to close at Rs 77.23 and Rs 75.63.

Gold prices increase by Rs1,335 to Rs356,000 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.1,335 and was traded at Rs.356,000 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs.354,665 on the last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs1,144 to Rs.305,212 from Rs.304,068 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs.1,048 to Rs.279,787 from Rs.278,739.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver increased by Rs.86 and Rs.73 to Rs.3,850 and Rs.3,300 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$13 to \$3,343 from \$3,330, whereas that of silver went up by \$0.86 to \$36.66, the Association reported.

Uzbek delegation to explore maritime prospects in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, in a telephonic call on Thursday, directed the Transition Management Committee of Karachi Port Trust (KPT) to extend facilitation and briefing to the visiting delegation from Uzbekistan, emphasizing the potential for collaborative ventures in the maritime sector.

The minister highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and underlined Pakistan's commitment in exploring economic avenues within the framework of its expanding blue economy, particularly with Central Asian nations, said a press release.

The Uzbek delegation, comprising nine senior officials and business representatives, was led by Alisher Tukhtaev, the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan. The purpose of the visit was to examine investment potential and partnership

opportunities within the maritime and port infrastructure of Pakistan.

Their tour of KPT followed a recent meeting between the Ambassador and the Federal Minister in Islamabad, where both sides discussed the significance of building sustainable maritime linkages to support mutual economic growth, promote regional connectivity, and ensure long-term prosperity through ocean-based industries.

Among the delegation members were Bakhrom Yusupov, Trade and Commercial Counselor at the Uzbekistan Embassy, Tukhtaev Akobirjon Khakimovich, Deputy Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, Uzbekistan, Djumaniyazov Mukhammadjon Bakhranovich, Secretary of the Uzbek Textile Association, and Ms. Al' Bina Murtaza from the Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce. They were joined by

four local representatives for the Karachi visit.

During the engagement, members of KPT's Transition Management Committee, Abdullah Zaki and Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol, presented detailed insights into Pakistan's blue economy landscape, particularly focusing on the Karachi Port's role in trade facilitation and development.

They briefed the delegation on the 1600-acre Comprehensive Coastal Development Zone (CCDZ), highlighting its immense potential for investment in infrastructure, tourism, and port expansion.

The discussions also touched upon projects involving clean bulk cargo handling, logistics connectivity, and tourism-oriented ventures such as scuba diving and jet skiing, underlining Pakistan's commitment to diversified and sustainable maritime development.

The Uzbek delegation expressed keen interest in the CCDZ initiative, potential port expansion plans, and other commercial opportunities within the blue economy.

They acknowledged Pakistan's strategic position as a gateway to maritime trade and viewed the developments at KPT as a valuable opportunity to enhance Uzbekistan's connectivity to global markets.

The delegation also visited South Asia Pakistan Terminals Limited (SAPTL), where they witnessed modern container handling operations, including the use of state-of-the-art gantry cranes and other advanced equipment deployed by terminal operators.

The visit underscored the growing sophistication and efficiency of Karachi Port's operations and served as a meaningful step toward fostering Uzbekistan-Pakistan maritime cooperation.

NEV Policy 2030:

Workshop held to promote eco-friendly transportation

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Ministry of Industries and Production organized a workshop on Thursday to discuss and promote the implementation of Pakistan's New Energy Vehicle (NEV) Policy 2025-30.

The event was attended by Asif Saeed Lughmani, Additional Secretary of the Ministry, and Mr. Khuda Bux Rind, Chief Executive Officer of the Engineering Development Board (EDB). The session focused on the vision, scope, and strategic benefits of transitioning to electric vehicles under the NEV Policy.

Speaking at the event, Lughmani underscored that the primary aim of the NEV Policy 2030 is to reduce Pakistan's dependency on imported oil and to shift toward clean, sustainable energy sources in the transport sector. He highlighted the economic and environmental challenges posed by unchecked oil consumption and stressed the need for



urgent action.

He pointed out that Pakistan is among the countries most at risk from climate change, and the NEV Policy represents a key national initiative to mitigate these risks through green mobility.

Lughmani emphasized the need for strong coordination between federal and provincial governments to ensure the effective rollout of the policy.

In line with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directives, Mr. Lughmani is visiting provinces to build consensus and strengthen cooperation across all levels of government. He also

noted that the government is actively involving the private sector, having already issued 61 licenses for local NEV production.

He added that 90% of NEV manufacturing will be localized, which will boost technical capacity and create over 15,000 jobs across the country. Khuda Bux Rind spoke about the economic and technological opportunities NEVs present and reiterated EDB's full support in developing this emerging sector.

As part of the NEV Policy 2030, the government will offer significant financial incentives: Rs. 65,000 for electric two-

wheelers, Rs. 400,000 for three-wheelers, and Rs. 150,000 for four-wheelers. The State Bank of Pakistan will also introduce green auto financing to make electric vehicles more accessible.

Additional incentives include free NEV registration and toll tax exemptions. Under Vision 2030, the goal is to convert 30% of all vehicles on Pakistani roads to electric. To support this transition, 3,000 charging stations will be established nationwide. These measures are projected to save the country one billion dollars and two billion liters of fuel each year.

ICCI calls for close industry-academia collaboration

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has underscored the critical importance of robust collaboration between industry and academia for the promotion of entrepreneurship and sustainable economic development in Pakistan.

In a joint statement issued on Thursday, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President ICCI, along with Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui and Vice President Nasir Mahmood Chaudhry, emphasized that in today's era of start-ups, incubators, and innovation-driven enterprises, it is imperative for educational insti-

tutions and industrial sectors to work hand in hand.

They stated that such synergy is essential to equip graduating students with the practical knowledge, entrepreneurial mindset, and industry-relevant skills needed to establish successful business ventures. "Pakistan needs more job creators than job seekers.

This can only be achieved if universities and industries jointly guide students to transform their ideas into viable enterprises," said Nasir Mansoor.

Highlighting ICCI's active role, he noted that the Chamber has already signed Memoranda of

Understanding (MoUs) with several leading universities in the region to strengthen industry-academia coordination. As part of its initiative, ICCI has proposed that universities allow final-semester students to engage with chambers of commerce and be placed in industries matching their academic background and interests.

This hands-on exposure would prepare them to become entrepreneurs who contribute meaningfully to national growth.

He reiterated that ICCI is fully committed to promoting entrepreneurship and is ready to extend all-out cooperation to the government and educational

institutions to create a productive ecosystem that supports innovation, industrial development, and job creation.

"The future of our economy depends on how effectively we nurture our youth by connecting their academic training with real-world industrial demands," he added.

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leadership called upon all stakeholders, policymakers, academia, and the private sector to join hands in fostering a knowledge-based economy where entrepreneurial ventures become the backbone of national development.

Japanese language awareness seminar held



F.P. Report

LAHORE: A dynamic and highly informative awareness seminar on "Japanese Language as a Career Path for Pakistani Youth" was successfully held at the University of Central Punjab, Lahore. The event drew enthusiastic participation from over 200 students, educators, and professionals across various disciplines, all eager to explore career and educational opportunities in Japan.

Organized under the national framework of the Japan Career Pathway Program, the seminar aimed to guide Pakistani youth toward professional growth through Japanese language proficiency, cultural understanding, and access to scholarships and job markets.

The session featured distinguished speakers including Ms. Sitara Arif, National Director/Country Head (Federal Ministry of Education) and President PJSA, Muhammad Bash-

arat, Executive Member PJSA, and Ms. Sajjal Rehman, Corporate Head Coordinator, who collectively shed light on the growing demand for Japanese-speaking professionals in sectors like IT, healthcare, hospitality, and engineering.

In continuation of its mission, PJSA also aims to launch tailored incentives for female students and trainers, fostering women empowerment through Japanese language education and global career facilitation. Participants were informed about outstanding options such as the MEXT Scholarship, Japan's JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) framework, and the Japan Cultural Understandings paradigm. 'JASSO' this scholarship was also introduced, Sitara Arif highlighted and introduced various incentives for women and empower them to come forward for adopting the career of Japan as this country pays the highest security and social respect.

The speakers also emphasized how cultural adaptability and language fluency serve as keys to unlocking meaningful employment and higher education in Japan.

In his keynote address, Prof. Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, UCP, highlighted the strategic importance of Japan in global career landscapes, stating: "You've already invested 14 years of your life in education. Now, just 6-8 more months of focused effort toward Japanese language and skills can entirely redefine your future."

Ms. Sitara Arif passionately urged the students to view Japan as more than just a destination: "Japan is one of the most civilized countries in the world. With determination, you can achieve not only high earnings and structured living, but also deep personal growth, peace, and a refined life. In Japan, you will truly meet yourself."



Nissanka 146*, Chandimal 93 put Sri Lanka in control

C O L O M B O (ESPNcricinfo): On a surface that Bangladesh's batters had laboured on a day earlier, Sri Lanka's batters made hay, as a 194-run second-wicket stand between Pathum Nissanka and Dinesh Chandimal took the hosts to a 43-run lead at stumps on day two.

At the close, night-watcher Prabath Jayasuriya was in the middle to keep Nissanka - unbeaten on 146 - company, as light began to fade quickly. Jayasuriya had survived a few nervy moments, including a lbw review late, but Sri Lanka went home the happier of the two sides.

Chandimal fell 93 late in the final session, agonisingly short of a 17th Test hundred, attempting a reverse sweep, giving Bangladesh some consolation. The only other wicket had been Lahiru Udara, who had made a meaningful 40 during an 88-run opening stand before being trapped lbw shortly after lunch.

In-between those two wickets though, Nissanka was the headline act of another day of Sri Lankan dominance. His was an innings that showed all aspects of the man, from the stoicism which brought him a gritty Test ton on debut, to the belligerence that made him Sri Lanka's first ever ODI double century. With Bangladesh's final two wickets picked

up inside the first hour of play in the morning session, Sri Lanka would have been wary of not succumbing to the same pitfalls that befell the Bangladesh batters, particularly on a wicket that was turning out to not be as batter-friendly as first assumed.

But from the very first delivery he faced, an insouciant back foot punch through the covers for four, Nissanka set the tone - and showed that he, and the rest of the Lankan batters, would not be afraid to pounce on any errors. As it turned out there were a fair few of those in the first 10 overs of the Lankan innings, as Sri Lanka racked up nine boundaries in the opening salvo. Their run rate during that time a staggering 5.5.

But over the next 11 overs - up until the end of the session - Sri Lanka scored just 28 runs, as Bangladesh led by Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Tajul Islam reeled things back. And so the innings would ebb and flow in a similar vein, as Sri Lanka gave due respect to the bowlers for their stints of disciplined bowling, but jolted into action when anything loose was on offer.

For much of the final session, it was more of the former as Bangladesh kept things very tight for the first hour or so after tea - attempting to frustrate the Sri Lankan batters with a barrage of short deliveries;

Nissanka took two blows on the grill so as to attest to this strategy. It was during this period where runs were at their most premium, but both Nissanka and Chandimal showed admirable patience and refused to take the bait.

This was primarily down to the fact that Sri Lanka were confident in the knowledge that runs would be available elsewhere at some point. And so it proved. Twenty-eight runs were scored in the first 12 overs after tea. The next 16 overs brought 72 runs at 4.5 an over.

The seamers in particular received a brunt of Sri Lanka's aggression, with neither Ebadot Hossain nor Nahid Rana able to stick to the consistent lines and lengths that had so well served Sri Lanka's seam pairing. They had bowled a combined 19 overs for 87 runs, and it might have been worse if not for that period in which they peppered the batters with bouncers in an attempt to dry up the runs.

Nayeem Hasan, meanwhile, struggled to replicate the nagging lengths that made him such a difficult proposition in Galle. Though Nissanka and Chandimal did their part admirably in not letting the young spinner settle.

In just his second over they struck him for a trio of boundaries, punishing anything too short or too full. Of the 43 deliveries

Nayeem bowled to the pair, 45 runs were scored. Nayeem though wound up getting the final say on the day, grabbing the wicket of Chandimal, though he'll need to put forward a better showing tomorrow if Bangladesh are to keep Sri Lanka from batting them out of the game.

At the start of the day, Tajul had shown promise with the bat during a 60-ball 33. He had taken on some short bowling from the seamers, while confidently stepping out against the seamers. Such was his confidence, he was even shielding numbers 10 and 11 from the strike.

Sri Lanka though, like they had done throughout day one, stuck to their plans, which in this instance involved lots of short stuff to push the batters back, before sneaking in something fuller. It was this strategy that got the first break of the morning, as Ebadot was caught on his crease that he ideally should have been coming forward to.

It wasn't all perfect for Sri Lanka, however, as they added yet another drop to their catalogue of missed chances in the innings - Kamindu Mendis spilling a low chance off Tajul at mid-off. But Sonal Dinusha returned shortly after, and took just three deliveries to get the last man, as Tajul skied one for mid-off to safely pouch.



LONDON: (L-R) Albert Molina, Manager of Carlos Alcaraz, Physio Juanjo Moreno, Alvaro Alcaraz Garfia of Spain, Juan Carlos Ferrero, Coach of Carlos Alcaraz, and Carlos Alcaraz of Spain, pose for a photo ahead of a practice session prior to The Championships Wimbledon 2025 at All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club on Thursday in London, England.

Pakistan earn silver medal at 2nd Asian Doubles Squash C'ships

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's squash team clinched silver medal at the 2nd Asian Doubles Squash Championships 2025 in Sarawak, Malaysia on Thursday. According to information made available here by Pakistan Squash

Federation (PSF), Pakistani duo of Noor Zaman and Nasir Iqbal displayed great skill and determination in the final match against defending champions India. Despite a strong start, they narrowly lost the title clash with a match score of

1-2.

Final Match Result: Pakistan lost to India 1-2 (11-9, 5-11, 5-11) – Duration: 88 minutes

Pakistan's journey to the final included a thrilling win over host nation Malaysia in the semifinals,

marking a remarkable run in the prestigious tournament. The Pakistan Squash Federation in a statement lauded the performance of Noor Zaman and Nasir Iqbal, congratulating them on securing the silver medal.

Windies bowl Australia out for 180 on chaotic first day

BRIDGETOWN (BBC): Australia were skittled out for just 180 against West Indies - but hit back with the ball as 14 wickets fell on a chaotic opening day of the first Test in Bridgetown.

Seamers Jayden Seales and Shamar Joseph shared nine wickets as Australia were dismissed in less than 57 overs after winning the toss.

Travis Head top-scored with 59 and opener Usman Khawaja hit 47, but captain Pat Cummins (28) and Beau Webster (11) were the only other batters to reach double figures.

The tourists clawed their way back into the match when their experienced pace trio of Mitchell Starc,

Josh Hazlewood and Cummins combined to reduce West Indies to 57-4 at close.

"That was pretty special," said Seales, who took five wickets and added that their plans had worked out well.

"Shamar [Joseph] was special. He has a love for Australia. He got through the top order and made it easy for us in the middle and at the end.

"We knew the batters would come hard if we gave them width, and the plan was to bowl full and as much at the stumps as possible.

"[It was] a little slower than what the Australians would have expected, and that made them play a lot

more."

Playing their first Test match in the Caribbean for 10 years, Australia named a new-look top order with Steve Smith injured and Marnus Labuschagne dropped following their World Test Championship defeat by South Africa.

Teenage opener Sam Konstas and Josh Inglis were recalled in their place, but they scored just three and five respectively as the tourists slipped to 22-3.

Head put on 89 runs for the fourth wicket with Khawaja, who was dropped twice before he became Joseph's third victim of the day.

Joseph, the hero for West Indies in their famous win in Brisbane 18 months

ago, then produced a beauty of a delivery that clean bowled Webster as he ended with figures of 4-46.

Head's resistance ended when he was caught behind off the bowling of Justin Greaves, before Seales wrapped up the tail to finish with 5-60.

West Indies, seeking a first home Test win over Australia for 22 years, made a poor start to their reply when Starc removed openers Kraigg Brathwaite and John Campbell in successive overs.

Cummins then had Keacy Carty caught behind, before Hazlewood bowled nightwatchman Jomel Warrican in the space of six balls shortly before stumps.

Ronaldo to extend Al-Nassr stay, Saudi sources say

LONDON (BBC): Cristiano Ronaldo is close to agreeing a new contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr, Saudi sources have told BBC Sport.

The 40-year-old Portugal captain's deal was due to expire at the end of June, but sources indicate a two-year extension is close to being finalised.

Ronaldo posted on social media "the chapter is over" following the Riyadh club's final Saudi Pro League game of the season last month, leading to speculation he was set to leave.

Fifa president Gianni Infantino then raised the prospect of him joining a team involved at the Club World Cup after Al-Nassr's failure to qualify for the extended tournament which is being held in the United States.

Ronaldo said he had received offers from participating teams but had turned them down.

Having helped Portugal win the Uefa Nations League two weeks ago, the former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus



forward appears to have decided to stay in Saudi Arabia, and is said to be considering making his own sports investments in the Gulf nation.

Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr in 2023 after the termination of his deal with Manchester United.

He has scored 99 goals in 111 appearances for the Saudi club, including 35 in

41 matches last term, claiming the league's Golden Boot award for top scorer.

Earlier on Wednesday, Al-Nassr parted company with Italian manager Stefano Pioli after less than a year in charge.

The ex-AC Milan boss led them to a third-placed finish last season in the Saudi top flight, where

they finished 13 points behind champions Al-Ittihad.

"Thanks for everything," Ronaldo wrote in a message on social media following news of Pioli's exit, with the 59-year-old set to take charge of former club Fiorentina.

BBC Sport has contacted Ronaldo's representatives for comment.

Ugly scenes as Inter beat River Plate to reach Club World Cup last 16

NEW YORK (BBC): Inter Milan went through to the last 16 of the Club World Cup with victory over Argentine side River Plate, who finished their final Group E game with nine players and are out of the tournament.

The bad-tempered match at Lumen Field in Seattle ended with River Plate's Marcos Acuna having to be restrained by team-mates and staff - including his captain Franco Armani and Inter manager Cristian Chivu - as he chased opposition winger Denzel Dumfries who was jogging off the

pitch.

Fans threw objects at players as Dumfries was escorted down the tunnel.

That was preceded by a melee between players from the two sides, sparked by a tackle by Acuna on Dumfries, with River Plate's Gonzalo Montiel dismissed in the aftermath after picking up a second yellow card.

The Argentine side had already seen Lucas Martinez Quarta sent off after 66 minutes for denying midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan a goalscoring opportunity.

Shortly afterwards, 19-

year-old Francesco Esposito lashed in his first goal for the club to give Inter the lead.

Alessandro Bastoni added a second with a left-foot shot five minutes into added time.

"We have the job done," said Inter's Romanian boss Cristian Chivu. "We qualify for the further stage of this competition. We are pleased with that.

"The game was very tough for us in the first half, River had a lot of aggression, a lot of intensity. In the second half, we controlled the game a little bit better and after the red

card it was much easier for us."

Inter, who were beaten by Paris St-Germain in the Champions League final, will play Brazilian club Fluminense in the last 16 on Monday at 20:00 BST.

Monterrey beat Urawa Red Diamonds 4-0 to progress to the knockout stage by finishing second in Group E on five points - one point ahead of River Plate.

The Mexican side will face German club Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday, 2 July at 02:00 BST in the knockout stage.

Pak women's football team to depart for AFC Asian Cup qualifiers

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), Syed Mohsen Gilani visited the training camp of the Pakistan women's national football team here ahead of their participation in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers.

During his visit,

President Gilani interacted with the players and coaching staff, expressing his best wishes and confidence in the team's performance.

He also discussed training progress and preparations with the team.

The training camp, led by head coach Adeel

Rizki, concluded on Thursday after several days of preparation. The team is set to depart for Indonesia tonight via a private airline, transiting through Karachi and Bangkok before reaching Jakarta.

Pakistan is placed in Group E alongside

Chinese Taipei, host nation Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan.

The team will play its first group match on June 29 against Chinese Taipei, followed by the second match on July 2 against Indonesia and the final group game on July 5 against Kyrgyzstan.

PHF seeks govt support to participate in FIH Pro League

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) Secretary General Rana Mujahid on Thursday said that Pakistan has been offered a place in the prestigious FIH Pro League but the federation lacks financial resources to ensure national team's participation in it. Addressing a joint press conference along side Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Yasir Pirzada here at Pakistan Sports Complex, Rana Mujahid said Pakistan, who finished as runners-up in the recently-held FIH Nations Cup after losing the final to New Zealand, have been invited to join the elite Pro League, but participation requires a budget of USD 2.5 million.

"It is a great opportunity for Pakistan team to return to top-tier international hockey and improve its profile. We have requested the Prime Minister to support us financially and have also made an appeal to Field Marshal Asim Munir for assistance," he said.

He said Pakistan's performance in the FIH Nations Cup was satisfacto-

ry and showed the potential of the national side.

"If we commit and then back out due to financial issues, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) could impose ban on us. We have already written to the FIH and requested time to make a final decision on our team's participation [in FIH Pro League]," he said.

He added that former Olympian Tahir Zaman would submit a strategic plan for the senior hockey team's development.

To a question, he said PTCL and Ufone were supporting the PHF as sponsors, but more robust funding was needed to ensure participation at the highest level. He revealed that Pakistan would take part in the upcoming Junior Asia Cup adding that the squad for that would be announced on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, DG PSB Yasir Pirzada said hockey was the country's national sport and the board would do whatever it

could to support it.

"The PHF has submitted its proposal, which we will review," he said.

"The PSB is committed to doing whatever possible within its available resources to support hockey, while ensuring that all work remains within the government's policy framework," he added.

He said the kind of money being spent on cricket could not be compared with hockey or other sports.



Soccer-Man City's Ederson dismisses exit rumours as 'fake news'

MANCHESTER (Reuters): Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson has said any reports of his impending departure from the club in the close season are fake news as he enters the final year of his contract.

Ederson has been City's number one since he joined the club from Benfica for 40 million euros (\$46.90 million) in 2017.

The 31-year-old has won six Premier League titles and the Champions League with City while he has also claimed the Premier League Golden Glove three times for the most clean sheets.

The Brazilian was heavily linked with a move to the Saudi Pro League, men-

tioning he had received an "unusual proposal" in October, but said at the Club World Cup that his head is with City.

"No, my future is here," Ederson told reporters.

"Some friends send me a lot of news but 99% is fake news. I understand you guys (media), you need the news to put a like on social media or rant for the news.

"I understand, but there's a lot of fake news around my name. My head is here, it stays with City. It gives me everything to go back to the Premier League again and try to win the Champions League as well. My mind is staying in the club."

City boss Pep Guardiola said he did not know anything about Ederson's contract. The keeper will leave as a free agent next year if the club do not extend his contract.

Guardiola said: "What I can say, I'm so pleased and delighted with what I'm

seeing in the training sessions and delighted that Eddie is still with us.

"We cannot define what we have done in this incredible, spectacular decade without him. His contribution has been massive in many, many aspects and I'm really pleased."





In brief

2 killed as pole falls on vehicle

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two people were killed and two others injured when an electricity pole collapsed on a vehicle near Mandi Mor, Rawalpindi on Thursday. According to a private news channel and rescue officials, the pole collapsed after the ground became unstable due to heavy rain, causing serious damage. Two people died on the spot, while two others were injured. The injured were shifted to PIMS Hospital for treatment.

Funeral prayer offered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Thursday offered the funeral prayer of Head Constable Alauddin at Police Lines Headquarters. The late officer was posted in the Security Division and had been diligently performing his duties. An official told APP that Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Security Division Muhammad Saffraz Virk laid a floral wreath, offered Fateha, and expressed heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family. He said the body was later sent to the officer's native town for burial with full official honours. SSP Virk directed police officials to extend all possible support to the family, adding that every officer and personnel of the police force is a valuable asset, and their families will be looked after in every possible way.

301,455 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 301,455 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 434,613 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.88 feet which was 71.88 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 255,600 cusecs and 154,600 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1173.30 feet, which was 123.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 43,779 cusecs and 11,621 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 194,366, 154,727, 86,236 and 36,425 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 38,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 64,034 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

‘Electoral Education’ held

RAWALPINDI (APP): An awareness seminar ‘Electoral Education’ was organized to educate students about the significance of voting and the constitutional role of ECP, chaired by District Election Commissioner Rawalpindi Zeeshan Khan, at Anglo Arabic Higher Secondary School. The event aimed to highlight the importance of the electoral process in building a strong democratic government and encourage students to actively participate in elections. Addressing the seminar, Zeeshan Khan, emphasized that a nation's progress depends on active participation in the electoral process. He urged the youth to actively participate in the electoral system, get their vote registered and empower the democratic values. Zeeshan elaborated that once a person reaches 18 and obtains a national identity card, their vote is automatically registered through a synchronized system between NADRA and the ECP.

Rain continues in ICT; teams monitor drainage, traffic flow

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rainfall continued in intervals across Islamabad on Thursday, prompting the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration teams to stay in the field and ensure smooth drainage and traffic movement.

In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon directed all Assistant Commissioners to remain on-site during the weather activity to monitor the situation closely.

According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, the federal capital witnessed intermittent rain throughout the day, raising concerns about water accumulation in low-lying areas. In response, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration deployed sanitation teams across the city to maintain drainage systems.

The Deputy Commissioner instructed all Assistant Commissioners to be physically present in the field. Following these orders, officers remained stationed across various sectors, inspecting critical points including roads, underpasses, and residential zones vulnerable to flooding.

According to an ICT spokesman, sanitation teams actively cleared

blocked drains and ensured water did not collect in underpasses. The spokesperson confirmed that no complaints were received about water accumulation inside any underpass during the day.

Monitoring teams also kept a close watch on stormwater drains and low-lying neighborhoods to respond quickly to any developing situation. The ICT administration continued coordination with its sanitation units to ensure uninterrupted flow of rainwater and prevent flooding.

Several trees reportedly fell on roads due to strong winds during the rain. Rescue teams responded immediately and cleared the fallen trees to restore road access. According to city officials, no serious damage was reported, and traffic flow remained normal across key routes despite the weather.

Assistant Commissioners also visited underpasses during rainfall hours to assess ground conditions. Their on-site presence allowed for real-time coordination with field teams, ensuring swift action in case of any blockage or emergency.

The ICT administration said that all major roads remained functional, and there was no major disruption

in urban mobility. Field teams worked in coordination with traffic police to ensure that vehicular movement continued without delays.

The rain-related operations continued till late evening, with the city administration maintaining regular updates from all zones. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for constant field presence by Assistant Commissioners until the rainfall subsides completely. He directed that no officer should leave the field during this period.

The ICT spokesman stated that the administration will remain on alert as more rain is expected in the coming hours. Monitoring and drainage efforts will continue to prevent any potential urban flooding or disruptions.

Residents were advised to stay cautious and avoid unnecessary travel during heavy downpours. The city's control room remains active to receive public complaints and to coordinate rapid responses with the relevant teams.

The administration has assured the public that all necessary measures are in place to deal with further rainfall, with teams ready to respond across all sectors of the capital.

Ethiopian embassy, UN Pakistan hold meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad and the United Nations, Pakistan, have agreed to cooperate on mobilizing international participation for the 2nd United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake, taking place from July 27-29, 2025, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The discussion was held during a meeting between Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Pakistan Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula and Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Pakistan Mohamed Yahya.

The two sides exchanged

views on the critical importance of Pakistani leadership's participation in the Summit, which is being co-hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Italy.

Ambassador Dr. Jemal briefed the Resident Coordinator on the extensive preparations underway in Addis Ababa to host the Food Systems Summit Stocktake.

The Ambassador highlighted the growing cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan, particularly in areas of climate change and food security.

He informed the Resident Coordinator about the visionary steps taken by

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed for climate adaptation and mitigation, green development, and food self-sufficiency.

Mohamed Yahya commended Ethiopia's significant efforts in forestation and afforestation, food security, and green development initiatives.

He assured the Ambassador of his full support to ensure the conference's success and the achievement of its objectives.

The meeting underscored the importance of international cooperation in addressing global food security challenges and promoting sustainable development.

‘Girls Empowerment Forum’ organized

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Girl Guides Association National Headquarters (PGGANH) organized ‘Pakistan Girls Empowerment Forum- Pathway to Leadership’ from 21st to 26th June 2025.

110 Guides and their Leaders from AJK, Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Islamabad Capital Territory participated. The event was organized in collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan.

Pakistan Girl Guides Association has recently launched a new badge curricula regarding Nutrition, Environment & Climate Change, Leadership, and Mental and Emotional Wellbeing. During the event, Girls experienced activities of these 4 badges and will cascade these to at least 10 more girls after returning to their home towns. Upon completion of this task, they will become Empowerment Champions.

Ms Cindy Kushner, Deputy Representative (a.i.), UNICEF Pakistan, was the Chief Guest of the

Event. Mrs. Maria Maud Sabri, National Commissioner, Pakistan Girl Guides Association, welcomed her and the other Guests.

She briefed them about the program and activities of the Guiding. She said that Guiding is preparing leaders for tomorrow. While experiencing the Guide program, the girls learn to step forward whenever there is a need. Mrs. Maria Maud Sabri also informed the guests about the new badges. She commended the tireless efforts of Guides, volunteers, and partners for their unwavering commitment to creating safe and inclusive spaces for young women and girls.

A highlight of the ceremony was a compelling panel discussion moderated by Ms. Fahmida Khan, featuring Girl Guides as panelists. The discussion spotlighted their journeys, insights, and dreams for the future, offering a powerful reflection on leadership, resilience, and the transformative power of girl-led initiatives.

Ms. Cindy Kushner, Deputy Representative of UNICEF Pakistan, graced the occasion as Chief Guest. In her inspiring remarks, she underscored the vital role of partnerships in nurturing girl-led leadership and promoting gender equality. She highlighted the potential of young girls and emphasized that empowering them should not be the responsibility of a single organization—it must be a national priority. She said:

“This forum does more than just amplify girls’ voices; it reminds us that when we work together, grounded in equality and respect, we shape a future where every girl has the chance to grow, learn, and lead. UNICEF Pakistan is proud to walk this journey alongside PGGA, and together we will continue creating spaces where every girl can realize her full potential.”

She also encouraged participants to stay resilient, to keep dreaming, and to use their voices as a source of strength for others.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for IT Shaza Fatima Khawaja delivers a keynote address at PSARB Industry Roundtable on Satellite Communications Regulation in Pakistan.

Over 1,000 drug dealers nabbed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested over 1,000 suspected drug dealers and seized massive quantities of narcotics — including heroin, ice, hashish, opium, cocaine, and more than 7,000 bottles of liquor — during the ongoing year 2025.

An official told APP on Thursday that the campaign is being conducted under the special direction of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, as part of the department's commitment to eradicate drug networks in the federal capital.

He said the police recovered 399 kilograms of heroin, 178 kilograms of hashish, over 52 kilograms of ice, more than 6 kilograms of opium, 50 grams of cocaine, 160 intoxicating pills, and 7,246 bottles of liquor during various operations carried out across the city.

He said multiple targeted operations were launched to dismantle drug trafficking networks, particularly focusing on those involved in supplying drugs to youth.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Muhammad Jawad Tariq, stated that efforts will continue to eliminate this menace and ensure the safety and well-being of citizens.

DIG said the Islamabad Police is utilizing all available resources to protect lives and property.

Japanese language course started

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) has launched a short Japanese language course for skilled workers to get jobs in Japan as basic knowledge is must for job seekers who were interested to work in Japan. An official source told APP, he said that OEC as a manpower promotion public agency which was playing a vital role to provide maximum jobs to Pakistanis abroad to generate the huge remittances.

In this regard, OEC seeking application from eligible candidate to apply for the Japanese language course, should have minimum education middle, 18-39 age limits and one year experience must for relevant field.

Course fee was Rs 10000 non-refundable and course duration around three months and two session one in morning and other in an evening.

He said, “All interested candidates those are seeking jobs in Japan could visit jobs.oec.gov.pk/jlt_form.”

ANF arrests seven smugglers with over 416 kgs of drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting seven operations across the country, recovered as many as 416.405 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 5.188 million and arrested twelve suspects, said the ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that 1.2 kgs of hashish were recovered from the luggage of a Qatar-bound passenger at Multan International Airport. In another operation,

9.6 kgs of hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Mandara Toll Plaza and five suspects were arrested. As many as 400 kgs of cannabis were recovered from a vehicle near Liaquatpur, Rahim Yar Khan and two suspects were arrested.

Similarly, 3 kgs of heroin were recovered from the possession of two suspects near Railway Gate Kasur, Lahore. As much as 2 kgs of ice were recovered from a motorcycle rider in

Hayatabad, Peshawar. 355 grams of ecstasy pills were recovered from a passenger in public transport near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza.

During another operation near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, 250 grams of weed were recovered from a passenger travelling in a public transport. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Lawmakers support govt’s green university initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Members of the National Assembly from various political parties have welcomed the government's plan to establish a Green University aimed at tackling climate change and promoting environmental awareness.

The lawmakers shared their views while speaking to media outside the Parliament House on Thursday. Dr. Shaista Jadoon, MNA from PML-N, called the initiative timely and important. “This university will help in research on

global warming, which is a serious issue for the entire world,” she said.

Syed Aminul Haq, MNA from MQM, praised the government's broader climate policies. “Efforts like emission control, promotion of green energy, and support for electric vehicles will play a key role in fighting climate change,” he said.

Malik Shakir Bashir, MNA, said the government cannot do it alone. “Every section of society needs to come forward and support the fight against climate

change,” he urged.

The lawmakers noted that one of the main goals of the Green University is to involve young people in climate action. They said this step would help prepare the next generation to deal with future environmental challenges.

Ali Musa Gilani, MNA, highlighted the impact of climate change on agriculture. “Food security is under threat. The agricultural sector is suffering. We need to raise awareness among the public,” he said.

Pakistan Gender Gap ranking ‘Wake-Up Call’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights, Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, on Thursday described Pakistan's 148th position in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025 as a “wake-up call,” and stressed the need for collective resolve to foster a more inclusive, gender-equal society.

Speaking as the Guest of Honour at the ‘National Dialogue on Spotlight on the Global Gender Gap Report 2025 – Facts, Ground Realities, and the Way Forward (2026)’, Shaikh expressed deep concern over the country's 148th ranking out of 148 nations. “It's not just a statistic — it's a moment for self-reflection,” he remarked. The event was organized by NCSW.

Emphasizing introducing reforms over denial to the report, he noted the report should serve as a catalyst for introspection, and called for homegrown strategies to tackle gender

disparities, particularly in economic participation and political representation. “Rather than racing to meet external standards, we must define and commit to our own vision of equality,” he said.

Shaikh pointed to encouraging trends, including an increase in women's representation in the civil services, now at 48%, and the influential role of women legislators, who have led 55% of Parliament's agenda in recent sessions. These milestones, he suggested, could pave the way for gradually retiring gender-based quotas.

He also reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to protecting vulnerable groups and highlighted several women-centric projects in pipeline, or nearing completion across the country. “There is no need for despair — there is room for change, and the work is already underway,” he concluded.

Pakistan, Indonesia to collaborate on vaccine production

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan and Indonesia are poised to significantly enhance their collaboration in healthcare, with a primary focus on vaccine development.

Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, Indonesian Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan, met with Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, Pakistan's Minister of State for National Health Services, today to discuss strengthening bilateral ties in the health domain.

The meeting explored several avenues for joint initiatives, including vaccine manufacturing in Pakistan, building healthcare facilities in Indonesia, advancements in pharmaceuticals, and the exchange of personnel.

Dr. Bharath affirmed Pakistan's dedication to this collaboration, emphasizing the strategic importance of the partnership with Indonesia.

PAL acknowledges social media’s role

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Director General of the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), Sultan Muhammad Nawaz Nasir, on Thursday, acknowledged social media's role for preserving Pakistan's endangered indigenous languages like Yidgha, Wakhi, Burushaski, Brahui and others, said, “It is the most relevant platform to preserve country's rich linguistic mosaic.”

According to the latest data from Ethnologue, there are approximately 7,159 living languages worldwide. However, 75%

of the global population communicates using just 20 languages. In Pakistan alone, around 80 languages are spoken, including 68 indigenous and 12 non-indigenous ones. While Urdu is the national language and English a co-official one, regional languages remain a vital part of the country's cultural identity.

Languages like Wakhi, Burushaski, Brahui and others are at risk. However, community-driven efforts are helping to preserve them. For example, the Wakhi Culture Association

is using radio, social media, and cultural events to promote the language. Wakhi speakers, known as Xik, maintain a strong cultural identity across borders—from China's Tashkurgan to Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor.

Burushaski, a language isolate with no known relatives, is spoken in the Hunza, Nagar, and Yasin valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan. Its speakers are increasingly turning to platforms like Facebook and TikTok to share content, promote cultural pride and keep the language alive.

A 2020 article titled “Challenges and Opportunities for Brahui Journalism in Balochistan” emphasized the role of digital media in connecting people globally. Experts noted that blogs, websites, and other user-generated content platforms provide opportunities for self-expression and cultural preservation.

Sonaina Haniya, who was graduated from the National College of Arts (NCA) belongs Hunza, designed Burushaski alphabets for her thesis on preserving the language. She

noted that many young Burusho, especially in cities, are shifting to dominant languages. Her work aimed to creatively preserve Burushaski by making it accessible and relevant to younger generations.

Internationally, digital campaigns like Chile's Kimeltuwe, which promotes Mapuche culture and has over 216,000 Facebook followers, show how social media can revitalize languages. In Pakistan, similar initiatives like the Youth Engagement and Resilience Initiative (YERI) are building digital literacy, promoting

online safety, and incorporating indigenous languages into peacebuilding efforts.

PAL is actively using its own digital platforms to highlight such initiatives and raise awareness about endangered languages. Through e-learning and social media, youth are being empowered to celebrate diversity, counter hate speech, and become responsible digital citizens, while also helping preserve Pakistan's linguistic heritage.

UNESCO warns that over 40% of the world's

7,000 languages are at risk of disappearing. Languages like Naikri (10,000 speakers), Phalura (8,600), and others with just a handful of speakers, such as Juma (5) and Yuchi (4), are facing extinction, threatening to take centuries of cultural traditions with them.

Experts and organizations like PAL stress that preserving language is preserving identity. With sustained commitment and digital innovation, Pakistan's rich linguistic mosaic, and that of the world, can still be protected for future generations.

Heavy rain, floods predicted

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) on Thursday predicted heavy flash floods, snowfall and rainfall in eight provinces. On its X handle, MoTCA wrote that flash floods, heavy rainfall and snowfall will likely lash Nuristan, Kunar, Nangarhar, Laghman, Panjsher, Paktia, Khost and Paktika on June 27. The amount of rainfall in different places is expected to be between 10 and 35 millimeters, MoTCA added.

104 more Afghans freed

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation says 104 more Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan. These individuals returned to the country, the ministry announced in a brief post on its X handle on Thursday. Citing Spin Boldak-based officials in Kandahar, the ministry wrote the returnees spent one to 10 days in jails and had been arrested in various parts of Pakistan.

Interior Minister engages with Kapisa leadership, community members

KAPISA (BNA): Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Minister of Interior Affairs, recently met with local authorities, religious figures, and Mujahidin in Kapisa, emphasizing the government's commitment to support the community in all circumstances.

The meeting, attended by local officials, tribal elders, and members of the Mujahideen, highlighted the importance of unity and cooperation. Qari Ehsanullah Baryal, the governor of Kapisa, reaffirmed the loyalty of the Mujahid people to the leadership of the Islamic Emirate, vowing to continue their support for the current governance and service initiatives.

Minister Haqqani explained that the purpose of his visit was to connect with local officials, families of martyrs, individuals with disabilities, and the broader community. He reassured attendees that officials operate within their legal authority and emphasized the importance of adhering to established rules and mandates.

Furthermore, he conveyed a message of reassurance to all Afghans, stating that those who may have committed crimes during the previous regime are granted amnesty by the Amir al-Muminin, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The head of the Kapisa Ulema Council expressed gratitude on behalf of the community for the Ministry of Interior's efforts in maintaining security and addressing public concerns. He urged continued attention to the needs of the province's residents, highlighting the importance of ongoing support from the government.

Railway project to link 9 provinces under review



KABUL (BNA): A high-level delegation assigned under the special directive of the Office of the Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has carried out extensive visits to assess and finalize the route for a planned national railway corridor. The visits spanned from Hairatan Port in Balkh province to Herat, and from Torghundi Port in Herat to Kandahar, covering a proposed rail line expected to enhance national and regional connectivity.

According to a statement received by Bakhtar News Agency, senior officials from various ministries and agencies, including the Ministries of Public Works, Finance, Mines and Petroleum, Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Information and Culture, and Economy, took part in the mission. Representatives from the National Environmental Protection Agency and the Municipal Reform Directorate of the Administrative Office also participated.

The technical teams conducted on-site evaluations across nine provinces—Balkh, Jawzjan, Faryab, Badghis, Herat, Farah, Helmand, Nimroz, and Kandahar—to examine potential railway routes based on natural, technical, economic, environmental, and social criteria. The goal is to select a final alignment that will best support Afghanistan's economic growth, regional integration, and transit facilitation.

The delegation also held meetings with local officials to incorporate community perspectives and regional needs into the final decision-making process.

Following these assessments, a technical report will be compiled and submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister. The report will guide the official announcement of the railway route and preparations for practical implementation.

This strategic railway project is envisioned to connect Afghanistan with neighboring countries and global trade networks, integrating various provinces into the national economy. It is also expected to generate substantial employment and open key trade corridors.

According to preliminary estimates, the full railway line will stretch 1,468 kilometers, crossing nine provinces, 37 districts, and 800 villages. The project will be completed in two phases. The first phase will cover 657 kilometers from Mazar-i-Sharif to Herat. The second phase will span 811 kilometers, beginning in Herat and continuing through the provinces of Farah, Nimroz, and Helmand, ending in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar province.

Afghans top global resettlement needs for 2026, says UN

KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations reported that in 2026, 2.5 million refugees around the world will require resettlement. UN Secretary-General's spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said that Afghan citizens represent the largest group in need of resettlement.

"Speaking of refugees, our friends at UNHCR today released a report estimating that 2.5 million refugees worldwide will need to be resettled next year. UNHCR said that while the figure remains high, annual resettlement needs have decreased for next year — down from 2.9 million in 2025, even as the global number of refugees continues to grow. This is mainly due to the changed situation in Syria, which has allowed for voluntary returns. UNHCR said that for 2026, the largest refugee populations that will need to be resettled are Afghans, followed by Syrians, South Sudanese, Sudanese, Rohingya and Congolese," he said.

UNHCR's Afghanistan office reported that in the first five months of this year, more than 393,000 Afghan migrants were deported from Iran and Pakistan and returned to Afghanistan. Additionally, 264 cases of deportation from Tajikistan have been recorded so far this year.

Mohammad Jamal Moslem, a migrant rights activist, told TOLONews: "UNHCR should convince host countries to address the problems of these individuals with respect for human dignity, and the Islamic Emirate and emergency committee must work with aid organizations to provide better shelter and economic support for affected citizens."

Leaky sewers contaminate underground water in Neili

NEILI (Pajhwok): Due to prolonged drought, reduced rainfall and the absence of a standard sewage system, underground water in the capital of central Daikundi province is becoming increasingly contaminated.

This issue has raised serious concerns among residents and local officials.

Local officials and residents say the lack of a proper sewage disposal system, particularly in residential homes and government offices, has led to the pollution of underground water sources, posing significant health risks and environmental hazards.

Arif Sediqi, spokesperson for Daikundi Environmental Protection Department, said unregulated sewage wells were increasingly contaminating groundwater in Neili city, the provincial capital, posing a severe future risk to residents.

According to his department's survey, over 40 percent of Neili's residents and some government institutions use substandard or soak pit sewage systems, with no standard waste disposal infrastructure in place.

He explained the infiltration of harmful substances into groundwater not only deteriorates water quality but also contributes to the spread of various diseases.

Contaminated water negatively impacts all aspects of life and endangers the entire ecosystem.

Sediqi added in the provincial capital, where groundwater was the primary source of drinking water and there was no proper sewerage system, the situation was becoming increasingly dire for both public health and the environment.

He warned: "Absorptive sewage wells are among the main causes of underground water pollution in Daikundi. Many of these wells are poorly constructed, lacking proper septic systems, and the region's permeable soil allows contaminants to seep quickly into underground water sources, creating a hazardous situation."

Residents not only face a shortage of agricultural water, but drinking water resources are also dwindling. Continued contamination could lead to a severe public health crisis. Siddiqi noted that it can take at least five years for polluted water to become safe again, and using it in the meantime can be extremely dangerous, even fatal.

He urged the public to invest in proper septic systems, stating: "While building a septic tank may cost around 50,000 afghanis, treating illnesses caused by contaminated water could cost more than 200,000 afghanis. Moreover, the health consequences may be irreversible."

He said the Environmental Department regularly holds quarterly meetings with local authorities to address groundwater pollution and reduce the use of soak pits. Public awareness campaigns have also been launched through local media and social networks.

The Department of Energy and Water also expressed concern over the growing pollution. The department noted that many older homes had been built without proper sewage plans, exacerbating the problem.

Omid Ali Mohammadi, an official of the department, said groundwater in Neili was losing its chemical and physical qualities.

According to him, water samples taken from wells near sewage pits show significant deterioration.

He pointed out that many homes were built without adhering to urban planning standards or constructing proper sewage systems, leading to the current crisis.

Meanwhile, university professor Mohammad Bonyadi said surface-level sewage wells allow waste to seep into rainwater and underground reserves, which were crucial for springs and wells. Once contaminated, these sources pose a serious health risk.

He noted that groundwater pollution is difficult to detect, meaning many wells in Neili might already be contaminated.

Bonyadi estimated that about 50% of the water used by residents comes from underground sources.

"Using this polluted water threatens our freshwater reserves and poses serious health risks, including various infectious diseases," he added.

"If contaminated water is used for agriculture, it pollutes the soil, disrupts its nutrient balance, harms crops, and eventually enters the human food chain. It also negatively affects the ecosystem."

Several Daikundi residents echoed concerns about unregulated sewage systems and called for urgent action to prevent further groundwater contamination.

Reza Rezaei, an inhabitant of the provincial capital, said most homes and some offices rely on absorbent sewage wells, which are hazardous to public health.

He explained: "When people first built houses, they didn't consider proper sewage systems. Many soak pits are dug just below ground level and are sometimes emptied into valleys, spreading foul odours."

Rezaei added that such practices contaminate nearby drinking water wells and spread diseases.

"This isn't just a nuisance to neighbours; it directly harms public health. Everyone must act responsibly to prevent illnesses and environmental degradation," he emphasised.

Doctors in Daikundi also warn that contaminated water can lead to serious illnesses.

Dr. Reza Akhtari said waterborne diseases caused by polluted water include diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain, kidney and heart issues, hormonal imbalances, weakened immune systems, nerve damage, and even poisoning.

He stressed that if access to clean water is not available, suspicious sources should be boiled or treated before use.

In response to public complaints, Daikundi governor's spokesman, Sayed Ghazanfar Kazemi, reported that inspections were carried out in 46 homes on June 23. As a result, four drinking water wells were found to be unusable.

Of the inspected homes, 17 had standard septic tanks, 16 had soak pits, seven had reusable water tanks, three had open-pit toilets, and three discharged waste through outdoor pipes.

Kazemi said homeowners with substandard sewage systems were given 25 days to upgrade them. He acknowledged widespread public concern and called on everyone to cooperate in tackling the issue.

Neili is one of Afghanistan's newer cities, and many homes there have not been built according to proper urban standards, residents say.

Muttaqi introduces new envoy to Turkey

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate, on Thursday, in a meeting in Ankara, introduced Sheikh Saneullah Farahmand, the new Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to Turkey, to his colleagues.

According to Bakhtar News Agency, quoting a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the meeting was attended not only by the official delegation but also by a number of Afghan elders and religious scholars residing in Ankara.

In his remarks, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi described the elevation of Afghanistan-Turkey relations to the ambassadorial level as a sign of good cooperation and positive relations between the two countries.

30,000 refugees return from Iran in 1 day

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): More than 30,000 Afghan refugees have returned from Iran to Afghanistan through the Islam Qala port in western Herat province in a single day, local officials said on Thursday.

Maulvi Ahmadullah Muttaqi, Director of Information and Culture, said this marked the highest number of returnees recorded in a single day.

He noted that the return process was proceeding smoothly, with dozens more vehicles carrying migrants still en route.

Muttaqi, who also heads the Public Information and Awareness Committee of the Commission for Addressing Migrant Affairs, said that the commission has mobilized all necessary resources at the Islam Qala port to assist the returnees.

He added that after receiving initial support, returnees would be transported to their respective home provinces using dedicated transport vehicles.

Previously, officials at the Islam Qala crossing reported that more than 10,000 Afghan migrants enter the country daily from Iran—approximately 70 percent voluntarily and 30 percent through forced deportation.

Kabul pursuing attack on Afghan child in Moscow



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan says it is closely investigating the case of an Afghan child who was severely injured by an individual in Moscow and has provided financial assistance to the child's family, and will follow up on the matter.

According to reports, a Belarusian man has been arrested after he violently slammed a one-year-old Afghan boy to the ground in the arrivals hall of Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport. The child reportedly sustained severe spinal and cranial injuries as a result of the attack.

According to The Daily Mirror, the suspect, identified as 31-year-old construction worker Vladimir Vitkov, has been taken into custody and has confessed to "attempting to murder" the child.

Graphic CCTV showed Vitkov picking up the boy before "hurling him to the ground of Moscow airport's arrivals hall".

"The attacker — described as a 'monster' by a Russian official — apparently checks to see if anyone is watching and then suddenly grabs the child, throwing him hard on the floor in the arrivals section of Sheremetyevo airport," The Mail reported.

Ahmad Zia Takal, deputy spokesman for MoFA, told Pajhwok Afghan News that after the incident, the ministry instructed the Afghan embassy in Moscow to inquire about the child, investigate the case, and follow it up.

According to him, later the diplomats at the Afghan embassy in Moscow visited the child closely and provided financial assistance to the child's family.

He said the child's condition is currently stable and he is out of danger.

Takal added that the "perpetrator" has been arrested and the criminal case against him is under investigation. He also stated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is using all its resources to ensure the child receives medical treatment and that the case is thoroughly examined.

Beekeepers Union hold meeting in Paktia

KABUL (TOLONews): The Beekeepers Union said Afghanistan has now reached self-sufficiency in honey production.

During a meeting held in Paktia province, members of the union called on the caretaker government to facilitate marketing for Afghan honey and provide the necessary support to increase production.

According to the union, there are currently 8,000 beekeeping farms operating across the country.

Shah Jahan Mubarez, head of the Beekeepers Union, said: "If we stop importing foreign honey, God willing, Afghanistan is self-sufficient in this sector. The reason foreign honey imports have not been stopped is that we haven't reported this issue to the government."

Other union members also stressed the need for market access, the promotion and maintenance of effective plants, and other necessary facilities.

Aqlbaz Selab, a member of the Beekeepers Union in Nangarhar, said during the Paktia meeting: "We need a strong honey market in Kabul, and each province should have its own market so that shops can be organized into central areas rather than being scattered in alleys. This will bring order and prevent price fluctuations."

"Honey from Iran, Pakistan, and other countries is widely available in Afghanistan, and the presence of foreign honey has weakened the market for our local products," said Mohammad Yousuf, a union member from Logar.

However, local officials in Paktia have assured beekeepers that their challenges will be addressed.

Inamullah Salahuddin, the deputy governor of Paktia, said at the meeting: "All your needs that are related to the system and within our capacity, we will address them, and we'll also try to resolve the visa issue."

Mohammad Azim Azimi, head of Industry and Commerce in Paktia, stated: "Any responsibility related to us—whether in honey production or other sectors—we are committed to fulfilling it."

According to statistics from the Department of Agriculture and Irrigation in Paktia, the province has 276 beekeeping farms, which produced 250 tons of honey last solar year.

Military equipment, arms prepared for use

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of National Defense announced that the support and logistics workshops of the technical management of the 217th Omari Corps have repaired and prepared a total of 529 vehicles and 38 weapons for operational use.

Among the repaired vehicles are 50 armored vehicles, eight strike tanks, 63 international vehicles, and 316 forklifts and other non-armored vehicles.

Additionally, the workshops have restored various types of weaponry, including an SPG9, an 82mm cannon, a Russian machine gun, and four ZU-23 rifles. The arsenal also includes four 249-AKM rifles, 12 Kalashnikov rifles, and 16 M16 rifles, alongside a diverse array of other weapons.

UNHCR opens women center in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has inaugurated a training center in Kabul aimed at empowering women returnees from neighboring countries.

In a statement, the agency said that this week, on the occasion of World Refugee Day, UNHCR and partners opened the INSAF Women's Integrated Services and Facilities Center in Kabul.

Eshwa, a displaced woman from Mazar, now leads a tailoring business here, said, "Thanks to this center, I have found purpose, and now 15 young women work with me, earning an income and gaining hope through craft."

The centre is a safe space for women entrepreneurs, including returnee and displaced women. With training, counseling, and business support, the center will enable women to transform ideas into sustainable enterprises."

The centre is a collaboration between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI), UNHCR and its partner APBHO.

"I am truly inspired by the resilience of these women. More than a place of business, the center is a space where women feel safe, seen, and empowered," said Arafat Jamal, UNHCR Representative in Afghanistan.

10 school buildings constructed

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ten newly constructed school buildings have been put into use in southern Ghazni province and a school building was renovated in central Maidan Wardak province on Thursday.

Spokesman for the Ministry of Education Qari Mansour Ahmad Hamza wrote on his Facebook page the school buildings in Ghazni consumed 110 million afghanis. He said a safe environment was created for students in Aab Band, Gilan and Ajristan districts after implementation of these projects.

Separately, the building of Ghazi Mohammad Jan Khan High School was renovated at a cost of 120,000 US dollars with financial support of the country's IHH Charity Foundation in Jaghatoi district of Maidan Wardak province, he added.

The building was put into service during a ceremony after renovation.

Poetical session held

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): A poetical session to discourage undesirable customs was held by the Information and Culture Department in Logar province, an official said on Thursday.

Local officials, poets, writers, and poetry lovers from the province attended the event. Head of Information and Culture Department Rafiullah Samin said poets and writers could fight against bad traditions, corruption, discriminatory behavior and divisions among people in society through their poems and writings.

He described the cultural situation in Logar as good and explained the activities of poets, writers, and cultural figures in this province had expanded beyond the capital, Pul-e-Alam, to remote districts, compared to the past.

Israeli attacks kill 62 Palestinians in Gaza

GAZA: At least 62 people have been killed in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, medical sources told Al Jazeera, as Israel's national security minister called for a "complete halt" of humanitarian aid supplies to the Palestinian territory.

Local health authorities said on Thursday that Israeli air attacks killed at least 15 people in two separate attacks in Gaza City, including nine people who were killed at a school housing displaced families in the city's Sheikh Radwan suburb. A separate strike killed nine people near a tent encampment in Khan Younis, in the south of the enclave. Hospital sources told Al Jazeera that nine people were killed and wounded in a drone attack on Deir el-Balah's market street. At least 62 people were killed in Israeli attacks on Wednesday, medical sources said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society reported that three people were killed and others injured by Israeli army fire while waiting for humanitarian aid near a distribution point at the Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza, the latest in a series of killings at aid distribution points set up by the controversial US- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). According to Gaza's Government Media Office, at least 549 Palestinians have been killed while attempting to get food from the sites since the GHF began operations on May 27.

It said the attacks on those seeking aid have also caused 4,066 injuries, and that 39 civilians remained missing following the attacks. According to British charity Save the Children, more than half of the casualties in the attacks near distribution hubs were children. Of the 19 deadly incidents reported, the organisation found that children were among the casualties in 10 of them. "No-one wants to get aid from these distribution points and who can blame them - it's a death sentence. People are terrified of being killed," said Ahmad Alhendawi, Save the Children's regional director for the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe.

The GHF has been criticised by the United Nations and international humanitarian organisations, which

Trump, Netanyahu agree on Gaza ceasefire terms

TEL AVIV: US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have reportedly reached a consensus on a framework for a ceasefire in Gaza, following a telephone call held after the recent US strike on Iran, according to Israeli media sources. Citing a report by The Times of Israel, it is being claimed that the war in Gaza may conclude within the next two weeks under the new agreement. The reported understanding includes the removal of Hamas from the Gaza Strip and the establishment of joint administrative control by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

The agreement also allegedly outlines the release of all Israeli hostages currently held in Gaza. Furthermore, arrangements are being discussed for the voluntary resettlement of Palestinians wishing to leave Gaza, with potential relocation to third countries. While official confirmation from either Washington or Tel Aviv remains pending, the purported deal marks a significant geopolitical shift in the region's complex dynamics, particularly with Arab states like the UAE and Egypt playing a central role in post-conflict governance. Observers caution, however, that any such agreement will likely face considerable on-ground challenges, particularly regarding local Palestinian consensus and regional reactions. Earlier, US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that a ceasefire between Iran and Israel was holding, shortly after he lashed out at both countries and cursed as he accused them of violating the truce. In a fast-moving series of declarations, the 79-year-old Republican, who was on his way to attend a NATO summit in The Hague, posted on his Truth Social app that "the Ceasefire is in effect!" "ISRAEL is not going to attack Iran. All planes will turn around and head home, while doing a friendly 'Plane Wave' to Iran. — Aljazeera

say it is inadequate to deliver humanitarian supplies to Gaza's population. The GHF took over aid operations in May, following mounting criticism against Israel's months-long total blockade on aid getting into the Strip. That had pushed most of the population to the brink of starvation. Since then, a trickle of aid has been allowed in, but the disastrous humanitarian situation has barely improved.

On Thursday, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir called for the Israeli government to reimpose its total blockade. "The humanitarian aid currently entering Gaza is an absolute disgrace," he said, adding that "what is needed in Gaza is not a temporary halt to 'humanitarian' aid, but a complete stop."

Meanwhile, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees warned that families across Gaza are at risk of dying of thirst amid the collapse of water supply systems. UNRWA noted that only 40 percent of drinking water production facilities are still operating, and that "Gaza is on the edge of

a man-made drought. "Extracting water from wells stopped due to fuel shortages, others located in dangerous areas that are difficult to access, pipelines are broken and leaking, and water tankers that often do not arrive," the agency said. As Israel continues its assault on Gaza, Arab mediators, Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, reached out to the warring parties in a bid to hold new ceasefire talks, but no exact time was set for a new round, according to Hamas sources.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who leads a coalition with far-right parties, insists that Hamas, which has ruled Gaza for nearly two decades, release all captives, relinquish any role and lay down its weapons to end the war. Hamas, in turn, has stated it would release the captives if Israel agrees to a permanent ceasefire and withdraws all its troops from Gaza. While it has conceded it would no longer govern Gaza, Hamas has refused to discuss disarmament. — Aljazeera



GAZA: A relative of Palestinian killed in an Israeli attack mourn at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.

NAB prosecutor given time for preparation in appeals

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A division bench of Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday granted time to NAB's special prosecutor for preparation in appeals seeking suspension of sentences of PTI founder and Bushra Bibi in 190 million pounds reference.

During the hearing of the 190 million pounds case, Acting Chief Justice Islamabad High Court Justice Sarfaraz Dogar said while talking to the PTI lawyer that you want to put pressure on me. A two-judge bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Sardar Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif heard the appeals. Special Prosecutor Javed Arshad Advocate and Rafe Magsood appeared in the court on behalf of NAB.

On this occasion, the three sisters of the founder of PTI, Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur, Opposition Leader Omar Ayub, Senator Shibli Faraz, Faisal Javed and other party leaders were also present in the court.

During the hearing, Special Prosecutor Javed Arshad Advocate told the court that he was appointed as the prosecutor in this case yesterday. He also presented the notification of appointment in the court and said that this is an important case and he should be given 4 weeks to understand it so that he can read the record and appear in court with full preparation.

China is a friend and brother: Asif

BEIJING (APP): The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can help promote peace and serve as an important tool for safeguarding the development of countries in the region, said Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif when attending the SCO Defense Ministers' Meeting in Qingdao, East China's Shandong Province.

Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun met with Asif on the same day. Asif praised China's efforts in preventing the escalation of regional tensions, noting that recent months have seen rising instability and conflict across the region. He said Pakistan highly values its ironclad friendship with China and is willing to work closely with Beijing to implement the three major global initiatives, deepen practical defense cooperation, and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.

In a media interview later on, he described the meeting with Dong as "very fruitful," adding, "We are friends, we are brothers. We discussed matters of mutual interest." He said that SCO member states would unite to confront regional terrorism and work collectively for the region's stability.

"We hope the SCO members will get together to fight this menace in this region and work for the stability of the countries of our region and the region as a whole," Asif said. "SCO can be an alternate platform for cooperation within this region and also beyond." Asif told the Global Times among a group of reporters. "This platform can be a very important vehicle to further the peace in this region and protect the countries of this region so they can live in harmony and work for the economic development of our citizens."

Dream of minus Imran will never come true: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, stated that the dream of excluding Imran Khan from politics would never materialize. The so-called fake government has put the entire country at stake for a long time, yet it has failed to sideline Imran Khan.

He said that despite trampling the Constitution, the law, and justice, Imran Khan could not be removed from the political landscape. Now, the illegitimate federal and Punjab governments are spreading misleading propaganda about "minus Imran Khan," which has even unintentionally influenced some PTI workers.

Barrister Dr. Saif further said that opponents could indulge in wishful thinking as much as they like, but they cannot ignore reality. The public is not minus-ing Imran Khan — they are amplifying him. The baseless rumors are clear evidence of how terrified the fake rulers are of prisoner number 804.

He added that even while imprisoned, Imran Khan continues to dominate the minds of these illegitimate rulers. If he is released, one can only imagine the state of these helpless individuals. The fake rulers are under severe mental stress due to Imran Khan's influence.

Dr. Saif said that those running the "minus Imran Khan" campaign were delusional. Imran Khan is the most popular leader in the country and is deeply embedded in the hearts of the people — the question of removing him doesn't even arise. He asserted that those attempting to eliminate Imran Khan from politics have themselves been politically eliminated and are now imposed on the nation through fraudulent mandates enabled by Form 47.

The people will not fall for the negative propaganda of these illegitimate rulers. The more they try to minus Imran Khan, the more the public rallies behind him with renewed vigor.

Meanwhile, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, has said that Islam is a religion of peace and harmony. The essence of Islamic teachings lies in rising above personal interests, serving humanity, strengthening one's character, and promoting justice and love in society.

He expressed these views while addressing a seminar titled "Promotion of Social and National Harmony and Peace" held on Thursday at the District Council

Hall, Abbottabad. The seminar was organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism (KPCE-CVE) in collaboration with NACTA and the Abbottabad district administration.

The event was attended by Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Captain (R) Sanaullah Khan, religious scholars from various schools of thought, professors, students, and officers from different government departments.

Barrister Dr. Saif stressed that if we live our lives according to the teachings and exemplary character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we will surely move toward worldly success and salvation in the Hereafter. He said that the foundation of Islam is justice, and in a just society, people prioritize the rights of others over their own.

He added that hatred and injustice lead societies toward destruction, while the most valuable trait for humans is the elevation of character, referred to in the Qur'an as Taqwa — the ability to distinguish between good and evil. A nation with high moral standards will produce righteous leaders.

Barrister Dr. Saif warned against considering oneself superior and more deserving than others, saying such attitudes breed hatred. He emphasized the importance of working for others' well-being, which leads to internal peace and moral strength. He further stated that a person with strong character follows the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) not only in public but also in private life, earning respect in both the eyes of God and people. He urged the youth to strengthen their character to achieve success, unity, tolerance, and love in society.

Addressing religious scholars and teachers, he encouraged them to promote the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings, eliminate lies and mockery, and instill love and respect for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in people's hearts. In his address, Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Sanaullah Khan lauded the people of Abbottabad for playing a key role in maintaining peace in the region, which attracts a large number of tourists to its scenic destinations.

Additional Director General KPCE-CVE Muhammad Kashif Irshad, Director Admin Waqar Khan, religious scholars, and members of civil society also addressed the seminar. At the end of the event, Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Sanaullah Khan presented a commemorative souvenir to Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif.

Kyiv forces halt Moscow advance in Sumy region

KYIV (BBC): The head of

Ukraine's army, Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy, has said his troops have stopped Russian advances in the northeastern border region of Sumy. During a visit to the front on Thursday, Syrskiy said the line of combat had been "stabilised" and that the Russian summer offensive in the area had been "choked off".

However, Syrskiy also added that he had personally gone to check on fortifications in the region and that more were urgently needed. Syrskiy's comments on the successes of the Ukrainian troops in Sumy back recent statements by Ukrainian officials that Russia's pressure on the region was declining. However, the situation remained "volatile", Border Guard spokesperson Andriy Demchenko said earlier this week.

Sumy borders the Russian region of Kursk, parts of which were seized and occupied last year by Ukrainian forces in a surprise offensive before being almost totally driven out months later. The Kursk incursion was an embarrassment for Russia and in April President Vladimir Putin announced a plan to create "security buffer zones" along the border to provide "additional support" to areas in Russia which border Ukraine's Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv regions. Moscow has been pushing in the Sumy area with renewed effort since then. In late May Ukraine's Volodymyr

Zelensky said 50,000 of Russia's "largest, strongest" troops were concentrated along the border and were planning to create a 10km (6-mile) buffer zone.

There has been criticism about the lack of fortifications in some areas of the Sumy region - and in his statement on Thursday Syrskiy tried to quell growing public concerns over delays in their construction. "Additional fortifications, the establishment of 'kill zones', the construction of anti-drone corridors to protect our soldiers and ensure more reliable logistics for our troops are obvious tasks that are being carried out," he said. However, Syrskiy acknowledged that these improvements had to be done better and more efficiently.

In the early days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the lack of fortifications in certain parts of Ukraine allowed Moscow to make advances across the country - from its northern borders and from the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. The window of opportunity to build fortifications in Sumy safely and quickly was in autumn 2024, when Ukrainian troops were still advancing in the Russia's border Kursk region and Sumy remained relatively unscathed.

Now may be too late, as Russia is undoubtedly well aware of the sections of the front line that lack strong fortifications. In the last several months Moscow has claimed to have captured several vil-

lages while pummeling the city of Sumy with heavy missile strikes, killing dozens. A single ballistic missile attack on 13 April killed at least 34 people and injured 117. DeepState, a group that monitors the latest frontline developments in Ukraine, has quoted sources as confirming that combat is raging in various unfortified areas of Sumy. The delays with erecting "much-needed fortifications" or the "low quality of some of the dugouts" could no longer be ignored, DeepState analysts said.

Asked about the summer offensive at a forum in St Petersburg last week, Putin said Russia did not "have the goal of capturing Sumy, but I don't rule it out". He said Russian forces had already established a buffer zone of 8-12km in depth. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, launched in February 2022, is now well into its fourth year.

Large-scale Russian drone attacks on Ukrainian cities are on the rise. In recent weeks the capital Kyiv was targeted with record numbers of drones that overwhelm air defences and cause deadly explosions. Recent rounds of talks between Ukraine and Russia resulted in large prisoner exchanges but have so far failed to produce any tangible progress towards a ceasefire. Earlier this week Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte said that European and Canadian allies had pledged 35bn (£30bn; \$41bn) to Ukraine.

PTI demands end to unjust taxation system in FATA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Speaker of National Assembly and senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser has expressed concern over the unjust taxation imposed on the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and demanded its immediate end.

Asad Qaiser addressing a press conference in Islamabad, expressing deep concern over the state of the judiciary, stated that the judiciary is under undue influence, demanding release of judges and their freedom to perform their duties without interference.

He emphasized that PTI Chairman Imran Khan is being unlawfully detained and called for his legal rights to be upheld. "The judiciary must stand firm for its own authority," he said, strongly condemning any interference in judicial matters. Turning to the issue of taxation in FATA, Qaiser criticized the government for imposing taxes without justification. "Until peace is restored and a level playing field is established, no taxes should be imposed," he asserted, adding that the people of FATA would willingly pay taxes if the government ensured stability. He also highlighted the unfulfilled promise of Rs. 1,000 billion for FATA's development, vowing that PTI would continue to resist this injustice alongside the people of the region.

Junaid Akbar, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and PTI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President, denounced the government's neglect of FATA, recalling that Rs. 100 billion was supposed to be allocated annually for development after the merger. "Instead, the people face extortion and unjust taxes while the wealthy have left the region," he said, calling the taxation policy cruel and unacceptable.

PTI leader Atif Khan pointed out the direct impact of FATA's instability on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, arguing that the government unfairly targets FATA for revenue collection while failing to curb smuggling, which could be an alternative source of income. He also criticized the exorbitant electricity bills and the new taxes on solar energy, stating that the government had completely mismanaged the energy crisis.

PHC reserved verdict against disappearance

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has reserved its decision on a petition seeking the recovery of four members of the Alkozai family who were allegedly enforced disappeared from Hayatabad, on Thursday.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal heard the case. The counsel, Muzamm Butt, informed the court that petitioner, Gulalai, had filed a petition claiming that four members of the Alkozai family were taken away by unknown persons in the presence of police over a year ago and have not been recovered yet.

Additional Attorney General Sanaullah informed the court that the government had filed a report claiming that the missing persons, including Zakir, Nasir Alkozai, Usman, and Abdul Wasagh, had gone to Afghanistan of

their own accord.

The report was based on records obtained from the Torkham border crossing. The court observed contradictions in the government's claims, noting that while the government said the individuals had gone to Afghanistan, the petitioner claimed they were still in Pakistan. PHC reserved the verdict after hearing the arguments.

Court seeks KP govt response on Sher Afzal Marwat plea: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued a notice to the provincial government in response to a petition filed by PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat seeking the quashing of cases registered against him, on Thursday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Fazal Subhan heard the case. Sher Afzal Marwat informed the court that multiple FIRs have been registered against him in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and

he has filed a petition seeking their quashing.

The Assistant Advocate General informed the court that the government would file a new report in the case. The court adjourned the hearing after seeking a report from the provincial government.

Sher Afzal Marwat stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget has been conditionally linked to the PTI founder without justification. He claimed that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is being trolled on social media for passing the budget.

He expressed concerns about the party's internal issues, stating that the PTI's social media team is damaging the party's reputation by criticizing its own leadership. Marwat warned that if the provincial government continues to ignore him, he will seek funds from the federal government for development projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

CJP urges importance of coordination for reforms

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Justice Yahya Afridi, Chief Justice of Pakistan, while emphasizing the importance of synergy, has urged bar representatives to sensitize their respective bar associations about developments in national judiciary and to proactively engage in the reform initiatives. He further directed that all support and facilities extended to the bar associations by the Federal Government must be streamlined and structured to avoid duplication and ensure efficiency.

The Chief Justice of Pakistan, who is Chairman, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (LJCP), said this while chairing a high-level meeting Thursday at the Supreme Court Branch Registry, Lahore.

According to a press released issued here today, the meeting was convened to review institutional linkages between the Bar associations and the Law and Justice Commission. The meeting was attended by Miss Justice Aalia Neelum, Chief Justice Lahore High Court; Registrar, Lahore High Court; Secretary, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan; representatives of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Pakistan Bar

Pak reaffirms commitment to eradicate torture: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As the world observes the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on Thursday, Pakistan reiterated its solidarity with the victims of torture worldwide and reaffirmed its continued commitment to eradicating torture and upholding human dignity. "Islam upholds the sanctity and dignity of every human being. Any act of torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment is incompatible with the values of justice, mercy, and compassion that are at the core of Islamic teachings," the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a message on the Day. He said that guided by these values and its international obligations, Pakistan remained committed to eradicating torture and strengthening protections for all individuals.

Council; officials from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of Pakistan; and Secretaries of Law and Planning from the Government of Punjab.

Welcoming the participants, the Chief Justice of Pakistan acknowledged their contributions to the justice sector. He referred to the existing gap in coordination between the bar associations and the Law and Justice Commission. In order to strengthen coordination, the Commission has decided to post a senior level representative in every province who would sit in, the High Courts. These representatives will serve as liaisons to raise awareness among district bar associa-

tions, identify local priority areas, and supervise ongoing justice sector initiatives at the grassroots level.

The Chief Justice also called upon provincial line departments to remain actively engaged with the Resident Additional Secretary of the Commission for timely and effective implementation of district-level projects forwarded by District Coordination Committee headed by the District and Sessions Judge. He noted with concern the lack of infrastructure, including solarization and digital integration, in less developed districts, and stressed the need for targeted interventions in such areas.