

Bank holiday announced
F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan will remain closed for public dealing on 1st July, 2025 (Tuesday), which shall be observed as Bank Holiday. All banks / DFIs / MFBs shall, therefore, remain closed for public dealing on the aforementioned date. However, employees of the Banks / DFIs / MFBs will attend the office as usual.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXII

No. 148

Regd. No. 241

MUHARRAM 02 1447 -- SATURDAY, JUNE 28 2025

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing parliamentarians after passing of Finance Bill 2025-26.

9 dead bodies of Swat River drowning tragedy recovered

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Deputy Commissioner Swat Shahzad Mehboob said here Friday that nine dead bodies out of 17 persons sweated by the flash floods have so far been recovered from River Swat.

In a statement here, he said it least nine people were died after 17 individuals were swept away by a sudden surge of high water in the Swat River on Friday morning. He confirmed that rescue authorities have recovered at least nine bodies and rescued four others alive while efforts were underway to locate the remaining four missing persons.

DC Mehboob said hat 10 of the individuals involved in the incident were residents of Sialkot, six belonged to Mardan, while one was a local resident of Swat. According to rescue officials, the affected individuals hailing from Sialkot was on a leisure trip, having breakfast by the riverbank at around 8am when heavy rains upstream caused an unexpected and rapid increase in water flow.

"We received information about the drowning of these people around 8am. There were guests on the bypass who were sitting on the bank of the river. These people were not aware of the water relay," a rescue official said. While four individuals have been successfully pulled to safety and the bodies of five recovered, the search for the remaining missing family members are underway.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has released a preliminary report on the damages and rescue operations following flash floods in Swat. According to the report, at around 8:30 AM on Friday, 18 individuals were caught in a sudden flash flood near Ji Qurban Hotel on Swat Bypass. Upon receiving the alert, a prompt

KP govt forms inquiry committee

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has constituted a high-level inquiry committee to investigate the tragic flash flood incident that occurred in District Swat on June 27, 2025, resulting in the loss of precious lives, including those of several tourists.

According to an official notification issued by the Establishment and Administration Department, the inquiry committee was formed on the directives of the Chief Minister. The Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has formed the committee to ascertain the facts surrounding the incident and determine any possible negligence. The committee will be headed by Khayyam Hassan, Chairman of the Provincial Inspection Team. Other members include Muhammad Usman (PAS, BS-20), Inspector General of Prisons, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sheheryar Qamar (PAS, BS-18) from the Excise, Taxation & Narcotics Control Department. As per the Terms of Reference (TORs), the committee will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the incident and determine the causes that led to the tragic incident. It will assess any lapses, negligence, or failure to follow safety protocols by government officials or tourists. The committee will also identify the individuals or institutions responsible for such failures and recommend necessary actions to prevent similar tragedies in the future. Additionally, the committee will review existing instructions and advisories related to tourist safety and flood warnings issued from time to time. The committee has been directed to submit its report within seven days.

KP govt suspends ADC, two ACs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the wake of the tragic incident of occurred due to flash flood in District Swat, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has placed three officers of the district administration and District Emergency Officer (Rescue 1122) with immediate effect. The officers placed under suspension include Ihsan-ul-Haq (PMS BS-18) Additional Deputy Commissioner, Swat, Dr Nida Iqbal (PAS-17) AC (Babuzai) District Swat and Muhammad Amir Khan (PMS-17) AC Khawazakhela District Swat. The provincial government has also suspended Saad Khan, District Emergency Officer (Rescue 1122) District Swat and directed him to report to Relief & Settlement Department with immediate effect.

rescue operation was launched. Three individuals were safely rescued, while the bodies of six others were recovered during a joint operation carried out by Rescue 1122, the district administration, and local volunteers. Nine people remain

missing, and search efforts are ongoing up to the boundaries of Malakand district. The victims belong to Daska (Punjab) and Mardan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

(Continued on Back Page)

PM urges unity, collective efforts for country's economic development

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday appreciating the economic team and the coalition parties for their hard work and support in the passage of annual budget 2025-26 through the parliament, called for replicating a similar exemplary unity and efforts to achieve national economic development.

"Now, we must all work together day and night for Pakistan's economic progress. I firmly believe that this exemplary unity will ensure Pakistan's economic uplift," he said in a meeting with members of the Senate and National Assembly after the approval of budget 2025-26, according to a PM Office press release.

He said the economic team worked tirelessly to prepare a people-friendly budget and also thanked the allied parties whose consultations helped shape a budget as per the public aspirations. Discussing the regional situation, he said Allah Almighty had granted Pakistan a splendid victory in response to India's recent unprovoked aggression against Pakistan.

The Pakistan armed forces, the entire political leadership, the public, civil society, and the media unitedly thwarted the enemy's evil designs. Pakistan's victory has elevated its stature among the comity of nations, he added. He told the parliamentarians that under the leadership of Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the diplomatic delegation effectively highlighted Pakistan's stance and exposed India's malicious intentions toward Pakistan on the global stage.

He stated that the multi-party delegation was warmly received internationally, and overseas

Pakistanis also enthusiastically greeted them, offering heartfelt tributes to the government and Pakistan armed forces over diplomatic and military triumph. Coming to recent Israel's aggression against Iran, Prime Minister Shehbaz said that Pakistan expressed solidarity with the Iranian government and its people at every level.

"I was in constant contact with the Iranian leadership, particularly President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, during the conflict. The resolution of Israel-Iran conflict will open avenues for peace and prosperity in the region," he remarked. Chairman of Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, members of the federal cabinet as well as the Senate and National Assembly attended the meeting.

MNAs call on Prime Minister to congratulate on passage of budget: Members of National Assembly from various constituencies called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and congratulated him on passage of the federal budget for upcoming financial year from the National Assembly.

During the meetings, the MNAs also discussed matters related to their respective constituencies, highlighting key local issues and development priorities. The MNAs who met with the prime minister included Khel Das Kohistani, Dr. Darshan, Nelson Azeem, Ramesh Lal, Naveed Amir, Ibrar Shah, Major (ret'd) Tahir Iqbal, Salahuddin Junejo, Jam Abdul Karim Bijar, Abdul Qadir Gillani, Sardar Yaqoob Khan Nasar, and Nuzhat Amir Sadiq.

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.

Shehbaz felicitates Sana Mir on her induction into ICC's Hall of Fame: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif felicitated former captain of Pakistan Women Cricket Team, Sana Mir for her induction into the International Cricket Council (ICC)'s Cricket Hall of Fame and hailed her performance as an ace team lead.

The former captain of Pakistan Women Cricket Team and prominent cricketer Sana Mir called on the prime minister at the PM's Office, a news release said. PM Shehbaz Sharif appreciated Sana Mir's performance as the captain of the Pakistan women's cricket team, adding, "Under your leadership, the Pakistan Women Cricket Team has achieved significant successes and made Pakistan famous all over the world."

He hoped that she would play an active role in providing training to new talent in cricket with her experience. The prime minister informed the former Women Team captain that the government was trying to promote talent on merit in every field of sports. The prime minister underlined that providing equal opportunities and facilities to men and women in every field of sports, including cricket, was among his priorities.

Former Women Captain Sana Mir thanked the PM, adding, "I am trying my best to represent Pakistan fully in the World Cricket Association and ICC." She also put up recommendations to promote cricket in Pakistan, especially for further promotion of women cricket in the country. She said, "Hopefully the government will take steps to develop cricket grounds and new talent in Pakistan, especially to create more opportunities for women in cricket."

Pak welcomes supplemental award by Court of Arbitration

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan welcomes the Supplemental Award by the Court of Arbitration in the Indus Waters matter that has been handed down on Friday and made public on the website of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

In a statement issued by Government of Pakistan, Pakistan noted that the Court has affirmed its Competence in the light of recent developments and that unilateral action by India cannot deprive either the Court or the Neutral Expert, in the proceedings initiated by India, of their competence to adjudicate the issues before them.

Pakistan looks forward to receiving the Court's Award on the First Phase on the Merits in due course following the hearing that was held in Peace Palace in The Hague in July 2024. The high priority, at this point, is that India and Pakistan find a way back to a meaningful dialogue, including on the application of the Indus Waters Treaty.

To this end, and reaching out to India, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said on 24 June 2025, in widely publicised remarks, that Pakistan is "ready to engage in a meaningful dialogue with India on all outstanding issues, including Jammu & Kashmir, water, trade and terrorism."

President, PM condole deaths in flash flood

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed their deep grief over the death of tourists in the flash flood in Swat River at Khwazakhela area.

The president and prime minister, in their separately issued statements, conveyed their sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families. They also prayed to Allah Almighty for peace for the departed souls and strength for the grieved families to bear the loss. "We equally share the grief of the affected families during this difficult time," the president said.

Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the authorities concerned to swiftly complete the search and rescue operation for missing persons in the incident. He instructed NDMA, the administration, and rescue agencies to further strengthen safety measures along rivers and streams. The prime minister praised NDMA, the administration, and rescue officials for rescuing tourists stranded due to the flash flood in Swat.

Pak confirms 13th polio case of 2025

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan on Friday reported its 13th polio case of the year after health authorities confirmed the virus in an 18-month-old girl from Union Council Amakhel in Tank district, South Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The latest case was confirmed by the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Islamabad, which has also verified a previous case of wild poliovirus in a 33-month-old boy from Bannu district, also in KP.

With the inclusion of the latest case, the total number of infections reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa this year has risen to seven, the highest for any province. According to the National Polio Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), access to some areas in southern KP remains limited, posing a major hurdle to house-to-house vaccination efforts.

"We are working closely with provincial and district administrations to reach every child," the EOC said in a statement, urging parents to take the threat of poliovirus seriously and ensure their children receive polio drops during every campaign.

SC upholds PHC ruling

— rejects PTI-backed SIC plea for reserved seats

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan has dismissed the plea seeking reserved parliamentary seats for the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and upheld the earlier decision of the Peshawar High Court, which had ordered that the seats be distributed among other parliamentary parties.

The Supreme Court's Constitutional Bench, headed by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, conducted 17 hearings on the high-profile case involving reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies. Other members of the bench included Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Mussarat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar, Justice Aamer Farooq, and Justice Ali Baqar Najafi.

During Friday's hearing, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar recused himself from the bench after senior counsel Hamid Khan, representing the SIC, raised objections on the constitution of the Bench. The court, however, continued the proceedings and announced a short order later in the evening.

In a 7-3 majority decision, the court overturned its previous judgment dated

Ruling allies gains two-third majority after verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Following the Supreme Court's constitutional bench decision on reserved seats, the ruling coalition has increased its strength in the National Assembly. Before the verdict, the total number of members from coalition parties stood at 218, including 110 from PML-N, 70 from PPP, 22 from MQM, and 5 from PML-Q.

According to the updated party positions, the opposition has a total of 100 members, which includes 80 from the Sunni Ittehad Council, 8 independents backed by PTI, and 8 from JUI-F. As a result of the court ruling, PML-N gained 15 additional seats, PPP 4, and JUI-F 3. The National Assembly now has 125 PML-N members, 74 from PPP, and 11 from JUI-F. With these added seats, the ruling coalition now holds 237 seats in the 336-member house—surpassing the 224 needed for a two-thirds majority. In light of the Supreme Court's ruling, 77 reserved seats have been reinstated — 22 in the National Assembly and 55 in provincial assemblies.

In the National Assembly, the restored seats include 11 for women from Punjab, 8 for women from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 3 for minorities. PML-N receives 14, PPP 5, and JUI-F 3 additional seats. Punjab Assembly gains 27 members — 24 women and 3 minorities—with 23 from PML-N, 2 from PPP, and 1 each from PML-Q and IPP. Sindh Assembly sees 3 reserved seats restored—2 to PPP and 1 to MQM—bringing PPP's total to 118 and MQM's to 37. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, PTI and Sunni Ittehad Council jointly hold 93 seats, while PML-N and JUI-F each have 9, PPP has 5, and ANP and PTI-P have 2 each. Out of 25 vacant reserved seats (21 women, 4 minorities), 5 have been allotted—PPP 1, PML-N and JUI-F 2 each.

July 12, 2024, which had granted PTI the right to claim reserved seats in Parliament through its affiliation with the SIC. The latest decision reinstates the Peshawar High Court's ruling that the reserved seats be allocated among other eligible parliamentary parties. The Court accepted review petitions filed against the July 2024 ruling and directed the Election

Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to rehear the applications of affected members accordingly. The majority opinion was authored by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, and supported by Justice Mussarat Hilali, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan, Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan, Justice Hashim Kakar, Justice Aamer Farooq, and Justice Ali Baqar Najafi.

Field Marshal engages with probationary officers

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), engaged with the probationary officers of the 52nd Common Training Program (CTP) of the Civil Services Academy (CSA) during a session held at the Army Auditorium.

The probationary officers of the Civil Services Academy remained attached with the formations of Pakistan Army at peace time locations and operational areas of Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, said a news release. These officers gained rich experience of the three services during various interactions and visits.

This interaction with the COAS formed part of a

broader national initiative aimed at strengthening institutional synergy and deepening mutual understanding between Pakistan's civil and military leadership.

In his address, the Field Marshal spoke on a range of critical issues, including national security imperatives, prevailing internal and external challenges, and the pivotal role of the Pakistan Armed Forces in preserving regional peace and national stability. He underscored the imperative of inter-institutional cohesion, mutual respect, and unified national purpose in advancing Pakistan's strategic and developmental objectives.

The Chief of Army Staff further highlighted the indispensable role of a capable, transparent, and service-driven civil bureau-

cracy within the architecture of state governance. He urged the young officers to embody the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and patriotic commitment in the fulfillment of their responsibilities to the nation.

The CTP participants expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to engage with the senior military leadership and gain first-hand insight into the Pakistan Army Leadership's strategic vision, operational readiness, and its multifaceted contributions to national resilience and development. The visit concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session, reflecting a spirit of constructive dialogue, shared responsibility, and collective dedication to Pakistan's enduring progress.

Finance Minister stresses focused reforms

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening the governance, operational efficiency and financial sustainability of key public sector entities.

Chairing a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises (CSOEs), the Finance Minister stressed the importance of aligning business plans with national priorities and addressing operational challenges in a timely and coordinated manner. The Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magso, and senior officials from relevant Ministries and Divisions attended the meeting, said a

press release. The Committee heard a detailed briefing from the Central Monitoring Unit of the Finance Division on a biannual report on the Federal SOE Performance covering the period from July 2024 to December 2024. The report included a detailed overview of the state of affairs and key challenges confronting State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), including cumulative losses amounting to Rs 5.8 trillion, with Rs 342 billion incurred in just six months. The Committee was told that the circular debt in the oil, gas, and power sectors had crossed Rs 4.9 trillion, severely affecting cash flows and asset valuations. The government's fiscal support to SOEs-through grants, subsidies, loans, and other injections-had also exceeded Rs 600 billion in six months, equivalent to nearly 10% of total revenue receipts.

In addition, unfunded

pension liabilities in DISCOs and other SOEs, estimated at Rs 1.7 trillion, remain off the books, as do railways' pension obligations, the meeting was told. It was also highlighted that government guarantees currently stand at Rs 2.2 trillion, while rollover costs and financial restructuring liabilities further compound fiscal pressures. Governance concerns persist, with low levels of transparency in beneficial interest disclosures under IFRS Section 30 and other compliance gaps. The lack of strategic alignment in business plans and operational inefficiencies across SOEs were identified as critical areas requiring urgent reform.

The Cabinet Committee noted with concern the staggering cumulative losses of SOEs amounting to Rs 5.8 trillion, with Rs 342 billion incurred in just the last six months-equating to a daily loss of Rs 1.9 billion.



Karachi transport to shift towards electric buses: Sharjeel



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to introduce a significant number of electric and hybrid buses during the current financial year.

Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that in the coming months, along with double-decker buses, additional buses will be added to Karachi's roads.

He further said that the transport system in the provincial capital is about set to be completely transi-

tioned to electric buses.

He said that following the introduction of EV buses for the first time in Pakistan, the Sindh government is also set to introduce double-decker buses, another first in the country's history.

A high-level meeting of the Transport and Mass Transit Department was held in Karachi, chaired by Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Transport Asad Zamin, Managing Director of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Dayo, CEO Trans Karachi

Fawad Ghaffar Soomro, Project Director of the Yellow Line BRT Zameer Abbasi, as well as consultants and contractors associated with the project.

The meeting reviewed the current status and progress of the ongoing construction work on the Red Line and Yellow Line BRT projects.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon was given a detailed briefing on the progress of both initiatives.

Officials informed the meeting that the Red Line BRT project is progressing according to

its planned schedule, and construction activities have also been expedited across various segments of the Yellow Line project.

Speaking on the occasion, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Red Line and Yellow Line BRT projects will bring about a revolutionary change for the citizens of Karachi. He added that the objective of these projects is to provide safe, high-quality, and affordable transportation to the public.

He said that the Sindh government is taking all possible measures to provide facilities to the citizens in line with the vision of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon directed that there should be no compromise on the quality of construction work and that all projects must be completed within the stipulated time frame.

He further stated that the people of Karachi deserve access to world-class transportation facilities, which is a key part of the Pakistan Peoples Party's service manifesto.



LAHORE: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf addressing the course participants of 54th PN Staff Course at Pakistan Navy War College.

PML-N welcome SC verdict in reserved seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The PML-N Lawyers Forum has hailed the Supreme Court's review decision on reserved seats as a victory for the Constitution and democracy, saying it will bring political stability.

In a joint statement, PML-N Lawyers Forum leaders Kifayatullah Khan, Haji Farhad Ali, Akbar Yousaf Khalil, and Saleem Shah Hoti welcomed the Supreme Court's decision, calling it a victory for the Constitution and democracy.

They said the decision will lead to political stability and economic progress in the country.

The PML-N Lawyers Forum leaders praised the Supreme Court for upholding constitutional principles in its decision. With the decision, the government is expected to gain a two-thirds majority, enabling it to implement legal and economic reforms more effectively. The PML-N Lawyers Forum leaders expressed optimism that the decision will put the country on the path to progress and stability, ending the current crisis.

Over 20,000 personnel to perform security duties

KARACHI (INP): Over 20,000 police officers and personnel will be deployed across Karachi to ensure security during month of Muharram, as part of a comprehensive security plan announced by Karachi Police.

According to a spokesperson for Karachi Police on Friday, 20,350 police officials will be on duty to safeguard religious gatherings and processions throughout the city.

The month will see a total of 829 processions and 5,227 Majalis, with 7,004 officers assigned to procession routes, 4,605 to Majalis, and 1,660 deployed at highly sensitive locations, including key Imam Bargahs.

Additionally, 1,100 traffic policemen will manage traffic flow and ensure smooth transportation around major event sites. The police have urged citizens to remain alert and report any suspicious activity or unusual incidents by calling the helpline Madadgar 15.

Three kidnapped individuals recovered

KARACHI (INP): In a major breakthrough, Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Sindh Police successfully recovered three kidnapped individuals during a joint intelligence-based operation in the riverine (katcha) area of Chak Rustam Teghani, located in Taluka Khanpur, Shikarpur district.

According to the spokesperson for Pakistan Rangers Sindh on Friday, the operation was launched based on precise intelligence regarding the presence of dacoits and criminal elements holding hostages in the area. The three citizens Ghulam Rasool Mahar, Habdar Solangi, and Sardar Solangi had been abducted on June 15.

During the targeted operation, the abductors fled the scene, leaving the hostages behind. All three individuals were safely recovered.

A search operation is currently underway to track down the fleeing criminals, with security forces cordoning off the area and establishing checkpoints at various locations.

Naval chief emphasizes modern warfare preparedness

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf visited Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore, and addressed the participants of 54th PN Staff Course.

While appreciating their efforts, he underscored the importance of understanding the evolving nature of modern warfare and emerging maritime security threats.

He emphasized that traditional military strategies must adapt to effectively address the complexities of contemporary security

challenges, both traditional and non-traditional.

The Naval Chief, while elaborating on the maritime challenges facing Pakistan and available response options, remarked that the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) remains fluid and contested. He highlighted that new geopolitical realignments and ongoing power rivalries in the region continue to affect security environment in the IOR.

The recent crises between Pakistan and India, as well as the 12-day conflict between Iran and Israel, serve as testimony to this dynamic environment.

He stated that the conventional, one-dimensional study of warfare is now outdated. Winning future wars demands not only a re-evaluation of legacy warfighting strategies, but also the development and maintenance of a future-ready workforce that is intellectually astute and technologically proficient.

In conclusion, Chief of the Naval Staff congratulated graduating officers on successful completion of the PN Staff Course and encouraged them to be meticulous, analytical, and innovative in their forthcoming appointments.

ABSENTEEISM NOTICE

Whereas you Syed Shafiq Ahmad Shah, Electric Sub Inspector BPS-12 are charged on account of the following acts of omission and commission which constitute "misconduct" under Rule 3(d) of the Efficiency & Discipline Rule 2011.

- That you have been absent from duty w.e.f 10-06-2024 onward without any intimation/prior approval.
- That you were directed to resume the duty and explain the reasons of your absence from duty vide Regional Electric Inspectorate, Nowshera Letter No. REI/NSR/FN.01/DN.19 dated 01-07-2024, No. REI/NSR/DN.1199 dated 11-12-2024 and No. REI/NSR/DN. 1458 dated 09-01-2025, but you failed to resume your duties and remained absent from duties of today.
- Your above acts are tantamount to inefficacy and misconduct.

2. AND WHEREAS, I, being Authorized Officer. After examining your service record reached to the conclusion that you are prima-facie guilty of the charge of misconduct and decided that conducting of an inquiry in your case is not necessary in terms of Rule-7 of K.P government servant rules 2011.

3. NOW, THEREFORE, you, Syed Shafiq Ahmad Shah, Electric Sub Inspector BPS-12 of this formation are hereby called upon to Show Cause in writing within (07) seven days of this publication in press of this Notice as to why one or more penalties including major penalty of "Removal from Service" as prescribed under Rule (4) (b) (iii) of KP Government Servants (Efficiency & Disciplinary) Rules. 2011 may not be imposed upon you.

4. Your written reply to Show Cause Notice should reach the undersigned within 07 days of the publication of this Notice, failing with ex-parte decision shall be taken against you.

(INF/P) 2774/25

ELECTRIC INSPECTOR PROVINCIAL ENERGY & POWER DEPARTMENT

BOARD OF INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY EDUCATION BANNU TENDER NOTICE

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Bannu, Invites Bids from eligible Firms/Bidders for the work 'Supply Installation and Commissioning of Solar Energy System for B.I.S.E, Bannu' in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules 2014, amended upto date on Single Stage two envelope Procedure having the following necessary particulars for the work mentioned in table below.

- Registered with Pakistan Engineering Council in category C-5 or above, and having valid/updated PEC Registration Certificate with specialization code i.e., EE-04, EE-06, EE-11, and CE-10.
- Registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XXI of 2013).
- Valid and updated Registration with Federal Board of Revenue both in STRN and NTN.
- Registration with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP).
- Valid Registration with Alternative Energy Development Board (AEDB).
- Valid ISO-9001:2015 Quality Management Certificate.
- Electrical License from Electrical Inspectorate Energy and Power KPK.

Other mandatory/necessary requirements are required to be fulfilled as mentioned in the Tender Documents/RFP.

S.No	Name of works	Estimated Cost (PKR)	Bid Security	Submission Date & Time	Opening Date & Time	Time of Completion
1.	Supply Installation and Commissioning of Solar Energy System for BISE Bannu	18,503,067	2% of the Estimated Cost	10-07-2025 11:30 AM	10-07-2025 12:00 PM	02 months

- Tender documents/RFP can be collected from the office of Director of Sports BISE Bannu on Payment of Rs.3000.00 (Non-Refundable) for printing charges from the date of advertisement upto 09-07-2025 till 04:00 PM (official working hours).
- Interested firms should have adequate financial soundness, similar work experience and personal capabilities.
- The proposals shall be book binding form with properly page numbering and each page signed by the authorized person of the firm.
- Pre-Bid meeting will be held on 30-06-2025 at 11:30AM in the Committee Room of BISE Bannu.
- All Taxes i.e Income Tax, Professional Tax, Sales Tax and Stamp Duty will be recoverable as per directives of the Government issued from time to time.
- In accordance with the Notification issued by the Finance Department of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the KPRA Sales Tax has been added to all item codes in the MRS. Consequently, this tax will be deducted at source from the gross project cost. Firms are required to include the same rate and amount in their tax bifurcation calculations.
- Additional Security is required to be deposited as per KPRA Notification No. S.R.O (14)/Vol:1-24/2021-22 dated 10.05.2022.
- The sealed envelope containing technical and financial bids must be submitted to the office of the Director of Sports upto 10-07-2025 at 11:30 AM by registered courier services (No bid will be received by hand). Technical bids will be opened on the same day at 12:00 PM in the presence of the bidders or representative at the Committee Room of BISE Bannu.
- Bid security 2% of the estimated cost shall be placed in financial bid, an affidavit shall be attached with technical bid stating that the bid security is placed in financial bid.
- The Estimate is based on MRS-2024 (1st Bi-Annual) items and Non-MRS items
- Incomplete/disfiguring/overwriting/conditional/late bids will be considered non-responsive.
- In case of tie, toss shall be carried out in front of the bidders by the works committee.
- The authority reserves the right to accept/reject any or all the applications/ tenders as per KPRA rules.
- All the prevailing KPRA rules/act and other Govt. Notifications issued from time to time shall be applicable.
- Other details, terms and conditions if any can be obtained from the office of the Director of Sports BISE Bannu on all working days during office hours.

CHAIRMAN

Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Bannu
Phone No. 0928 633170, Email: chairman@biseb.edu.pk

NA Speaker congratulates Iranian nation on standing firm against Israeli aggression

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday congratulated the people and government of Iran for their resilience and success in the wake of Israeli aggression.

Talking to Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam, he said Pakistan and Iran enjoy cordial ties rooted in shared religion, history, and cultural heritage, reaffirming that the friendship between the two neighbouring countries continues to grow stronger with time. Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, and Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Naqvi were also present on the occasion.

The speaker condemned Israel's recent attack on Iran, calling it a flagrant violation of international law.

Welcoming the announcement of a ceasefire between Iran and Israel, the speaker emphasized that what the world needs today is not more war, but a renewed commitment to peace.

He reiterated that Pakistan has always played a proactive role in promoting peace and stability in the region. Referring to recent regional tensions, he highlighted Pakistan's firm and effective response to Indian aggression, stating that the events clearly exposed the strategic alliance between India and Israel.

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has also stated that a successful outcome for Iran and Pakistan in these turbulent times would further solidify their bilateral partnership.

He pointed out that India's negative and unconstructive role in the Iran-Israel conflict provides Iran with an opportunity to reconsider its diplomatic and strategic ties with India.

The speaker also expressed deep sorrow over the loss of over 50,000 Palestinian lives due to Israeli aggression, calling it a tragedy that has deeply affected every Pakistani.

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also said that Parliament and the people of Pakistan stand in complete solidarity with the Iranian nation. Pakistan's National Assembly was the first leg-



islature to pass a resolution condemning the Israeli attack on Iran.

Furthermore, more than 200 members of parliament reiterated their support for Iran during their speeches on the National budget for the fiscal year 2025-26.

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stressed the recent conflicts between Pakistan and India, and Iran and Israel, serve as a reminder to the world of the urgent need for peace. He warned that Israel's actions pose a severe threat to regional security and called upon the international community to take immediate and serious notice of the violations of international law.

He asserted that Israeli attacks are in clear breach of both international legal norms and the United Nations Charter.

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to its neighbor, the speaker described Iran as a trusted and brotherly country.

He emphasized that Pakistan is determined to expand cooperation with Iran in both parliamentary and economic sectors.

He further added that increased parliamentary engagement can play a crucial role in strengthening bilateral relations and bringing the people of both countries closer together.

Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam expressed deep gratitude

to the speaker and the people of Pakistan for their consistent and heartfelt support. He acknowledged Pakistan as a true and reliable friend, especially in difficult times.

The Ambassador thanked Speaker Ayaz Sadiq for being the first to express solidarity with Iran following the Israeli attack and praised Pakistan's principled stance in supporting Iran across all international platforms.

Ambassador Moghadam also conveyed appreciation on behalf of the Iranian Parliament and government to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the Parliament of Pakistan, and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for their unwavering support.

He stated that Israel's attack was a deliberate attempt to damage Iran's nuclear program, and that Israel's weakening position has led to the United States becoming directly involved in the conflict.

The Iranian Ambassador lauded Pakistan's positive and constructive role in supporting peace and stability across the region.

He emphasized the importance of strengthening parliamentary cooperation as a means to further deepen ties between the two countries and acknowledged the speaker's commendable efforts in fostering bilateral engagement.

Haier, Alkhidmat bring clean water to Tharparkar

F.P. Report

THARPARKAR: Haier Pakistan has officially signed an MOU with Alkhidmat Foundation to install solar submersible water pumps in the remote region of Tharparkar, marking a meaningful step forward in Haier's ongoing CSR efforts.

In this powerful collaboration, both organizations have come together to tackle one of the region's most pressing challenges: access to clean, drinkable water. The initiative will deliver solar-powered water plants designed to serve some of the most water-deprived communities in the country, offering sustainable relief where it's needed most.

Empowering Communities Through Water

Water scarcity in Tharparkar is more than a statistic. It's a daily struggle that affects health, hygiene, education, and livelihood. Recognizing this critical need, Haier's water well initiative is not just about installing water plants, it's about restoring dignity, wellbeing, and opportunity in areas long forgotten by mainstream development.

Each solar-powered water plant taps into underground water reserves, converting them into safe, accessible drinking water for thousands of residents. It's a solution built for endurance. It's sustainable, low main-



tenance, and designed to withstand the harsh climate of the region.

Technology with a Purpose
Haier's innovation has always centered around enhancing lives, from smart homes to sustainable living. This project extends that vision to communities who need it the most. Using solar energy not only ensures an uninterrupted water supply but also aligns with Haier's ongoing commitment to green energy and eco-conscious solutions.

Uplifting Lives, One Drop at a Time

The impact of these water wells reaches beyond hydration. Children are able to go to school instead of

fetching water, families can maintain hygiene, and communities experience a new standard of living.

The ripple effect is profound, creating a pathway to better health and socio-economic resilience in Tharparkar.

A Long-Term Commitment to Sustainable Change

This initiative reflects Haier's belief that true innovation must serve humanity. By addressing one of Pakistan's most urgent issues with a sustainable, long-term approach, Haier and Alkhidmat Foundation are working together to create real, measurable change, and this journey is only just beginning.



PESHAWAR: Maulana Tayyab Qureshi and others Ulama from different school of thoughts addressing a press conference regarding unity during Muharram.

Amir Muqam expresses deep grief over Swat river tragedy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Engineer Amir Muqam, has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic incident in which tourists were swept away by the Swat River.

He said the heartbreaking tragedy is a moment of

reflection for the entire nation, as precious human lives were lost.

In his statement, Engr Amir Muqam said it is extremely unfortunate that people remained stranded in the middle of the river for hours, waiting for help, yet no rescue team arrived at the scene. This incident is a clear indication of the provincial government's complete failure and the criminal negligence of the

district administration.

He added that the failure to issue timely warnings, the unavailability of prompt rescue operations and the absence of essential machinery and resources all point to the fact that the public was left at the mercy of the situation.

Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam extended heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the affected

families, stating that "we stand with them in their time of grief." He also instructed the relevant authorities to speed up relief efforts and ensure all possible assistance and facilities are provided to the victims.

He expressed profound sorrow over the martyrdom of 18 tourists, including 15 from a single family, calling it a major tragedy.

No Place for corrupt officials in excise dept: Secy Khalid Ilyas

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Secretary Excise Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khalid Ilyas, has declared a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption within the department, vowing to transform the Excise Department into a transparent, efficient, and modern institution that plays a decisive role in combating narcotics and provides top-quality services to the public.

Speaking exclusively to The Frontier Post, Khalid Ilyas emphasized that various wings of the department-particularly the Narcotics Wing, Intelligence, and Investigation Bureau-are actively engaged in robust operations against drug dealers and smugglers. He noted that several successful

operations in recent months have yielded significant results in the fight against narcotics.

He further stated that under the directives of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the department is undergoing full digitization, with services being shifted online to eliminate unnecessary office visits and make processes more accessible for the public. "Providing transparent, swift, and user-friendly services is our top priority," he added.

Taking a strong stance against corruption, the Secretary said that only 2% of the department's officials are involved in corrupt practices, yet they tarnish the image of the entire institution. "These elements are being strictly dealt with under a zero-tolerance policy to restore

public trust and departmental integrity," he stressed.

Khalid Ilyas also noted that clear instructions have been issued to district and regional officers to ensure transparency, merit-based procedures, and adherence to legal standards in all Excise police stations. "Any negligence will not be tolerated," he warned.

He reiterated that the mission of the department is not limited to crime prevention but includes building an institution that offers public confidence, safety, and convenience. He urged citizens to report any corrupt or illegal activities to help strengthen the department further.

With a new vision, firm resolve, and unwavering integrity, we are moving forward he concluded. Soon, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Excise

Department will stand as a model for institutions across the country.

Secretary Excise Khalid Ilyas stated that one day each week is designated as a "Public Day" in the department, during which citizens are encouraged to visit and register their complaints. He emphasized that all complaints are taken seriously and are addressed within 48 hours.

He further revealed that inquiries were conducted against certain officers and officials based on public complaints, and disciplinary actions, including punishments, were taken where necessary.

The Secretary added that this process of accountability and transparency is aimed at transforming the department into a public-friendly and trustworthy institution.

Study prompts KP govt; to confront learning crisis

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) endorsed the rollout of a classroom-based solution designed to help millions of primary school children improve basic literacy and numeracy. The program, known as Targeted Instruction Pakistan (TIP), will be introduced in all 27,000 public primary schools across the province starting this academic year.

The decision follows a large-scale study by the Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP), conducted in partnership with the KP Elementary and Secondary Education Department.

The study found that TIP's focused teaching approach, which groups students by learning level and adjusts lessons to their needs, helped children make significant progress in just 40 school days; gaining the equivalent of three additional months of learning in English, Urdu, and mathematics.

The program's success in classrooms across Peshawar and Mardan led



to its endorsement by the Directorate of Curriculum and Teacher Education and the Directorate of Professional Development in KP. "The strength of TIP lies in its simplicity, scalability, and evidence," said Tahir Andrabi, lead researcher and co-founder of CERP.

"It enables regular teachers to provide targeted support without extra workload or new infrastructure."

The TIP model, tested with over 7,000 teachers and 200,000 students,

uses existing resources and provides training and tools to help teachers close learning gaps. With 77 percent of 10-year-olds in Pakistan unable to read and understand a simple sentence, education experts say solutions like TIP are urgently needed.

Masood Ahmad, Secretary Education Department KP, noted, "What we teach children today must prepare them for the future. Learning should help them overcome challenges and shape their lives."

TIP's national expansion is also in motion. The Federal Directorate of Education plans to use TIP workbooks during Numeracy Hour in Islamabad, while pilot programs in Balochistan are extending to more districts.

Maroof A. Syed, president and CEO CERP, stressed that turning evidence into action requires a long-term commitment. "We must embed a learning approach within government systems so reforms are sustained," he said.

Hazrat Umar (RA) laid foundations of justice, equality: Qadri

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Auqaf and Religious Affairs, Adnan Qadri, issued a special message on the occasion of the 1st of Muharram, marking the beginning of the Islamic New Year.

He stated that the day not only signifies the start of the new Islamic year but also commemorates

the martyrdom of the second Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Umar Farooq (RA), who laid the foundations of justice, peace, equality, and a welfare state. The provincial minister said that the martyrdom of Hazrat Umar (RA) is an unforgettable chapter in the history of humanity, Islam, and the Caliphate.

His exemplary leadership, noble character, and

rule of law-based governance continue to serve as a guiding light for us even today.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has announced a special holiday on the 1st of Muharram to allow the public to observe the day with reverence, reflection, and devotion.

In his message, the minister urged the people to engage in self-account-

ability regarding their character, intentions, and collective lifestyle. He called upon them to follow in the footsteps of Hazrat Umar (RA) to help transform society into one of justice, peace, and unity.

He concluded with a prayer that may Allah (SWT) bless us with goodness, prosperity, and steadfastness in faith in the new Islamic year.

KPCPWC, UNICEF holds event to strengthen child protection system

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission (KPCPWC) in collaboration with UNICEF organized first-of-its-kind Cross-Regional Exchange on Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Pakistan.

This two-day landmark event brought together child protection authorities and commissions from across all the federating units of country including Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and the Islamabad Capital Territory. The exchange aimed to foster inter-provincial dialogue and learning exchange on further strengthening child protection systems in the country and to build consensus on improving coordination to collectively address child protection issues common to more than one province or region.

In his welcome remarks,

Syed Nazar Hussain Shah, Secretary of the Social Welfare, Special Education & Women Empowerment Department noted that KP was the first province to legislate a dedicated child protection law in 2010 and established KP Child Protection and Welfare Commission. He described the seminar as "more than an event - a forum to reflect, share, and grow together," and urged all provinces and regions to place children at the heart of governance and justice.

He appreciated the delegations from all provinces and regions for coming to Peshawar to conduct comparative analysis of learning from each other's experiences in their efforts to strengthen child protection systems, build consensus on the need for a regular coordination forum and inclusion of children as meaningful actors in these efforts.

Wisam Hazem, Programme Manager at UNICEF Peshawar welcomed the delegates from all parts of Pakistan and



other participants. He reaffirmed UNICEF's commitment to strengthening child protection systems not only in KP but across Pakistan.

The major highlights of this two-day event also included the launch of KPCPWC's Inaugural Report (2010-2024), Centre of Continuing Professional Development

(C4CPD), Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) and Child Protection Helpline 1121. Sohail Ahmad, Child Protection Specialist UNICEF provided a detailed overview of the KPCPWC's Inaugural Report from 2010-2024 to the forum. The report is a comprehensive documentation of the KPCPWC's

efforts in the global and historical perspective post 18th Constitutional Amendment to establish and strengthen child protection system in the province. It captures not only its past and present achievements but a future roadmap to continue improving the child protection institutional framework, governance and

services in the province - a commitment for the system to exist in all districts in KP.

The official launch of the Centre for Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) by the Minister for Social Welfare, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, also marked a significant, historical and first-of-its-kind child protection initiative

in Pakistan. KPCPWC with the support of UNICEF established the CCPD in its provincial secretariat as a representation of deeper understanding of the critical gaps in the planning, development and strengthening of technical capacities, professional development and supervision of child protection workforce across relevant sectors in the province.

The Center is designed not only to build individual capacities but also to contribute in systemic reforms, including the integration of child protection into allied sectors such as health, education, social welfare, and justice.

Minister for Social Welfare Department also presented a roadmap to scaling-up the child protection system across all districts of the province. He updated the forum that the CM KP in this regard has endorsed key proposals, including the institutional sustainability of existing 21 District Child Protection Units in the

province and expansion of DPCUs to additional five districts in the coming fiscal year (2025-2026) through a significant enhancement of the regular grant-in-aid to the KPCPWC by Rs. 250 million. Additionally, he has approved a special allocation of Rs. 120 million for the establishment of a model DCPU facility in Dera Ismail Khan (DIK).

At the end the Minister acknowledged UNICEF's critical role and partnership in making the vision for a comprehensive child protection system fully functional through trained and supported workforce, CPIMS and Child Protection Helpline 1121 in KP.

He also extended his special gratitude to UNICEF for supporting KPCPWC to organize this first of its kind forum with all provinces and regions that helped to build a national consensus on the need for common communication framework and inter-provincial coordination.



In brief

Drive against power thieves F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Xen FESCO Kamalia Syed Fazal Abbas Shah said that continuous operations against electricity thieves are ongoing. He further said that our task force teams are working in the field on a daily basis and actions are being taken against electricity thieves by identifying them. Syed Fazal Abbas Shah said that electricity thieves do not deserve any concession because these people are causing loss to the Government of Pakistan by stealing electricity, so they do not deserve any apology. We have caught countless electricity thieves and have registered FIR against them in different police stations. In addition, these electricity thieves have also been imposed heavy fines for stealing electricity. He said that stealing electricity is a serious crime which is unforgivable. In the End, Syed Fazal Abbas Shah said that I am giving a message to those who steal electricity. If in future any person is caught stealing electricity, then along with FIR against him, he will have to go to jail.

Section 144 imposed in Dera F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Deputy Commissioner Abdul Nasir Khan has imposed Section 144 in Dera Ismail Khan during Muharram to maintain law and order and ensure the protection of lives and property. According to a notification issued by the district administration, several preventive measures have been put in place. The display of arms, sale of petroleum products in open bottles, and sale of LPG and CNG cylinders along Muharram procession routes have been strictly prohibited. Construction activities on procession routes have also been banned. The order further prohibits the use of loudspeakers and sound systems in public places, wall chalking, and the dissemination of sectarian hate material through audio-video cassettes or printed content. Similarly, giving shelter to unknown individuals in houses or hotels located along the procession routes has been banned. To enhance security, pillion riding on motorcycles will remain banned from Muharram 1 to 8, while a complete ban on motorcycle riding will be enforced on Muharram 9 and 10. The district administration urged citizens to cooperate with the authorities to maintain peace and harmony during the holy month.

Biometric verification F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: The Excise and Taxation Department of Sindh has extended the deadline for biometric verification of vehicle registrations until August 14. According to the report, citizens have been urged to complete biometric registration of their vehicles and motorcycles before the new cutoff. According to Excise and Taxation Sindh Deputy Director Asif Ali Bhatti, this is the final extension, and no further extension will be granted after August 14. He warned that if a vehicle is not registered under the owner's name, the transfer and biometric process must be completed immediately. After the deadline, both the buyer and seller will be required to undergo biometric verification for the transfer of any vehicle or motorcycle. Asif Ali Bhatti revealed that over 5 million citizens across Sindh, including Karachi, have yet to obtain new number plates for their motorcycles.

Special students visit FC HQs in Dir



Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: In a rare initiative, Dir Scouts in collaboration with Frontier Corps (FC) North arranged a visit to the FC Headquarters in Timergara for 30 differently-abled students here the other day. The students were presented a guard of honour upon arrival and later laid floral wreaths at the Martyrs' Monument, offering prayers in remembrance of fallen heroes.

During the visit, Dir Scouts officers gave detailed briefings on various weapons and their operational mechanisms, which drew keen interest from the students. The guests expressed joy over the opportunity, describing it as a memorable experience.

Commandant Dir Scouts, Brigadier Sanaullah Malik, met the students and distributed gifts among them. In return, the students thanked the officer and presented him with flower garlands. The event concluded with loud chants of "Pakistan Zindabad" and "Pak Army Zindabad," reflecting patriotic fervour among the attendees.

Liquor smuggling bid: The Timergara police foiled an attempt to smuggle liquor late Thursday night at the Zolam checkpoint. A police team, during routine inspection, stopped a suspicious vehicle bearing registration number ALC-181. Upon searching the vehicle, 48 bottles of liquor were recovered, a spokesman for Lower Dir police said.

The alleged smuggler, identified as Faqir Muhammad, a resident of Rabat, was arrested on the spot. Police registered a case against him under Sections 3 and 4 of the Prohibition (Enforcement of

Hudood) Order, and further investigation is underway.

DSP Timergara Sher Hassan Khan told media that Lower Dir police are enforcing a zero-tolerance policy against drugs and contraband, and such operations will continue. District Police Officer Abdul Salam Khalid appreciated the successful action and announced commendation certificates and cash rewards for the in-charge of the Zolam checkpoint, the SHO of Timergara police station, and their team. The police reaffirmed their resolve to continue indiscriminate operations across the district against drugs, weapons, and criminal elements with the public's cooperation.

AKF training: A total of 14 orphaned students in Gulabad completed an IT course under Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF)'s youth empowerment program and were awarded certificates at a ceremony held in their honour.

Addressing the event as chief guest, AKF Vice President and retired Air Marshal Farooq Habib urged youth to embrace modern science and technology to meet the challenges of the digital age. He emphasized the importance of using digital media positively and productively, adding that excellence lies in performing any task with sincerity and efficiency.

Other speakers included Jamaat-e-Islami KP North General Secretary Haleem Bacha, AKF provincial president Fazal Mehmood, Professor Dr. Shoukat Ali, and Aghosh Dir Lower administrator Saeedullah. They highlighted that under the "Bano Qabil" programme, Al-Khidmat Foundation is providing free IT training to one million youth across Pakistan, and the initiative will continue in the future.

Women empowerment: A key to achieve development

CHITRAL (APP): In a rapidly transforming world, where economic, social, and political norms are constantly evolving, women across Pakistan are emerging as key agents of change reshaping not only their own lives but also the destinies of their communities. From classrooms to boardrooms, beauty parlors to hospitals, and public offices to private enterprises, Pakistani women are breaking barriers and contributing significantly to national development.

One such inspiring example is Fozia Bibi, a bright and determined entrepreneur from Laspur village in Upper Chitral. With a degree in Gender Studies from Peshawar University with distinction, Fozia launched her own organic woolen garments business in 2008 and today, her venture not only supports her own family but also provides employment opportunities to dozens of skilled women in the nearby villages by contributing in the development process. She produces traditional woolen items such as Chitrali caps, Chughas (overcoats), jackets, sweaters, and shawls, using pure wool sourced from yaks, buffaloes, and cows.

Designed to meet both national and international standards, her handmade products are marketed through social media and

local exhibitions, highlighting the use of sustainable and organic materials besides Chitral's rich culture and entrepreneurship potential. "I want to inspire unemployed women by showing that hard work and dedication can lead to success," Fozia told APP, while urging the government to support her in expanding operations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Fozia is also collaborating with several NGOs to explore new markets, proving that education, when combined with skill and initiative, can uplift not just individuals but communities of Chitral. Like Fozia, thousands of women across Pakistan are making their mark in diverse sectors such as healthcare, education, technology, arts, and business driving social progress and economic growth.

According to a Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) spokesperson, over 400 pre-feasibility studies have been prepared to encourage self-employment and promote the SME sector in Pakistan, including initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Focus is being made on promotion of entrepreneurship, generator rental service centers, bread and biscuit manufacturing units and dairy farms and poultry

services.

Mashal Azam Yousafzai, former Advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare and Women Empowerment, said that the significant contributions of women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. From traditional handicrafts like embroidery and weaving to professions in medicine, education, and entrepreneurship, women in KP are thriving. Their resilience enables them to overcome cultural and societal barriers, and their leadership is transforming lives, she noted.

Mashal said technical education initiatives for women are being expanded, with TEVTA (Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority) being strengthened under a major budget allocation for 2025-26 to enhance women's skill development. Women's empowerment is no longer a side narrative it is central to Pakistan's developmental journey. When women are given equal access to education, economic opportunities, healthcare, and decision-making platforms, the entire society benefits. As stories like Fozia's impressive show, empowering one woman has a ripple effect it uplifts families, energizing communities, and ultimately fueling the nation's progress.

Nurses Association announces strike F.P. Report

BUNER: Vice President of Buner Nursing Association Sahib Zaman flanked President Zameer Khan, General Secretary Bakht Alam and female nurses in a press conference on Friday, demanded the replacement of MS DHQ Hospital Daggar, otherwise he has announced a one-hour strike from Monday and a complete strike from Wednesday.

He threatened of closing emergency services in Buner hospitals and expending the strike to provincial hospitals if the core demands of the replacement of MS and other related demands are not accepted. He has also announced to close emergency services and extend the strike to the entire province. He has accused MS of adopting inappropriate behavior towards subordinate staff right from doctors, paramedics, nurses and class four in administrative matters, due to which, according to them, the conditions of the hospital are getting worse.

He has alleged the MS that Nurses Association President Zameer Khan and Vice President Sahib Zaman have been relieved for DG Office merely on the token strike against MS's attitude and the reason has been given as a request by nurse Dina Kumari for forcibly stopping nurse Dina Kumari from duty, although Nurse Dina Kumari has completely denied filing any complaint or grievance application before MS. He claimed that nurse Dena Kumari in her written statement and video recording has reiterated her stand with her community.

Armed men looted senior journalist F.P. Report

LARKANA: The unrest in Larkana could not be controlled. Armed men robbed a valuable mobile phone worth lakhs of rupees from Larkana Union of Journalists District President Senior Journalist Tariq Mahmood Durrani between two police stations and fled.

While the Larkana Press Club and journalist organizations condemned the incident, the police started an investigation on the notice of the SSP Larkana. According to details, yesterday, motorcycle-borne armed men held Larkana Union of Journalists District President Senior Journalist Tariq Mahmood Durrani hostage at gunpoint near Seyal House of two police stations Market and Darri police stations in of Larkana and easily escaped after robbing him of a valuable mobile phone worth lakhs of rupees.

When contacted by the media, the affected senior journalist Tariq Mahmood Durrani protested and said that unknown armed men robbed a valuable mobile phone worth lakhs of rupees from me while I was going to my house in the city of Larkana, about which I have also filed a report at the police station, but the police the robber has still not been arrested. He demanded that the culprits be arrested and justice be done to him. Meanwhile, SSP Larkana has taken notice of such an incident and has sought a report from DSP Haideri and the market.

PkMAP politics revolves around public welfare

F.P. Report

KARAK: Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party Karak president Rafi Khattak has said that service to the people is the soul of real politics. In our country, the slogan of service to the people is often on the lips of politicians, NGOs and religious parties, but when this slogan is tested in practical life, the reality looks very different. What is real service to the people? Real service to the people is the name of a long, continuous, and selfless struggle that connects man to man, gives him self-respect, and leads society towards a just system.

He expressed these views in his address to a study circle in Anarbanda. He said that the term service to the people actually has a broad meaning. It is not limited to welfare works only, but encompasses all aspects of human rights, justice, equality, education, health, and social justice. Feeding a hungry person is a great act, but raising your voice against the causes of hunger is an even greater service.

Giving medicine to a sick person is a virtue, but making treatment facilities equally accessible to all is a big struggle. He said that in our society, there is often a show in the name of public service. A few pictures,

some social media posts, and temporary activities, but those who are silently, without any desire for reward, working day and night for the welfare of the deprived sections of society are the real servants.

These are the people who take the field against poverty, ignorance, unemployment and injustice and never want to appear in front of the camera. The real purpose of politics is public service, elected representatives are actually public servants, but today's politics has become a means of self-interest, power and personal appearance and show-off instead of service. Instead of healing the wounds of the people sitting in parliament, they are burdening them with inflation, unemployment and deprivation. In such a situation, the real concept of public service has become blurred. He said that one aspect of public service is that we dedicate our knowledge, time and abilities to others.

A teacher who trains his students not only in bookish knowledge, but also in awareness, courage, and the ability to become good citizens, is a great servant. A doctor who provides free treatment to a poor patient, a lawyer who provides justice to the needy, or a journalist who becomes a voice for truth and justice are all

shining beacons of public service. Islamic teachings also consider public service an important part of religion.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "All creation is the family of Allah, and the most beloved person to Allah is the one who is kind to his family." This statement is a declaration that philanthropy is the true religion.

He said that today's society also needs a similar service that does not need fame, a service that is free from personal interests, a service that brings about policy changes to provide the basic amenities of life to the lower classes, and a service that empowers the people to demand their rights. If we do not make this lofty concept of public service a part of our collective and national life, then a few charitable projects, a few ration bags and a few temporary sympathies cannot give us a just, selfless and conscious society. We have to go beyond intentions, slogans and ideology and take practical steps. Public service is not a temporary campaign, it is a lifelong struggle. It is not just about giving something to the poor, but to make them stand on their own feet. Those who make this service the aim of their lives are actually the true benefactors of humanity.

KP secretary visits Koto Hydropower Project

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary for Power and Energy Zubair Khan visited the long-delayed 40.8-megawatt Koto Hydropower Project (HPP) in Lower Dir here the other day to review its development progress and operational readiness.

Launched on July 4, 2015, by PTI founding chairman Imran Khan and then Chief Minister Perviz Khattak, the much-anticipated project was originally scheduled for completion in February 2019 at an estimated cost of Rs1,399,999 million. However, it has seen repeated delays due to administrative, financial, and technical hurdles.

During the visit, Project Director Engineer Sultan e Rome and Deputy Director Engineer Mueqem Khan briefed the Secretary,

informing him that the construction phase had been successfully completed and that the project had now entered the critical phase of testing and commissioning. Mr Zhao, the Chinese contractor's representative, told the secretary that security concerns surrounding the movement of technical teams were currently hindering the timely execution of the "mechanical run" — a key pre-requisite for the project's commercial operation.

Taking immediate notice, Secretary Zubair Khan contacted the Deputy Commissioner of Lower Dir to ensure the safe and timely movement of the Chinese technical staff. Mr Zhao assured that once the mechanical run is completed successfully, the project would move swiftly toward commercial operation without further delay.

The project team also updated the secretary on the progress of the grid interconnection and energization of the switchyard. He was informed that the Commercial Operation Date (COD) committee had been mobilized and formal approval for the shutdown of the 132kV transmission line had been granted to facilitate the final phase of testing.

Secretary Zubair Khan appreciated the timely efforts of the project management, particularly in achieving interconnection milestones and initiating the switchyard energization. He stressed the need for all relevant departments to work in close coordination to ensure the remaining testing procedures are completed efficiently, enabling the plant to begin commercial operations at the earliest.

Police arrest terrorist facilitator in Charsadda

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: In a significant intelligence-based operation, Umarzai Police arrested a suspected facilitator of terrorist activities and recovered arms and ammunition from his possession.

According to police officials, the operation led to the arrest of



Qurban Ali, also known as Abu Bakar or Qari, son of

Mursaleen. The suspect hails from Mohmand Agency and was residing in Shawadg Bangla, within the jurisdiction of Mandani Police Station.

During the raid, police recovered two hand grenades and three RPG2 rounds from the suspect's possession. A case has been registered against the accused, and further investigation is underway.

Commissioner honours Saeed Afridi

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has, on return of the Kohat's son Khan Saeed Afridi, who achieved great success in International Martial Arts Competitions, arranged a special reception in his honor at Commissioner House

which beside others, was also attended by the Commissioner RTS Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zakir Hussain Afridi, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali, Civil and district officers and elites of the area.

During the reception, rich tributes were paid to Khan Saeed Afridi for his extraordinary performance

and bringing the glory to Pakistan at the global level. Commissioner Kohat, while appreciating the services of Khan Saeed Afridi, said that such youth are a great asset to our country particularly for Kohat and the nation who have raised the prestige of Pakistan in the world with their hard work and talent.

Forgotten community: A call for transgender empowerment

Nazia Naz

IN 2020, the Pakistani authorities took a significant step by passing legislation to protect and empower the transgender community. This legal recognition was a landmark achievement. It marked a moment of hope for a historically marginalized and vulnerable group. Alongside this, the establishment of the Islamabad Transgender Protection Centre signaled that perhaps a new era of inclusivity and human rights had begun.

However, the optimism was short-lived. Today, those same initiatives face neglect, underfunding, and political disinterest. The dream of a better future for the transgender community

has become yet another unfulfilled promise. In particular, the province of Sindh stands out for its lack of commitment. Not a single Annual Development Plan (ADP) has been created specifically for the welfare of transgender individuals. No structured policy, no inclusive employment scheme, and no dedicated budget from the Social Welfare Department, whose core mandate includes the protection of such vulnerable groups.

In Sindh, thousands of transgender people continue to live in the shadows economically excluded, socially marginalized, and politically invisible. While a very small number of highly educated transgender persons have managed to secure jobs, the vast majority are left with no options. Their lives are reduced

to survival. With no access to jobs, education, or training, they face extreme poverty, discrimination, and abuse.

What is most painful is the silence the absence of implementation, the absence of voices from within the system, and the absence of dignity. We are not talking about robots or statistics. These are human beings, with the same dreams, fears, and rights as every other citizen of Pakistan.

As someone who works for humanity and justice, I have personally faced institutional pushback. At police stations and in official departments, I am often questioned: "Why do you, as a woman, take an interest in transgender people?" My answer is always the same: Because they are human beings. But sadly, we

are still operating in a system that doesn't want to see, support, or empower them.

We must ask ourselves: How can the transgender community be empowered if no company, government office, or institution is willing to offer them employment? Without economic independence, they are denied dignity, respect, and opportunity. The lack of employment leads to vulnerability, pushing many into unsafe and exploitative environments, where they are subjected to sexual violence, police brutality, and social exclusion.

In my research, I studied a presentation by Kami Sid, a prominent transgender activist, which highlighted alarming trends. Many transgender individuals have been harassed,

assaulted, and abused by police. Their complaints are ignored. FIRs are not registered. Their existence is criminalized rather than protected. When a state fails to acknowledge or act on such abuse, it is complicit in that abuse.

So, what is the way forward? Firstly, awareness and sensitization campaigns must be launched for police stations and all government departments. Officers must be trained to understand that transgender individuals are citizens with rights, not criminals. Treating them with dignity is not a favor; it is a duty.

Secondly, the Social Welfare Department must immediately design a provincial development plan that includes skills training, micro-finance schemes, and job

quotas for the transgender community. Inclusion should be both policy and practice.

Thirdly, we need more allies people who speak out from within the system. Silence equals violence. If we are truly committed to justice, we must not only defend those who are heard but amplify the voices of those who are silenced.

In closing, I will repeat what should be obvious but is often forgotten: Transgender individuals are human beings. They deserve the same dignity, rights, and protection as everyone else. If we continue to ignore them, we are not just failing a community we are failing our humanity.

The writer is International Human Rights Researcher & Defender.



GAZA: Palestinians gathered at an aid distribution point set up by the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, near the Nuseirat refugee camp.

Denmark to push for stricter EU migration policies

OSLO (AFP): Denmark's strict migration policies have slowly spread across Europe and the country will now push for harsher EU-wide regulations during its upcoming EU presidency, including on asylum handling and legal appeals.

Migration policy "is linked to security, that is to say that we need a Europe that is safer, more stable and robust, and that isn't really the case if we don't control the flows to Europe," Denmark's European Affairs Minister Marie Bjerre said as she presented the country's priorities for its EU presidency, which it takes over from Poland on July 1. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen hopes to build EU consensus on externalising asylum procedures outside Europe, and restricting the scope of rulings from the European Court of Human Rights. She set the tone during a recent visit to Berlin.

"We need new solutions to reduce the influx to Europe and to effectively send back those who don't have the right to stay in our countries," she said at a press conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who applauded the Danish "model". Denmark, where the number of inhabitants of foreign origin has soared from 3.3 percent in 1985 to 16.3 percent in 2025, says it needs to limit the number of immigrants in order to safeguard its generous cradle-to-grave welfare system.

At the same time, the need for foreign labour has surged, with the number of work permits doubling in less

than a decade, though these can be swiftly revoked. Refugees in Denmark are entitled to a one-year renewable residency permit, and they are encouraged to return home as soon as authorities deem there is no longer a need for a safe haven.

"Refugees are expected to integrate while also being prepared to leave at anytime... a kind of contradictory or schizophrenic situation," researcher Marie Sandberg, the head of the Centre for Advanced Migration Studies at the University of Copenhagen, told AFP. "As recent research shows, the increased focus on return policies and temporary protection, along with high demands for getting permanent residency, create a very, very difficult integration landscape for newcomers into Danish society," she added.

Denmark made headlines in 2020 when it revoked residency permits for 200 Syrians, deeming the situation in Damascus no longer justified a Danish residence permit. Since her election to the head of the centre-left Social Democrats 10 years ago, Mette Frederiksen has shifted her party's migration policy far to the right, in line with that of preceding right-wing governments backed by the far right. She has repeatedly called non-Western immigration Denmark's "biggest challenge". In 2024, she expressed support for an MP who alleged that some well-integrated immigrants were "undermining" Danish society.

"We are a sociable and relaxed

country culturally, but for some reason Muslims have been seen as a kind of threat to this liberal culture," lamented Michala Bendixen, head of the Refugees Welcome organisation. Championing a "zero refugee" policy, Denmark is keen to externalise the asylum process to a country outside Europe. In 2024, the country accepted 860 refugees, 13 times fewer than in 2015.

Two years ago, the government halted its plans to process asylum requests abroad -- possibly in Rwanda -- and keep refugees there if their applications were approved, in order to try to find a joint solution with the European Union. While all similar efforts in European countries have so far failed, "there will be a European attempt to do something on the subject" during the Danish EU presidency, Bendixen said. Denmark also recently joined Italy and seven other countries to seek a reinterpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights to allow for changes to migration policy, arguing that the text sometimes protects "the wrong people."

"We used to be proud of being one of the first countries to sign the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, and we've also been part of the UNHCR resettlement scheme since the late 1980s. However ... Denmark seems to be ready to test the (limits of the) conventions," Sandberg said. Bendixen said those efforts were now "undermining the whole mindset of Europe".

Former Venezuelan spymaster pleads guilty

CARACAS: A former director of Venezuelan military intelligence has pleaded guilty to drug trafficking and narcoterrorism charges in a United States federal court, according to the Justice Department, a week before his trial was set to begin.

Hugo Carvajal, who served in the country's late President Hugo Chavez's government from 2004 to 2011, pleaded guilty in a Manhattan federal court to four criminal counts including narcoterrorism conspiracy, conspiracy to import cocaine and weapons charges. Federal prosecutors alleged the former major-general, along with other high-ranking Venezuelan government and military officials, led a drug cartel that attempted to "flood" the US with cocaine.

The cartel partnered with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a now demobilised armed group that the US once considered a "terrorist" organisation, to produce and distribute cocaine, prosecutors alleged. In a letter this week to the defence counsel, prosecutors said they believe federal sentencing guidelines call for the 65-year-old to serve a mandatory minimum of 50 years in prison.

"The deeply troubling reality is that there are powerful foreign government officials who conspire to flood the United States with drugs that kill and debilitate," Jay Clayton, the interim US lawyer in Manhattan, said in a statement. Nicknamed "El Pollo", "the chicken" in Spanish, Carvajal took part in the failed 1992 coup that lifted Chavez to political prominence and is considered one of the most powerful figures of the socialist leader's 1999-2013 rule.

Carvajal then served as a diplomat representing current Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government before breaking with him to support the US-backed political opposition. Carvajal was extradited to the US from Spain in July 2023 following a more than 10-year effort by the Justice Department to bring him to US soil.

US tests radar

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The Pentagon has successfully tested a long-range radar in Alaska that can detect missile threats from Russia or China, and could someday serve as a sensor in the Golden Dome missile defense shield.

The Long Range Discrimination Radar successfully acquired, tracked, and reported missile target data, the Pentagon said. These are key tasks for Golden Dome, a \$175 billion program aimed at protecting the US and possibly allies from ballistic missiles. The US Defense Department's long-range radar in Central Alaska was built by Lockheed Martin as part of the existing Ground-Based Midcourse Defense missile defense system. The system is designed to increase the effectiveness of interceptors based in Alaska and California that are currently on standby to knock down incoming missiles launched by Iran or North Korea.

The US Missile Defense Agency, alongside the US Space Force and US Northern Command, conducted the flight test at Clear Space Force Station, Alaska. During this test, a target developed by MDA was air-launched over the Northern Pacific Ocean and flew over 2,000 kilometers (1,243 miles) off the southern coast of Alaska where it was tracked by LRDR.

The Golden Dome missile defense shield aims to create a network of satellites to detect, track and intercept incoming missiles. Inspired by Israel's Iron Dome, the Golden Dome program faces political scrutiny and funding uncertainty due to its projected cost. The shield is expected to be operational by January 2029, though experts question the timeline and budget feasibility.

'Mass scale' abuses in Cambodia scam centres: Amnesty

CAMBODIA (AFP): While looking for jobs on Facebook, Jett thought he had found a well-paying opportunity working in online customer service in his home country of Thailand.

Following instructions to travel across the kingdom, the 18-year-old ended up being trafficked across the border to a compound in Svay Rieng, Cambodia. There Jett was beaten, tortured and forced to perpetrate cybercams, part of a multibillion-dollar illicit industry that has defrauded victims around the world.

He was forcibly held at the compound for seven months, during which "there was no monetary compensation, and contacting family for help was not an option", he told AFP. "Will I survive, or will I die?" Jett (a pseudonym to protect his identity) recalled asking himself.

Abuses in Cambodia's scam centres are happening on a "mass scale", a report published by Amnesty International said, accusing the Cambodian government of being "acquiescent" and "complicit" in the exploitation of thousands of workers. The report says there are at least 53 scam compounds in Cambodia, clustered mostly around border areas, in which organised criminal groups carry out human trafficking, forced labour, child labour, torture, deprivation of liberty and slavery. Amnesty's Montse Ferrer said that despite law enforcement raids on some scam compounds, the number of compounds in Cambodia has increased, "growing and building" in the last few months and years.

"Scamming compounds are allowed to thrive and flourish by the Cambodian government," she told AFP. The Cambodian government has denied the allegations. Jett was made to romance his wealthy, middle-aged compatriots on social media, gaining their trust until they could be tricked into investing in a fake business. "If the target fell into the trap, they would be lured to keep investing more until they were financially drained -- selling their land, cars, or all their assets," he said.

Scam bosses demanded exorbitant targets of one million baht (\$31,000) per month from overworked employees -- a target only about two percent of them reached, he said. "Initially, new recruits wouldn't face physical harm, but later, reprimands escalated to beatings, electric shocks, and severe intimidation," Jett told AFP.

The other employees in his multi-storey building were mostly Chinese, with some Vietnamese and some Thais. Amnesty International says none of the ex-scammers of the 58 they interviewed for the report were Cambodian, and "overwhelmingly" were not paid for their labour. Most of the scam centre bosses were Chinese, Jett said, adding that they used Thai interpreters when meting out punishments to those who performed poorly.

"Sometimes they'd hold meetings to decide who would be eliminated tomorrow," he said. "Or who will be sold to another scam compound?" Or did anyone do something wrong that day? Did they break the company rules?" He claims a colleague falsely accused him of wrongdoing to the Chinese bosses for a bounty. He pleaded his innocence but

they "just didn't listen". Ferrer said Cambodian government interventions against the scam centres had been "woefully ineffective", often linked to corruption by individual police officers at a "systemic and widespread level".

Government spokesman Pen Bona told AFP: "Cambodia is a victimised country used by criminals to commit online scams. We do recognise that there is such thing, but Cambodia has taken serious measures against the problem." The UN Office on Drugs and Crime said in April that the scam industry was expanding outside hotspots in Southeast Asia, with criminal gangs building up operations as far as South America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and some Pacific islands.

In Cambodia, Jett ultimately staged a dramatic escape after a particularly severe beating in which his arm was broken. He jumped out of a building, passed out and later woke up in hospital. "Whether I died or survived, both options seemed good to me at the time," he said. "Consider it a blessing that I jumped."

He is now seeking legal recourse with assistance from Thai government agencies who have categorised him as a victim of human trafficking. But Ferrer said effective action to help end the industry must come from the Cambodian government. "We are convinced that if the Cambodian government wanted to put a stop they would be able to put a stop. At the very least they would be able to do much more than what we're seeing," she said.

Myanmar burns confiscated drugs worth around \$300m

YANGON (AP): Officials in Myanmar's major cities destroyed about \$300 million worth of confiscated illegal drugs. The destroyed drugs included opium, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, ketamine and the stimulant known as ice, or crystal meth, Yangon Police Brig. Gen. Sein Lwin said in a speech at a drug-burning ceremony.

The drug burnings came nearly a month after UN experts warned of unprecedented levels of methamphetamine production and trafficking from Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle region, where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet, and Myanmar's eastern Shan State in particular. The production of opium and heroin in historically flourished there, largely because of the lawlessness in border areas where Myanmar's central government has been able to exercise only minimum control over various ethnic minority militias, some of

them partners in the drug trade.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a May report that the political crisis across the country after the military takeover in 2021 -- which led to a civil war -- has turbocharged growth of the methamphetamine trade. In the country's biggest city, Yangon, a massive pile of drugs worth more than \$117 million went up in a blaze, Sein Lwin said.

Similar events to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking also occurred in the country's second-largest city of Mandalay, and in Taunggyi, the capital of eastern Myanmar's Shan state, all areas close to where the drugs are produced. A police official from the capital Naypyitaw told The Associated Press that the substances burned in three locations were worth \$297.95 million. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the information has not yet been publicly announced.

Myanmar has a long history of drug production linked to political and economic insecurity caused by decades of armed conflict. It has been a major source of illegal drugs destined for East and Southeast Asia, despite repeated efforts to crack down. That has led the flow of drugs to surge "across not only East and Southeast Asia, but also increasingly into South Asia, in particular Northeast India," the UN said last month. Drugs are increasingly trafficked from Myanmar to Cambodia, mostly through Laos, as well as through maritime routes linking Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, with Sabah in Malaysia serving as a key transit hub, it added.

The UN agency labeled Myanmar in 2023 as the world's largest opium producer.

Pope laments 'diabolical intensity' of ME conflicts

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Leo said that conflicts in the Middle East were raging with an unprecedented "diabolical intensity" and appealed for greater respect for international law, in comments to Catholic bishops and aid agencies operating in the region.

At a meeting in the Vatican, the pontiff said countries in the region were being "devastated by wars, plundered by special interests, and covered by a cloud of hatred that renders the air unbreathable and

toxic." "Today, violent conflict seems to be raging... with a diabolical intensity previously unknown," he said, adding that the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian enclave of Gaza was "tragic and inhumane".

Leo, elected on May 8 to replace the late Pope Francis, appealed last month for Israel to allow more humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. He did not name Israel in his remarks. The US-born pope also did not directly address the recent 12-day war between

Israel and Iran that also saw the United States bomb suspected Iranian nuclear facilities but he called for countries to show better respect for international law.

"It is truly distressing to see the principle of 'might makes right' prevailing in so many situations today, all for the sake of legitimising the pursuit of self-interest," he said. "It is troubling to see that the force of international law and humanitarian law seems no longer to be binding, replaced by the alleged right to coerce others," Leo added.

Putin authorises creation of state messaging app

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law authorising the development of a state-backed messaging app integrated with government services, as Moscow strives to reduce its dependence on platforms like WhatsApp and Telegram.

Russia has long sought to establish what it calls digital sovereignty by promoting home-grown services. Its push to replace foreign tech platforms became more urgent as some Western companies pulled out of the Russian market following Moscow's

February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Russian lawmakers say the state app will have functionality that the likes of Telegram and Meta Platforms' WhatsApp do not. Critics say the fact that Russia will exercise state control over it poses risks to privacy and personal freedoms. Mikhail Klimarev, director of the Internet Protection Society, a Russian digital rights group, said earlier this month he expected Russia to slow the speeds of WhatsApp and Telegram to encourage people to switch over to the new app.

North Korea will open its biggest tour site next week

SEOUL (AP): North Korea next week will open a signature coastal tourist site that it says will usher in a new era in its tourism industry, though there is no word on when the country will fully reopen to foreign visitors.

The Wonsan-Kalma coastal tourist zone has hotels and other accommodations for nearly 20,000 guests who can swim in the sea, engage in sports and recreation activities and eat at restaurants and cafeterias on site, state media said. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un toured the site and cut the inaugural tape at a lavish ceremony, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

Kim said its construction would be recorded as "one of the greatest successes this year" and called the site "the proud first step" toward realizing the government's policy of developing tourism, according to KCNA. North Korea will

open the site to domestic tourists first

The Wonsan-Kalma beach resort is North Korea's biggest tourist site. KCNA said North Korea will begin service for domestic tourists next Tuesday. It didn't say when North Korea will start receiving foreign tourists, but Russian officials said that the first Russian tour to the site will happen in July. Observers say the resort likely required a huge investment from North Korea's limited budget, so it eventually will have to accept Chinese and other foreign tourists too to break even.

Kim has been pushing to make the country a tourism hub as part of efforts to revive the ailing economy, and the Wonsan-Kalma zone is one of his most talked-about tourism projects. KCNA reported North Korea will confirm plans to build large tourist sites in other parts of the country,

too. But North Korea hasn't fully lifted a ban on foreign tourists that it imposed in early 2020 to guard against the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts say North Korea has been slow to resume its international tourism because of remaining pandemic curbs, a flare-up of tensions with the US and South Korea in recent years and worries about Western tourists spreading a negative image of its system.

Russia's Primorsky region, which borders North Korea, said that the first group of Russian tourists to the resort will depart on July 7. The region's press service said that during their eight-day trip, Russian tourists will also have an opportunity to visit major attractions in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, according to Russian state news agency Tass. Starting from February 2024, North Korea has already been accepting Russian tourists

to other areas amid the booming military and other partnerships between the two countries, but Chinese group tours, which made up more than 90% of visitors before the pandemic, remain stalled.

In February this year, a small group of international tourists visited North Korea for the first time in five years, but tourist agencies said in March that their tours to North Korea were paused. Kim's recent foreign policy prioritizes relations with Russia as he's been supplying troops and conventional weapons to support its war against Ukraine in return for economic and military assistance. But North Korea's ties with China, which has long been its biggest trading partner and aid benefactor, have apparently cooled as China is reluctant to join an anti-Western alliance with North Korea and Russia, analysts say.

Nigerian farms battle traffic, developers in downtown Abuja

ABUJA (AFP): Under the din of traffic from the highway bridge that cuts over his fields, Bala Haruna inspects corn, cassava and okra on his family farm.

A pump pulls up water from a nearby stream and is diverted through trenches dug through cropland wedged between four-lane roads -- fields which were here long before the nearby hotel, the imposing national mosque or any of the high-rises that make up downtown Abuja were even dreamed up. "There were no buildings here," Haruna, 42, told AFP, reminiscing over his childhood as birds chirped and frogs croaked.

The urban farms dotting Nigeria's capital show the limits of the top-down management the planned city is known for -- oases scattered around pockmarked downtown that has long

expanded outward faster than it has filled in. They owe much of their existence to the fact that they lie in hard-to-develop gulches along creek beds. Even roads built through them over the years tended to be elevated highway overpasses.

That fragile balancing act, however, is increasingly under threat, as developers fill in farmland despite regulations protecting these areas as rare green spaces in a city known for concrete sprawl. On the other side of the overpass, the future has arrived: the vegetation abruptly stops and temperatures suddenly rise over flattened fields razed by construction crews.

Local farmers said the people who took the land three years ago provided no documentation and only gave the eight of them

300,000 naira to split -- a sum worth only \$190 today after years of rampant inflation. Much of the farmland in and around downtown is supposed to be a municipal green space, with neither farms nor buildings on it.

But enforcement of the decades-old Abuja master plan is ripe with abuse and lack of enforcement, said Ismail Nuhu, urban governance researcher who did his PhD on the capital's urban planning. Adding to the sense of precarity is that the land, on paper, belongs to the government. "Politicians still use it to grab lands, just to say, 'Oh, according to the master plan, this is not to be here,' no matter what the document actually says, he told AFP, adding that, technically, even the presidential villa is not located where it is supposed to be.

Nyesom Wike, the minister of the Federal Capital Territory, which includes Abuja, recently told reporters he would "enforce" the 70s-era master plan by building roads and compensating and evicting settlements that stand in the way. FCT officials including Wike's spokesman did not respond to requests for comment. The farms have provided steady employment -- a lifeline for some as the rapidly urbanising country fails to produce enough jobs. A recent opening for 10,000 government jobs saw 450,000 applicants, according to local media.

"Having a green space... in a very thick, populated city like Abuja does a lot of good," said retiree Malik Kuje Guni, who started farming three years ago to supplement his pension.

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Starmer acting like colonialist

I can't stop looking at an image of a man in Westminster holding a flag. He is standing proud and defiant. He doesn't want his homeland to be taken over by a foreign country. And yet, oddly, this man is not a folk hero to the Left. His name is Misley Mandarin, and he embodies a noble tradition of anti-colonial activism. He is not operating at the level of Gandhi. But the principle that underpins Mandarin's fight is the same powerful one that shaped independence movements in Asia and Africa in the 20th century: that people should have a say over the destiny of their homelands. It is as simple as that.

But this particular argument of Mandarin is completely deaf to a group of people who claim to stand up for progress and human rights: Keir Starmer's Labour Party and the wider Left. Why? We have heard much talk, especially in the past five years, about the need for Britain to "decolonise". In principle this means that we confront our nation's colonial past and try to make amends for it. In practice, it means an ostentatious display of self-loathing - in which our institutions, from museums and galleries to schools and universities, relentlessly promote a warped version of our history. British history, according to this supposedly enlightened world view, is nothing more than a catalogue of racism and predatory colonialism; one damn oppression after another.

Colonialism is bad, they would concede. But if it's done by an African country, why should it be any of our business? We should focus on ourselves and the sins we have perpetrated (and continue to perpetrate) in the world rather than giving moral lectures to nations from "the Global South". I remember the start of this decade, when this hysteria reached its apogee, and almost every bookshop I went to was full of volumes about how British people (specifically white British people) could better educate themselves.

And yet, in a crystal-clear case of colonialism, all I see is ignorance and indifference. For Mandarin, who came to Britain 25 years ago, is mounting a legal challenge against the Labour Government over their transfer of his native land to Mauritius; in other words, he is agitating for these islands to not be the colonial property of this foreign nation. "We are not Mauritian," Mandarin told The Telegraph, "we are Chagossian. The Government cannot lawfully decide our fate without us."

He is not the only Chagossian passionately advocating against this transfer. Bernadette Dugasse and Bertrice Pompe, another two British citizens native to Chagos, launched a last-minute injunction at the High Court last month to stop the deal going through. Pompe has said: "The fight is not over. There is nothing in that treaty for Chagossians and we will fight." In fact, the Chagossians are invoking human rights law, the same kind of rhetoric that Starmer and his allies would be all too familiar with. Dugasse and Pompe will argue any agreement struck behind closed doors is not simply unjust, but also unlawful. Starmer would say this issue is about protecting national security. And perhaps if Mauritius was not an ally of China this argument would have some credence. But weren't the Left meant to be the people who stood up for higher values over cynical realpolitik? Misley Mandarin is a hero. And I hope he succeeds in stopping the British Government and their reckless colonial actions.

Trump and natural disaster safety net

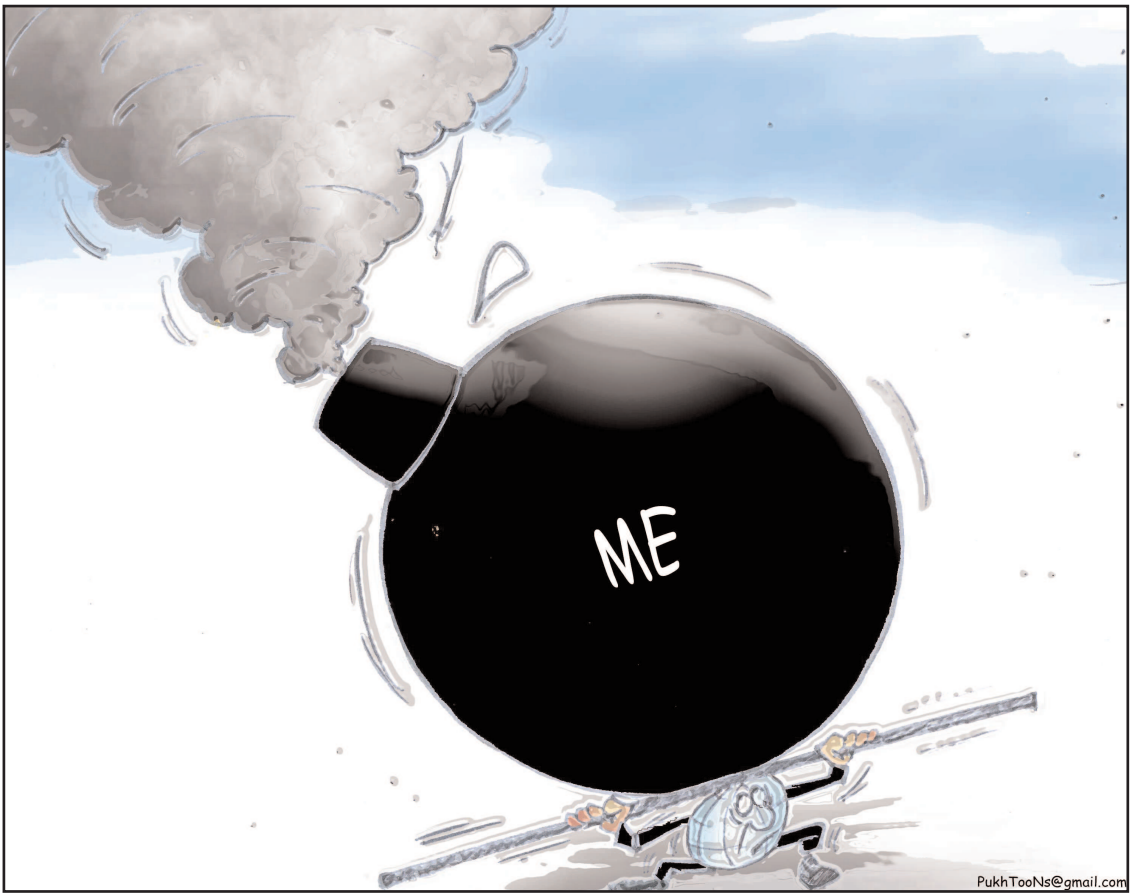
HURRICANE season is here, and according to government forecasts it's shaping up to be brutal. And then comes wildfire season, which is growing more destructive in the West. The US just faced the worst tornado season in more than a decade. You wouldn't know it by the Trump administration's approach to disaster preparation.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is in disarray, and President Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kirsti Noem want to dismantle the disaster response agency altogether at the end of this year, leaving states to fend for themselves. It's eerily reminiscent of the summer of 2005, when hasty organizational changes, brain drain and unqualified leadership plagued FEMA in the lead up to its catastrophic response to Hurricane Katrina. The images we saw along the Gulf Coast then shocked the nation, and communities are still recovering to this day. As we approach the 20-year anniversary of that catastrophe, this administration seems dead set on repeating history's mistakes. Storms - and other dangerous weather events - are getting more frequent and more destructive, and the Trump administration is leaving America dangerously unprepared for the challenges ahead. Since taking office, the Trump administration has implemented drastic changes - without the consent of Congress - that significantly weaken FEMA's ability to respond to hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, floods, heat-induced blackouts and other disasters. Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency forced out 2,000 full-time FEMA employees - nearly one third of its workforce - and subjected dozens of non-partisan employees to polygraph tests to determine their political loyalty. A recent report found that the White House wasn't notifying them when Trump signed major disaster declarations, with staff learning of approvals only days later. On top of all of this, President Trump's pick to lead the agency is woefully underqualified. Acting administrator David Richardson does not hold the qualifications required by law for his job, and has no experience leading natural disaster response. In fact, he was apparently unaware the US even has a hurricane season.

As Trump hobbles FEMA's disaster preparation, he's also playing politics with federal funding for recovery. So far, almost every approved disaster declaration has been for Republican-led states, while requests from Democratic governors - including Washington - remain pending or have been denied outright. Even conservatives have had to grovel to Trump for federal assistance. This all-out assault on FEMA begs the question: When disaster strikes, will Americans be able to count on support from the federal government? Or will they be left to fend for themselves? We are not arguing that FEMA is perfect; it is not. The agency needs serious overhaul to make it more efficient and more effective. But the answer isn't to shutter the agency altogether. Now is the time for Congress, and leaders from red and blue states alike, to speak truth to power - before it's too late.

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Safeguarding the UN's core mission

Munir Akram

SINCE China restored its seat at the United Nations 54 years ago, it has assumed a major role in the UN System, including as a constructive permanent member of the Security Council and an active development partner of the Global South.

Evidence of this is China's election to all major UN bodies and partnerships with several UN agencies such as the WHO, ITU and FAO. China is now the second-largest contributor to the UN budget, the largest official investor in development projects in the developing countries and a major contributor to UN peace-keeping operations. Yet, the "culture" and senior positions within the United Nations and its agencies continue to be dominated by some Western powers.

It is thus ironic that the United Nations today faces an existential crisis due to the hostility of those who dominate the Organization. The UN is often criticized for failing to prevent and end the multiple conflicts that are raging across the world. However, the responsibility for this failure does not rest with the UN. It is the consequence of the rampant geopolitical ambitions of some powers. Nor can the world body be blamed for the parallel erosion of development cooperation and non-implementation of solemn commitments by the rich countries to advance the sustainable development goals. The UN is also not to blame for inadequate attention by the international community to global threats - poverty, climate change, ethnic and religious conflicts and terrorism.

The "coup de grace" to the crippled world organization may be delivered by the hostile posture and financial cuts imposed by the UN's largest contributor. Already, its blockage of emergency aid is causing considerable suffering among poor populations, particularly in conflict zones.

To prevent global chaos, it is essential to preserve the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and ensure that the organization is equipped to address the current and emerging multidimensional challenges.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has initiated a reform process in the context of the upcoming 80th anniversary of the United Nations. There is no doubt that the UN structures and processes can be significantly improved to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, reduce overlap and duplication, improve outdated working methods and enhance performance. However, it is also necessary to acknowledge the outstanding and indispensable contributions by the UN and its personnel in critical areas and situations.

The reform proposals are being formulated by the UN bureaucracy which seems anxious to accommodate and adapt to the coercive budgetary cuts which are being arbitrarily imposed or threatened. There is also a concern that the reform process could be

conferences and summits to advance these objectives.

At this moment of crisis, China can come to the rescue of the United Nations and the multilateral system. President Xi Jinping's three global initiatives - on security, development and civilization - offer an appropriate framework for a future world order that is more peaceful, prosperous and harmonious for all humanity.

While some dissonant voices see security as best imposed by large states through domination and military alliances, an international consensus can be constructed on the basis of the principles outlined in the Global Security Initiative: State sovereignty and equality; indivisible security; dispute resolution through dialogue and mediation; and multilateral cooperation in all security domains.

To prevent global chaos, it is essential to preserve the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and ensure that the organization is equipped to address the current and emerging multidimensional challenges. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has initiated a reform process in the context of the upcoming 80th anniversary of the United Nations. There is no doubt that the UN structures and processes can be significantly improved to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, reduce overlap and duplication, improve outdated working methods and enhance performance.

exploited by some ambitious powers to secure unequal privileges in the Security Council and other UN bodies.

It is vital that the reform exercise does not end up in compromising the UN Charter's purposes and principles, or its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development, or the commitments solemnly agreed by member states at UN

The recent establishment of the International Organization for Mediation, initiated by China, can be a significant platform for peaceful resolution of the multiple disputes that currently threaten international peace and security. UN reform must also serve to prevent external interventions, revive arms control and disarmament and end terrorism in all its forms.

There is already widespread support among UN

member states for China's Global Development Initiative. Concrete projects have been launched, through consultations among the nearly 100 members of the "group of friends" of GDI, in the eight identified areas critical for achievement of the SDGs.

China's Belt and Road Initiative, with almost 140 partner countries, offers a vital avenue to build the physical and human infrastructure essential for sustainable development and an inclusive and equal global economic system. Such a system, encompassing trade, finance and technology, can be best negotiated within inclusive multilateral institutions, not in exclusive formats.

The current approach to human rights within the United Nations coercively propagates the cultural and political priorities of the West. This approach has exacerbated political and cultural divisions between different civilizations, the West and the East, the North and the South. An approach based on development and dialogue is the best way to advance human rights - as China has demonstrated by lifting about 800 million people out of poverty since the late 1970s.

The approach outlined in the Global Civilization Initiative - respect for cultural diversity, mutual learning, dialogue and understanding and joint advancement of development and human civilization - offers a good guide to advance the third pillar of the United Nations.

The process of UN reform must be led by member states, particularly the Global South. It was a coalition of "like-minded countries" which were able, at last year's Summit of the Future, to ensure acceptance of critical commitments on security, development, environment, technology and global governance. China was a leading member of this group. A similar "coalition of the willing" - all those genuinely committed to the vision of the UN Charter - should come together to ensure that UN reform preserves multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in the emerging world order.

The China Daily

US is at war with Iran - and with itself

Nadim Shehadi

FORGET about the war with Iran for a moment. The conflict inside the US, with universities, foreign students, immigrants, and the polarization between interventionists and isolationists, may have far more impact on the country's future as a world power or on the empire it has built itself up to be in the 20th century. In this conflict, the US is at war with itself and has much to lose.

When the dust settles, what will matter is whether what the US achieved through war can be preserved in times of peace. We have seen how that failed in Iraq and Afghanistan, when after a military victory and occupation, the US did not succeed in creating a local government that could control the country as its ally. For an empire, military power is important for expansion, but empires consolidate their control by recruitment.

Former empires controlled vast territories with very few people because they could co-opt the locals who then ruled on their behalf. Romans ruled most of the known world for almost a millennium because the conquered could become Romans, absorbing the culture and language and serving the empire. Some emperors, such as Septimius Severus and Philip the Arab, were from Carthage or the town of Shabha in the Roman province of Arabia, now in Syria. The British in India ruled over tens of millions with tens of thousands, incorporating officials, administrators and the military. Several early Ottoman grand viziers were also originally recruited as slave boys in the Balkan provinces, such as Serbia and Croatia, and rose through the ranks both through meritocracy and by joining Sufi religious orders.

The empire that America built is ruled by global corporations and cultural influence through technology, education, innovation and lifestyle. You know you have landed in one of its provinces from the signs in the streets, the way people dress and, to a certain extent, what can loosely be described as American values. It is a system that anyone can join and become part of. Immigrants become Americans in ways that they can never become Chinese or Russian.

America spread its influence through education, immigration and its belief in a universal mission to uphold and preserve American values of freedom, democracy and human rights. This universalism is deeply rooted in puritan beliefs and emphasizes education and equality among people as a model - the city upon a hill that was meant to be a model for all nations. These are the three pillars of American soft power.

America was always a reluctant empire. After all, it revolted against the British Empire and is composed of a population that left Europe to create a free and egalitarian society. So, the pendulum swings between interventionism and isolationism, with one administration dismantling what the previous one achieved.

I lived in the US for seven years and barely began to understand the complexity of its society. But then again, I am also Lebanese and,

believe me, I can recognize acute and toxic polarization when I see it. I am not sure if the Trump phenomenon is behind the polarization of the country, whether it is a symptom of it or if it is a kind of backlash against a system that has become so rigid that half the country feels alienated by it. The result is what we have now - a feeling that the country is imploding under the tension of extreme polarization, which future historians will probably describe far better than I can.

Symptoms of the American malaise are obvious: complicated phenomena like the conflict between the Trump administration and universities such as Harvard, together with the protests in California about immigration policies. America has also proved to be an unreliable ally when each administration reverses the policies of its predecessors.

When foreign students are seen as a threat to the US, it means that the country is losing confidence in itself, its cultural values and recruiting power. An experience of living and studying in the US should be seen as producing assets to America and a threat to students' own strict societies if, say, they come from China, Russia or Iran. Even when they protest against the US itself, these foreign students are learning that protests are possible and realize that they are not possible at home. They are becoming American.

It is also absurd to think that the protests in California are directed against the application of immigration laws. It is precisely because the US is a country that is governed by the rule of law that it attracts immigrants, especially those escaping the rule of drug cartels and failed states in Latin America. If faith in the rule of law is no longer there, and immigrants are no longer welcome, then this is far more dangerous to what America stands for.

Silicon Valley, which produced many of the leaders of the tech industry, was also part of that recruitment ability. The brightest and most creative, whether products of Syrian, Indian or South African immigration, all became part of America's empire, together with countless executives of American companies and banks.

In occupied Iraq, the US lost its alliances among both Shiite and Sunni because it proved to be an unreliable ally when President Barack Obama fixed a date for withdrawal as an election campaign promise. The Iraqi Shiites were eventually recruited by Iran, which gained more control in the country. The Sunnis also felt abandoned after Sunni tribes had worked with the Bush administration to fight Al-Qaeda in the north. Afghanistan is another story.

American power is challenged by China and its BRICS allies, but America has the upper hand as long as students choose it for education. Every emigrant wants to become American and its allies will not worry that the next administration will reverse policies and abandon them. In the war with Iran, these are battles that cannot be lost and that will affect the outcome as much as, if not more than, the military operations.

Arab News

From harsh rhetoric to pragmatic compromise

Dr. Adam Yousef

ACCORDING to the World Bank, in 2023, the United States and China collectively represented 43% of the world's GDP, 21% of global trade exports and 23% of global imports. These numbers uniquely crystallize the importance of both countries to the international economic order, whose very foundations have been challenged to a great extent by the tension between the two superpowers.

Since his return to the White House, US President Donald Trump has made stymying China's export-driven and manufacturing-based growth strategy a central focus of his international economic agenda, while simultaneously intending to revive American manufacturing and export dominance. Back in March of this year, President Trump levied a series of tariffs targeting China (amongst other coun-

tries), including specific industries such as steel and aluminum. The tariff rate levied on China reached a dizzying height of 145%. Meanwhile, China retaliated with its own tariffs on US imports and products, which reached a high of 125%.

The harsh exchange of rhetoric and tariffs eventually gave way to pauses, delays, exemptions, and negotiations - including with China - for new trade deals. This prompts the question: why the sudden change in direction?

To understand the reasons, it is worth highlighting that the main objectives of President Trump's trade policies (which include his tariffs) are: Reducing the US trade deficit with the rest of the world in goods. In other words, ensuring that the value of goods imported by the United States does not exceed the value of goods the US exports. Restore the US'

atrophied manufacturing and industrial base. Slow and frustrate China's economic progress.

Economic theory and historical precedent put in question the idea that tariffs could reverse the existing trade deficit over time. The key reason why the US has a trade deficit in goods is because Americans tend to spend and consume more than what they produce. The US currently has a \$36 trillion debt (and it continues to increase), and its households have relatively low saving rates. Tariffs were unlikely to address this issue and were always likely to provoke retaliation from countries such as China. As a consequence, the US' own exports could reduce over time, which would reinforce the deficit (other things equal).

In fact, the US-China Business Council (USCBC) did a study on the effect of

President Trump's tariffs on China during his first term, and it showed that those tariffs ended up costing the US up to 245,000 jobs [1]. The tariffs on Chinese goods did nothing to address the fact that China runs a huge trade surplus due to its lower-than-expected domestic demand, an issue that continues to the present.

Furthermore, on April 11, President Trump also announced an exemption from tariffs for all imported smartphones, computers and other electronics (including those produced in China). To understand why, consider that the skills needed to put together a product as complex as an iPhone are not widely distributed in the US, a country whose manufacturing base has been hollowed over time. Global supply chains are more integrated than ever and it is virtually impossible to rupture them without considerable

self-harm. For example, an iPhone alone integrates components from 43 different countries! Continuing with the high tariff policy would have meant American consumers facing significantly higher prices for iPhones and laptops. It is also worth noting that China holds at least \$750 billion of US debt at a time when the national debt is substantial and yields on Treasury bonds remain relatively high by recent historical standards (i.e., the past decade). Should China choose to 'dump' its bond holdings (even if slowly), yields would start rising and the US would find it difficult to finance its \$36 trillion debt.

These considerations prompted the US to pragmatically negotiate a deal with its chief economic rival, which has led to a reduction in tariffs and reassured investors and governments unnerved by the economic uncertainty. While the agreement did not fully

eliminate the tariffs both countries levied on each other, it reduced them while keeping open the possibility for further talks and future deals on trade and economic relations.

What this episode demonstrates is the complex nature of contemporary trade links and supply chains. Economists have spoken in recent years of a growing 'decoupling' as the US and Western countries seek to re-shore production to improve economic resilience and preserve access to strategic minerals and materials. In a post-Cold War environment that is deeply globalized, this is an arduous task to accomplish without inflicting considerable economic self-harm. Last but not least, this episode provides a strong reminder that trade is not necessarily a zero-sum game, and that diplomacy is a virtue that could produce many winners and no losers.

AA

NATO's 5 percent spending pledge is a threat to people and planet

Nick Buxton

NATO'S leaders agreed this week to invest 5 percent of their countries' gross domestic product (GDP) on "core defence requirements as well as defence and security-related spending by 2035". NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte called it a "quantum leap" in spending that would guarantee "freedom and security" for the military alliance's one billion people. It certainly is historic in terms of military escalation, but will it deliver security - and if so, for whom?

The headline demand for 5 percent GDP spending has been so loud, it's easy to forget that for a long time, many NATO members considered the previous 2 percent goal either unachievable or unimportant. NATO first committed to its 2 percent GDP goal in 2002, but by 2021, only six of its members had achieved it. Yet three years later, 23 members had met the goal and all 32 are expected to comply by the end of 2025.

This week, NATO has committed to more than doubling its spending to 5 percent of GDP. This will be partly met through creative accounting and reflects a desire to trumpet a big number to satisfy a petulant President Trump. The 5 percent headline includes 1.5 percent spent on military-related infrastructure, which could be broadly defined to include civilian expenditure. Even so, it reflects a huge escalation of military expenditure over the next decade from an already very high level.

Last year, NATO spent \$1.5 trillion on the military - more than half of global military spending. If

members comply with the core 3.5 percent target by 2030, that would mean a total of \$13.4 trillion in military expenditure. It's an impossible figure to grasp, but if you stacked it in one-dollar bills, you could make almost four piles that reach the moon. It could also be distributed as a one-off cash bonus of \$1,674 to every person on the planet. In reality, the money will be diverted - most of all from social and environmental spending - even though 30 percent of Europeans report difficulty in making ends meet and climate scientists warn that we have two years left to keep temperature increases below the international target of 1.5 degrees Celsius (34.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who fought for a partial exemption from the 5 percent goal, was the most honest about this costly trade-off: "If we had accepted 5 percent, Spain would have to spend by 2035 an extra 300 billion euros on defence. Where would it come from? From cuts in health and education." Social and environmental spending is already on the chopping block. In February, the United Kingdom announced it would reduce its aid budget to 0.3 percent of GDP to pay for military spending increases - a year after it won an election committing to increase foreign aid. Belgium, the Netherlands and France followed suit, announcing aid cuts of 25 to 37 percent. The United States, under Trump, has decimated its overseas aid and climate programmes and reduced healthcare

funding while proposing a record \$1 trillion expenditure on the Pentagon.

Europe is falling far behind on its own environmental and social goals, with its primary funding vehicle, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), expiring in 2026. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) concludes that most European NATO members will be unable to meet the 3.5 percent NATO target without cutting budgets, raising taxes or changing fiscal rules. NATO's spending spree will not only divert money - it will worsen the climate crisis. As one of the world's biggest carbon polluters, it is investing in more gas-guzzling jets, tanks and missiles. Military emissions are notoriously hard to track due to limited data, but one report estimates that 3.5 percent of GDP spending would lead to 2,330 million metric tonnes of greenhouse gases by 2030 - roughly the same as the combined annual emissions of Brazil and Japan.

NATO's justification is that increased investment is needed to confront the threats of "Russia" and "terrorism". Yet there is no rationale behind the 5 percent target or details on why threats to NATO have so drastically increased. Nor is there self-examination on how NATO's actions partly set the stage for Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia has increased military spending, but it still spends 10 times less than NATO. Nor could it catch up militarily with NATO's 32-strong alliance, given its economy: \$2

trillion in 2024 (nominal GDP), compared with \$26 trillion for non-US NATO countries and \$29 trillion for the US alone. As for "terrorism", the idea that NATO's increased spending could deter it ignores the failures of the "War on Terror", where NATO interventions in Afghanistan and Libya prompted instability and fighter recruitment. The security NATO seems most concerned with is that of its arms firms. Long before Trump's pressure, arms firms have pushed for higher European military spending through lobbying groups like the AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD). They have successfully made military security an overriding European Union objective, winning ever more public money for research and industry support. Now they are reaping the rewards with booming revenues and profits. Before the NATO summit, BlackRock released an investment report celebrating the arms industry as a "dynamic growth industry" and a "mega force" that will drive investment trends in the coming years.

NATO's idea of security diverts money from social needs, worsens the climate crisis, rewards arms firms profiting from global conflict, and chooses war over diplomacy. Its bellicose stance in The Hague this week makes it one of the greatest threats to global security - even to life on this planet. It is up to the peoples of NATO countries to reject this deadly path and reclaim security based on cooperation, justice and peace.

Aljazeera

Without dignity, leaders fell at Trump's feet in The Hague

Martin Kettle

NATO'S Hague summit was an orchestrated grovel at the feet of Donald Trump. The originally planned two-day meeting was truncated into a single morning's official business to flatter the president's ego and accommodate his short attention span. The agenda was cynically narrowed to focus on the defence spending hikes he demands from US allies. Issues that may provoke or embarrass Trump - the Ukraine conflict, or whether the Iranian nuclear threat has actually been eliminated by US bombing - were relegated to the sidelines.

Instead, the flattery throttle was opened up to maximum, with Nato's secretary general Mark Rutte leading the assembled fawning. On Tuesday, Rutte hymned Trump's brilliance over Iran; yesterday, he garlanded him as the vindicated visionary of Nato's drive towards the 5% of GDP spending goal. No one spoiled the party. As the president's own former adviser Fiona Hill put it yesterday, Nato seemed briefly to have turned into the North Atlantic Trump Organization.

For Rutte and most of the alliance leaders, however, this was 24 hours of self-abasement with a specific goal. The purpose of this first Nato summit of the second Trump presidency was to keep the US as fully on board as possible with the transatlantic alliance. Nothing else mattered. Any repetition of the shocks that JD Vance and Pete Hegseth delivered to Europe at the Munich security conference in February was to be avoided at all costs. In pursuit of that objective, no humiliation or

hypocrisy was too gross.

So, was it mission accomplished for Nato? Maybe yes, judging by Trump's generally good behaviour in The Hague. The 5% pledge was "very big news", he announced. The US was still committed to Nato's article 5 collective-defence doctrine, he appeared to say at his post-summit press conference, though his curious choice of words - "We are here to help them protect their country" - will not reassure everyone. The leaders have nevertheless emerged with what Henry James called "the equanimity of a result". The Nato summit got what it was designed to get.

But in every longer term way, this appeasement of Trump solves nothing. In political terms the Hague summit does not mark the resumption of normal relationships, let alone the beginning of a new Nato golden age. Such things are not possible in the Trump era. Politically, the summit was a bunker buster dodged. True, things have not got worse, an outcome that many, including Rutte, will regard as a kind of achievement. However, none of Nato's other pre-existing difficulties has been solved. Most remain firmly in place.

Of these, four stand out. The first and most immediate is Ukraine. There has been no change in Trump's impatience with Ukraine, his belief in a ceasefire or his unwillingness to renew US military aid. But nor can the other Nato members supply the aid that Ukraine needs. So the war grinds on, in part because of Trump. Some believe the war could even become

permanent. "Rather than assuming the war can be ended through a comprehensive battlefield victory or a negotiated compromise," the Carnegie Endowment analyst and former Ukrainian defence minister Andriy Zagorodnyuk wrote earlier this month, "Ukraine and its allies must plan to build a viable, sovereign and secure state under constant military pressure." Trump would not be interested in that.

The second difficulty is Trump's sheer unpredictability. Everything was well choreographed in The Hague, but for how long will this last? No one can say for sure. The world is still absorbing the implications of Trump's impulsive handling of Iran, in which military action was repudiated in favour of diplomacy one day, before war was launched the next, followed by the proclamation of peace on the one after that. The Iran bombing has reminded the US's Nato allies of just how little sway they actually possess over the president, and has underscored the difficulty of second-guessing Trump's actions.

This feeds through into the third problem. The commitment to spend 5% of GDP on defence is a policy goal not a present reality. The UK, for instance, aims to get to 5% by 2035, and it will only do so through some jiggery-pokery over what can legitimately be classified as security, as the government's new national security strategy document, published on Tuesday to coincide with the Nato summit, makes clear.

Ten years is a long time. Much will change. Trump's successors

may be more committed to Nato, or they may be even more unreliable than he is. There could be regime change in other places too. No one knows. Warfare is certain to change, as the drone revolution has shown. Nato needs to be careful not to bring 20th-century assumptions to bear on 21st-century planning. The national security strategy document rightly posits this period as an era of "radical uncertainty". Yet investors, including investors in high value hi-tech industries such as defence, abhor uncertainty.

Which brings us to the fourth problem. Patching things up with Trump may solve nothing because he marches to his own drum. But the threats do not go away. This means that the European Nato nations and Canada have to forge a viable system of collective defence against hostile threats that is not dependent on the whims of the person in the White House at every turn. That is a very large task. But Washington cannot have a veto on whether the nations of Europe defend themselves against, say, Russian aggressions.

There is no real choice in the circumstances. The allies are faced with the huge task of gradually reducing their long dependency on the US's technology and armaments without provoking a complete rupture with the US. At the same time, they must increase their own and Europe's defence capacity. It is a devilishly difficult course, with which Britain's political leaders, never mind Britain's security world, would be profoundly uncomfortable. Yet that is the one on which we are embarked.

Goals, this policy could be a game-changer. It aligns with Nigeria's strategic interest in diversifying trade partnerships, reducing overdependence on traditional Western markets and embedding itself more firmly within global value chains. However, maximizing the benefits of this opportunity will require more than preferential access. Nigeria must invest in trade infrastructure, standards compliance and export capacity - especially in high-potential sectors such as agribusiness, light manufacturing and solid minerals. Additionally, effective trade diplomacy and institutional coordination will be crucial to ensure that Nigerian exporters can navigate the Chinese market successfully and sustainably. This development also underscores the urgent need for a functional and inclusive multilateral trading system. China's zero-tariff initiative illustrates what strategic, mutually beneficial trade can look like - but it can also serve as a catalyst for reforming the WTO and reinforcing the principle that trade must work for all.

Such commitments provide much-needed reassurance for African economies such as Nigeria, which are navigating a volatile international environment. In a world facing compounding challenges - from geopolitical tensions to climate-related trade risks, the principles of transparency, openness and mutual benefit must remain central. China's engagement offers an example of how these principles can be operationalized through both bilateral cooperation and support for multilateral institutions. Ultimately, the shared China-Africa vision reinforces the importance of safeguarding and revitalizing the multilateral trading system. It is only through a fair, rules-based and inclusive global trade framework that developing countries can fully realize the benefits of international trade and chart a path toward inclusive and sustainable development.

Road to shared prosperity

Hussein Askary

to increase, the industrialization of the continent has started to pick up the pace. Through Chinese investments, industries are relocating to Africa and industrial parks are popping up in African countries, such as Egypt, Morocco, Rwanda, Uganda and Nigeria, to name just a few. African nations do not want to continue to be exporters of cheap raw materials and importers of expensive finished goods. Many of the goods needed in Africa are now being increasingly produced within Africa.

The "Hunan model" is focused on the three main areas which has made the province excel at them. These are modern agriculture and machinery, poverty alleviation and vocational training. By sharing modern agricultural technology with African nations, two major dilemmas can be resolved. First, many African nations lack food security due to low agricultural productivity. Utilizing modern techniques, these nations can increase their basic staple food production and reduce or eliminate their food insecurity. A large number of pilot agricultural research centers and farms have been established by China and African countries to serve this purpose. Second, other African nations, which have much greater agricultural potential, lack the infrastructure for packaging, refrigerating and transporting the produce to market. By providing the infrastructure, China is enabling these nations to solve this dilemma. In 2020, Ethiopia, which was typified by recurring famines in recent history, exported the first cargo of fresh avocados to Europe, using refrigerated containers on the China-built railway from Addis Ababa to the port of Djibouti on the Red Sea. Ethiopia uses the same railway for importing fertilizers and machinery for its growing agricultural sector.

As for vocational training, there will be an acceleration in implementing the "Future of Africa" China-Africa Vocational Education Cooperation Plan that aims to build schools of engineering technology and 10 Luban Workshops, an international program named after an ancient Chinese master craftsman that provides vocational skills training for youth. In total, these initiatives will provide 60,000 training opportunities for African youth. It is noteworthy that in 2017, China surpassed both the US and the United Kingdom in the number of African students enlisted in its universities. Much of the vocational and

educational programs are focused on agriculture, engineering, and science and technology.

Contrary to the mythology spread by opponents of the Belt and Road Initiative, China has not stopped lending and investing in infrastructure projects in Africa. China, as President Xi declared at the FOCAC Summit last year in Beijing, will carry out 30 infrastructure connectivity projects in Africa under the framework of the BRI, connecting China and Africa through a network of land-sea links. President Xi also pledged 360 billion yuan (\$50 billion) of financial support in three years. Two-thirds will be in the form of loans, and one-third is in assistance and investment in Africa by Chinese companies.

The Chinese and African sides also emphasized cultural and people-to-people exchanges. In the 2024 summit, the two sides decided to launch a cultural Silk Road program as well as an initiative of cooperation on innovation in mass media. They also agreed to designate the year 2026 as the "China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges". Last year, the number of Chinese tourists to certain countries in Africa increased dramatically. Countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Egypt are becoming popular destinations for Chinese tourists.

This FOCAC ministerial meeting came at a time when the US has proven itself to be a unreliable and unpredictable partner for most nations of the world. China has shown stability and consistency between words and deed, and between short-term and long-term goals. This is extremely important for stable trade and economic cooperation. At the same time, US President Donald Trump's much-touted "peace through strength" has failed in every case where he said he would achieve peace within days. The Ukraine crisis keeps escalating, the war in Gaza is still raging and the suffering of the Palestinian people has increased.

China's philosophy of peace through economic cooperation, which is embedded in the BRI, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, is more suited for the changing world today. It can circumvent all kinds of conflicts by focusing on the common goals rather than the differences among nations. Cultural and economic exchanges are the best tools for easing tensions and building trust and solidarity among states and peoples.

Opposing reforms

David Frost

WHAT do you do as a parliamentary opposition when the Government is doing something you know you should support? The Conservative Party has faced this issue twice this week. The first is on Labour's feeble attempt to slow the increase (not make a cut) in health-related welfare spending. How that will play out is unresolved as I write. Kemi Badenoch recognises the reputational risks of voting against, so she has made an offer to back Sir Keir Starmer - but on conditions: further spending cuts and no tax increases this autumn.

It's clever tactically. Starmer clearly can't accept the conditions. And his refusal allows a vote against the Government and, potentially, the death of a flagship Bill. That's the job of an opposition, isn't it? Well maybe. Yes, it certainly makes things awkward for Starmer. But it makes things awkward for the Tories too. For a political party, principles are as important as tactics, especially perhaps if you are trying to reinvent yourselves in the public mind after the political mush of the last 14 years. Sometimes it's possible to be too tactical, too clever.

The fact is the welfare bill has to come down. Maybe Labour is not going about it exactly as we would. But it is still the right thing to do. Fiscal responsibility is supposed to be a Conservative thing. So when Labour is taking a Conservative approach to something, maybe the party should back them? A similar problem is presented by the Planning Bill, which had its Second Reading in the Lords this week. Less is at stake in the short run, for the Bill will certainly go through. But the underlying politics are if anything more significant. Labour's Bill is certainly imperfect. It is best characterised as driv-

ing the current system to work better: more meaningful plans, less power for local councillors to block, less scope for legal challenge. It has a novel approach to nature protection: essentially making developers pay to restore nature somewhere, but not necessarily on the exact spot where development is taking place.

My suspicion is that this is not going to deliver the boost Labour wants. The current system hasn't delivered the target of 300,000 homes a year since the late 1970s. Indeed, since the financial crash, it's only once delivered more than 200,000. Our restrictive controls-based system, with its presumption against building, very likely just can't do it, however streamlined it is. Moreover, although Labour hates it when you mention it, any house building is to a very large extent building for migration. Net immigration is going to be, best case, towards two million under this Government, so at least 125,000 homes every year will be needed simply to accommodate future arrivals. While that's the case, it's going to be very difficult to get political consent to build more - and rightly so. So what is the right political response to this situation? Do Conservatives resist Labour's Bill, arguing that it undermines local democracy and risks the countryside, or support, recognising their approach is imperfect?

At the moment the party is doing neither. Instead it is trying to side-step the choice by saying it wants "more homes, but the right homes, in the right places". That allows it to sound sympathetic to the policy aims while raising all sorts of difficulties in practice, and (not by chance) to accommodate very different

perspectives within the party. But there are risks here: not just that Conservatives get on the wrong side of the argument, but that voters can't see the guiding principle that's being applied, perhaps can't even tell whether we are actually supportive or hostile at all. Once again: when trying to establish a clear profile, maybe this is less than ideal. I know where I stand. Like it or not, and unless you are prepared to engage in what is euphemistically called compulsory "remigration", which I am not, the population is what it is, and we need to build more houses. That requires both reducing immigration right down to zero for a prolonged period and a serious reform to the current planning system, more like the radical Robert Jenrick proposals from 2021, sadly junked as the Conservative Party entered the early stages of its nervous breakdown. Indeed we might need to be even more radical than that in places like London within the M25.

Advertisement That's obviously not going to happen under Labour, but it is what a post-2029 government on the Right should aim to do. So we shouldn't do things which are inconsistent with it now. Labour's Bill is an imperfect half measure, but it still goes in the right direction. There is no future for the Right in echoing the voice of nimby councillors and the green and Lib Dem blob, determined as they are to stop development or hamstringing it with green regulation.

The appeal of the Right must instead be to aspiration, to those who want to own a home (and dare I say it more than one?) and get on in life. The Conservative Party at least can't get back in the game without this. Now would be a good time to start.

The Telegraph

GLOBAL cooperation and sustainable development hinge on strong multilateralism and stable, inclusive trade environments. The multilateral trading system - anchored by the World Trade Organization - has long provided the foundational framework for regulating global trade relations. This system plays a vital role in promoting an open, transparent, inclusive, non-discriminatory, fair, predictable and stable trading environment. For developing economies, preserving and strengthening this system is essential. By ensuring a rules-based international trading order, these economies can gain more secure and equitable access to global markets, thereby unlocking new opportunities for growth and development.

However, this system is under threat. Since 2019, the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has been effectively paralyzed following the US decision to block appointments to the WTO Appellate Body. This institutional crisis has far-reaching consequences. For developing countries - particularly in Africa and across the Global South - the absence of a functioning dispute settlement system undermines trust in the fairness of global trade and erodes the legal protections that these countries rely on to challenge unjust trade practices. Therefore, restoring a fully operational and impartial dispute settlement mechanism must be a priority.

The paralysis of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has far-reaching implications - particularly for developing economies that rely on a rules-based trading system to protect their interests in the global market. One major consequence is the increased vulnerability to power asymmetries. In the absence of a credible enforcement mechanism, global trade risks shifting further toward bilateral or plurilateral agree-

Functional change

Ehizuelen Michael

ments, where larger economies often set the terms. For many African countries and other economies in the Global South that may lack the legal infrastructure or negotiating leverage of wealthier nations, this shift exposes them to greater risks of unilateral trade measures and discriminatory practices. Without a functioning system to challenge such actions, smaller economies are left with limited recourse to defend their trade rights.

As major developed economies increasingly pursue new trade norms outside the multilateral framework, developing countries risk being excluded from shaping the rules that will govern the future of trade. Emerging initiatives - such as digital trade agreements and environmental trade standards - are often negotiated in exclusive platforms such as the G7, or within bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements. These settings frequently lack meaningful representation from the Global South. As a result, the standards that emerge may not reflect the developmental realities, technological capacities or regulatory priorities of developing countries, thereby entrenching existing inequalities in the global trading system. This heightens the urgency for Africa to strengthen its role in South-South cooperation.

A compelling example of how strategic partnerships within the Global South can foster mutual development and support a more equitable global trading system is the growing economic cooperation between China and Nigeria. This relationship illustrates how developing countries can leverage South-South partnerships to reduce dependence on Western-dominated trade frameworks, enhance sovereignty in trade policy, and strengthen their integration into the rules-based global

economy. China has become a key trade and investment partner for Nigeria across sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing and telecommunications. These engagements have contributed to job creation, technology transfer and infrastructure development - core pillars of Nigeria's pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations. However, Nigeria's ability to fully capitalize on such partnerships is constrained by its limited influence in the multilateral trading system. Without a robust, rules-based international trade framework, Nigeria risks facing barriers that could erode the benefits of international cooperation. As a developing country that heavily relies on trade to fuel its economic growth and sustainable development, Nigeria is particularly vulnerable to the uncertainties and power imbalances in the current global trade landscape.

As Nigeria navigates a complex and evolving trade environment, its trade partnership with China has been fruitful and offers both opportunities and lessons in harnessing international trade for sustainable development. In a major policy shift poised to reshape Africa-China trade relations, the Chinese government has announced plans to grant Nigeria and 52 other African countries full duty-free access to its vast consumer market. This groundbreaking move is emblematic of China's commitment to safeguarding the multilateral trade system, and advancing a more equitable, multipolar global order in which all nations, regardless of their size or economic power, can participate and benefit.

For a country such as Nigeria, which relies heavily on trade to fuel economic growth, create jobs and advance its Sustainable Development



World Bank reaffirms support for Pakistan’s economic agenda: Cheema

WASHINGTON (APP): Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema held high-level discussions with World Bank leadership during his official visit to the United States, marking a significant step forward in the country’s development partnership with the international financial institution.

In a productive meeting with Managing Director for Operations Ms. Anna Bjerde and South Asia Regional Vice President Martin Raiser, the minister applauded the strengthened collaboration between Pakistan and the World Bank Group over the past year, said a news release here on Friday.

This enhanced engagement has culminated in the development of the new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2026-

2035, a transformative ten-year strategy backed by an unprecedented \$40 billion commitment from the World Bank.

The minister expressed deep appreciation for the World Bank’s historical support, particularly during critical challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating 2022 floods.

As our largest development partner, the World Bank has played an indispensable role in Pakistan’s socio-economic progress and improving the lives of our citizens,” Cheema stated. He particularly commended the leadership of both Ms. Bjerde and Mr. Raiser in advancing this vital partnership.

With the CPF now successfully launched, the minister emphasized the government’s complete

focus on finalizing a comprehensive implementation framework in collaboration with the World Bank to ensure the strategy delivers its full potential.

He welcomed Pakistan’s transition to the World Bank’s Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region under Vice President Ousmane Dione, noting this move will create valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange and regional synergy.

Meanwhile, in a separate meeting with World Bank Executive Director Abdelhak Bedjaoui, he acknowledged his effective representation of Pakistan’s economic interests.

The minister proposed regular visits by Executive Directors to constituency countries to better understand devel-

opment needs and opportunities for World Bank engagement.

The discussions also highlighted recent WB approvals, including the \$700 million Reko Diq mining project and \$400 million Risk Participation Facility, which moved forward despite objections.

Cheema reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to working closely with the WB country team to achieve the CPF’s ambitious development objectives and transformational impacts.

WB leadership expressed appreciation for the minister insights and assured their full support for the effective implementation of the CPF, underscoring the institution’s continued commitment to Pakistan’s sustainable economic development.



WASHINGTON, DC: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Cheema, held a meeting with Abdelhak Bedjaoui, Executive Director at the World Bank.

Rupee sheds 6 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Friday depreciated by 06 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 283.72 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 283.66.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285.1 and Rs 286.1 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 08 paise to close at Rs 332.59 against the last day’s closing of Rs 332.67, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen came down by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.96, whereas a decrease of Rs0.11 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 389.93 as compared to the last day’s closing of Rs 390.04.

RDA inflows rise to \$10.381 bn in May 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): The inflow of remittances under Roshan Digital Account (RDA) has risen to US \$10.381 billion by the end of May 2025 as compared to US \$10.180 billion by April (2025) end.

The data showed that the inflows of remittances during May were recorded at US\$ 201 million as compared to US\$ 177 million in April and US\$ 235 million in March 2025, according to the latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Historic first for real estate in Pakistan IMARAT’s subsidiary earns A-rating



F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a landmark achievement for Pakistan’s real estate sector, IMARAT Group has announced that its subsidiary, Amazon Mall (Private) Limited, has been assigned initial entity ratings of ‘A-/A2’ by VIS Credit Rating Company Limited. This marks IMARAT’s credibility, financial strength, and commitment to institutional governance.

With this milestone, IMARAT Group takes a significant step toward unlocking its portfolio’s full potential and sets the stage for a future Initial Public Offering (IPO) as part of its long-term capital markets strategy.

IMARAT stands at the forefront of Pakistan’s real estate industry, with 14 landmark projects across commercial, residential, retail, and hospitality segments—representing a total development value of PKR 413 billion (~USD 1.5 billion). Flagship projects include Amazon Outlet Mall, Florence Galleria, IMARAT Builders Mall, and the expansive Mall of IMARAT.

In the hospitality sector, IMARAT is currently constructing 4 Marriott-branded hotels, including Courtyard by Marriott and Residence Inn by Marriott, bringing world-class standards of luxury and service to Pakistan’s growing tourism and business travel markets.

Beyond bricks and mortar, IMARAT is also Pakistan’s first PropTech pioneer. The Group has developed a suite of proprietary technologies tailored for the real estate sector—integrating AI-powered lead management systems, custom CRM platforms, and automated marketing tools to enhance sales, service, and operational efficiency.

Its technology ecosystem—driven by subsidiaries like Graana.com, Agency21 International, and Propmax.AI—is redefining how real estate is discovered, transacted, and managed in Pakistan. These platforms enable IMARAT to capture and analyze market demand, optimize sales funnels, and deliver seamless digital experiences for property buyers and investors.

With a vision to become

a global PropTech leader, IMARAT aims to export its unique fusion of real estate development and technological innovation to international markets.

VIS Credit Rating Company assigned a medium-to-long-term rating of ‘A-’ (Single A Minus) and a short-term rating of ‘A2’, supported by strong protection factors, sound liquidity, and a stable outlook. The rating reflects Amazon’s track record of successful project execution, high occupancy in completed assets, and robust forward bookings in ongoing developments.

Despite sector-wide challenges—including inflation, exchange rate volatility, and political uncertainty—Amazon’s low debt exposure, effective risk management, and strong governance have positioned the company to benefit from Pakistan’s improving macroeconomic indicators such as falling interest rates and a stabilizing PKR.

With institutional confidence now reinforced by this rating, IMARAT is accelerating its roadmap to launch an IPO, unlocking new growth opportunities, enhancing transparency, and gaining broader access to capital markets. The Group remains committed to financial discipline, governance excellence, and sustainable development across all its verticals.

As Pakistan’s real estate industry transitions into a more formalized, transparent, and technology-enabled era, IMARAT Group is proud to lead the way—locally and globally.

Lifting of ban on gemstone exports appreciated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chairman of the All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association (APCEA), Iftikhar Ahmed, has welcomed the decision to lift the ban on gemstone exports following the suspension of SRO 760. He expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), and the Ministry of Commerce for their support.

In a statement, Iftikhar Ahmed highlighted the vital role exporters play in any developed economy, comparing them to the backbone of the nation. He emphasized that exporters are instrumental



in attracting foreign investment to their home countries.

He further stated that APCEA had formed a special committee on May 7 to campaign for the suspension of the said SRO and the restoration of gemstone exports.

Committee members Mushtaq Ahmed, Zulfiqar Ahmed Siddiqui, and Anwar Ahmed held numerous meetings with officials from the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Commerce, Trade Development Authority, FPCCI, and the

Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), personally presenting their concerns.

He added that this achievement is the result of tireless efforts and the prayers of the exporters, and ultimately, the ban on gemstone exports has officially been lifted.

Sir Anwar’s Birthday Tea with the King and Queen

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the 20th of June 2025 Sir Anwar Pervez, OBE H Pk was invited to join their Majesties for Tea at the Royal Box at the Royal Ascot Races.

The invitation to join their Gracious Majesties was part of Sir Anwar’s 90th Birthday celebrations. By honouring Sir Anwar on his 90th birthday the King has shown his deep appreciation of the significant contribution that the founder of Bestway has made to the British Society over his 60-year career.

Sir Anwar immigrated from Pakistan to the UK in 1956, having worked in various jobs in Bradford, he then moved to London

and set up his first retail store in 1963; he founded Bestway in 1976.

Sir Anwar through his business and charitable endeavours he has a long history of encouraging entrepreneurship and furthering dynamism specially within marginalised communities of the country.

The Bestway Foundation - the Charitable Trust Sir Anwar founded in 1987 has a had a long association of working with Royal Charities - the British Asian Trust; the Duke of Edinburgh Awards; Pakistan Recovery Fund and the Princes Trust.

To date Bestway Foundation has donated over £44.0 million to

charitable causes, schools, universities and hospitals in the UK.

Every year Bestway Group hosts its charity race day at the Royal Ascot, this year’s main beneficiary charity was the British Asian Trust.

Registered Address: Newport House, 15 The Grange, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 2QL Reg. No: 68536 Head Office: 2 Abbey Road, Park Royal, London, NW10 7BW The British Asian Trust was founded in 2007 by His Majesty King Charles III.

BAT is a diaspora-led international development organisation, delivering high-quality programmes in South Asia and specialises in, and champion the use of, social finance products to drive positive



change across the region.

The charity seeks to make South Asia that is free from poverty by unlocking the potential of disadvantaged people in South Asia by maximising the impact and support from the South Asian diaspora and beyond.

Kitchen items’ prices decrease by 0.18pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), decreased by 0.18 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on June 26, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 309.80 points as compared to 310.35 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed a decrease of 1.52 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed a decrease of 0.06 per cent and came down to 299.39

points from last week’s 299.58 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, came down by 0.03 percent, 0.15 percent, 0.27 percent and 0.25 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 12 (23.53%) items increased, 14 (27.45%) items decreased and 25 (49.02%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded major decrease in

their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Eggs (12.27%), Chicken (10.75%), Bananas (2.75%), Onions (1.46%), Potatoes (1.27%), Wheat Flour (1.01%), Pulse Mash (0.49%) and Pulse Moong (0.39%).

The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Electricity Charges for Q1 (6.88%), Garlic (5.15%), LPG (1.24%), Gur (1.00%), Tomatoes (0.99%), Sugar

(0.88%), Rice IRRI-6/9 (0.69%), Milk Fresh (0.38%), Curd (0.36%), Firewood (0.11%) and Powdered Milk (0.03%).

Year-on-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included Onions (62.28%), Tomatoes (40.70%), Electricity Charges for Q1 (37.62%), Garlic (27.06%), Potatoes (19.80%), Pulse Mash (19.75%), Tea Lipton (17.93%), Wheat Flour (15.54%), Pulse Masoor (7.62%) and Diesel (1.93%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included Ladies Sandal (55.62%), Sugar (27.35%), Powdered Milk (25.97%), Pulse Moong (24.42%), LPG (17.00%), Beef (15.74%), Vegetable Ghee 2.5 Kg (12.87%), Vegetable Ghee 1Kg (12.59%), Gur (10.99%), Firewood (10.70%), Lawn (10.48%) and Bananas (8.71%).



Four days of Pakistani flavours wrap up at Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan

F.P. Report

OSAKA, JAPAN: The four-day Pakistan Food Festival under the theme "Flavours of Pakistan", came to a vibrant conclusion at Expo 2025 Osaka, drawing thousands of international visitors with its rich culinary offerings, immersive displays, and warm hospitality.

Organized by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), the festival turned food into a powerful medium of cultural diplomacy, and the display areas played a central role in bringing Pakistan’s culinary story to life.

Each day of the festival highlighted one of Pakistan’s culinary icons, not only through free tastings but also through beautifully curated thematic displays that reflected the tradition and story behind each food item.

The festival opened with the country’s favorite celebratory dish - Biryani. Visitors were treated to its signature aroma and flavor, while the display area featured different types and flavours of Biryani, spice jars, Basmati rice sacks, along with traditional raita and salad. The presentation reflected Pakistan’s deep-rooted culinary customs and the festive spirit associated with Biryani across the country.

On the second day, the spotlight turned to Pakistan’s most loved fruit - the mango. The display area was transformed into a golden orchard, with vibrant arrangements of mangoes laid out in beautiful formations, surrounded by traditional patterns and cut into elegant styles. A quiz competition added interactivity, while the display attracted hundreds of visitors for photos and

mango tastings - many of whom declared them the best mangoes they had ever tasted.

Day Three celebrated the timeless elegance of Pakistani dates. The display area was a visual and sensory delight.

Dates filled with almonds, pistachios, walnuts, and even sprinkled with matcha reflected both tradition and innovation. Plated with finesse and complemented by traditional nuts and refreshing date shakes, the setup was one of the most photographed corners of the festival. Visitors praised both the flavor and the craftsmanship of the presentation.

As the festival drew to a close, Day Four brought together the stars of the past three days in a spectacular combined display of Biryani, Mangoes, and Dates. The area was reimaged as a vibrant

culinary mosaic, trays of multiple types of Biryani, mango pyramids and fresh cuts shining under spotlights, and ornate platters of stuffed dates arranged side-by-side. With folk music and a lively crowd, this immersive display told the story of a country whose flavors are as rich and diverse as its people.

Court Notice

In the Court of Quarat-ul-Ain Rashid, Senior Civil Judge/Judge Family Court Swabi, Safia VS Adnan, Suit Number : 373/FC, Institution Date : 23-12-2024, Hearing Date : 03-07-2025, Subject: Dissolution of Marriage, Notice to : Adnan Khan son Abdul Qadeer R/o Moh, Ahmad Khel, Shewa, Teh, Razar, Distt, Swabi, presently Abroad. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the Court on 03-07-2025 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

Court Notice

In the Court of Quarat-ul-Ain Rashid, Senior Civil Judge/Judge Family Court Swabi, Samreen Bibi VS Abdullah, Suit Number : 72/FC, Institution Date : 16-04-2025, Hearing Date : 10-07-2025, Subject: Recovery of Dowry, Notice to : (1) Abdullah son Raj Wali, (2) Raj Wali son Mir Muhammad Khan R/o Shoo Wand, Teh, Razar, Distt, Swabi, presently Panjman, Distt, Swabi, Teh, TOPPI, presently Abroad. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the Court on 10-07-2025 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.

SCCI hosts seminar to empower youth

SIALKOT (APP): In a significant step toward fostering digital entrepreneurship, the WS Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Friday hosted a seminar on E-Commerce lead generation.

The event was the result of the visionary leadership of President SCCI Ikram-ul-Haq and the tireless efforts of Chairman of the SME Training Committee

Faizan Akbar.

The seminar featured a keynote session by Usman Chughtai, popularly known as E-commerce wala, a renowned expert in digital commerce.

The session provided young entrepreneurs with actionable insights into leveraging digital tools, mastering lead generation techniques and implementing effective online business strategies.

Participants left the event equipped with practical knowledge to navigate and succeed in today’s fast-evolving digital marketplace.

The initiative marked another important milestone in SCCI’s commitment to supporting SMEs and promoting innovation in the region’s business community. The seminar was attended by young entrepreneurs.



In brief

Pak secures first win

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan got off to a flying start at the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025, thrashing Saudi Arabia 71-15 in their opening match in South Korea on Friday. The national side, featuring standout performances by Lia Raza Shah, Alisha Naveed, Samia Safdar, Halima, Sareena Hussain, Jasmine Farooq, Farah Rasheed and Pareesa, displayed dominance throughout the match, according to information made available here by Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF). Following the impressive victory, Chairman of the PNF Mudassar Arain, President Sameen Malik and Secretary General Muhammad Riaz extended their congratulations to the team. Pakistan will play its second league match against Chinese Taipei on Saturday (June 28). The Green Shirts are scheduled to face hosts South Korea on June 29, Japan on June 30 and Maldives on July 1 in their remaining group fixtures. The championship, featuring 11 participating nations, has been divided into two groups. Group A includes Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, and India, while Pakistan is placed in Group B alongside Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea, Maldives, and Saudi Arabia. The tournament will continue till July 4.

Pindi athletes glows at National C'ship

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi's athletes have shown an outstanding performance during the National Men's and Women's Karate Championship 2025, and secured two gold medals. Tanveer Ahmed, Secretary of the Rawalpindi District Karate Association, informed APP that the city's talented athletes showcased their exceptional skills during the championship. Mehrun-Nisa won a gold medal in the women's 68kg category with remarkable performance, while Shoaib Akhtar won a gold medal in the men's 50kg category. Tanveer Ahmed said that the achievements of Rawalpindi Karate are not only a source of pride for the city but also a positive sign for the promotion of karate across the country. He reaffirmed that the district association would keep the performance of players further up in future to attain more national and international standings.

UAE name team to support Pogacar

PARIS (AFP): Tadej Pogacar will set off in defence of his Tour de France title on July 5 backed by a powerful squad which his UAE team unveiled on Friday. The 26-year-old Slovenian has ridden the three-week Tour five times, winning three and finishing second to Jonas Vingegaard in 2022 and 2023. "It's hard to believe it's already my sixth Tour de France, time flies," he said in the team press release. He started the season by taking the UAE Tour, then won four one-day races, including Liege-Bastogne-Liege, finishing on the podium in three others. He ended his Tour preparation by winning the penultimate warm-up event, the eight-day Critérium du Dauphine. "I'm lucky to have had close to the perfect preparation this year — everything has gone really smoothly," said Pogacar. He will be backed by five of the team-mates who helped him to victory in the Dauphine -- Marc Soler, Nils Politt, Pavel Sivakov, Tim Wellens and Jhonatan Narvaez.

Pakistan Women's Cricket Team Gears Up for World Cup

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan women cricketers are diligently preparing for the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Lahore.

The squad is focusing on refining their skills and improving their physical conditioning during the off-season. Their next international engagement is a three-match T20I series against Ireland in Dublin from August 6th to 10th. The World Cup, hosted entirely in Sri Lanka, will run from September 30th to November 2nd.

Experienced players Aliya Riaz, Nashra Sundhu,

and Sadia Iqbal, mainstays of the Pakistan T20I and ODI squads, are central to the training efforts. All-rounder Riaz emphasized the team's dedication to performing responsibly and meeting fan expectations. "We are working to fulfill the team's needs while keeping our supporters in mind," she stated during a training session. "We aim to represent Pakistan in the best way possible."

Sundhu, a left-arm spinner, noted the motivational impact of Sadia Iqbal's recent ascent to the top of the T20I bowler rankings. "It's a source of pride for us to see a teammate reach

such a height," Sundhu commented. "It energizes the entire group, knowing we have bowlers capable of being the world's best."

Sadia herself has been concentrating on honing her abilities, particularly the challenges of bowling with the new ball under pressure. "I strive to stay calm in tense situations," she explained. She credited coach Abdur Rehman and training with male players for her continued improvement. With this concentrated off-season work, the Pakistan women's team aims for strong performances leading into and during the World Cup.

Eala makes history as first Filipina to reach WTA Tour final



EASTBOURNE (AFP): Alexandra Eala became the first player from the Philippines to reach a WTA Tour final after beating Varvara Gracheva 7-5, 2-6, 6-3 in the last four at Eastbourne on Friday. Eala survived a tense clash lasting more than two hours to make history in the Wimbledon warm-up event on the grass at Devonshire Park. In a final featuring two of the rising stars of the women's game, the 20-year-old will face Australian teenager Maya Joint on Saturday.

Joint, 19, ranked 51 the world, beat Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 7-5, 6-3. "There were tough moments where she was playing well, and I didn't know how to get out of it," Eala said. "It was a challenge for both of us, physically and mentally. She's a really solid player, had some moments where she was really dominating."

"The fact that I was able to stay there and wait for my opportunities was a big achievement for me," Eala's run to the final underlined the world number 74's

emergence as one to watch. After coming through qualifying to make the main draw on the south coast, Eala has beaten Lucia Bronzetti, former French Open champion Ostapenko (via retirement), Nottingham Open finalist Dayana Yastremska and France's Gracheva.

She burst onto the scene with three shock victories over Grand Slam winners Ostapenko, Madison Keys and Iga Swiatek to reach the Miami Open semi-finals in March. Eala is due to face reigning champion Barbora Krejickova in the Wimbledon first round on Centre Court on Tuesday.

But Krejickova is struggling with a thigh injury that forced her to pull out of the Eastbourne quarter-finals on Thursday, putting the Czech's title defence in doubt. Later on Friday, the Eastbourne ATP semi-finals feature defending champion Taylor Fritz against Spanish sixth seed Alejandro Davidovich Fokina while French fourth seed Ugo Humbert faces America's Jensen Brooksby.

Swiatek to play maiden

grass-court final against top seed Pegula: BAD HOMBURG: Five-time Grand Slam winner Iga Swiatek reached her first ever grass-court final on Friday defeating last year's Wimbledon runner-up Jasmine Paolini in the semi-finals at Bad Homburg.

The former world number one swept past second seed Paolini 6-1, 6-3 in just over an hour to reach her first final in a year since she lifted her fourth French Open trophy at Roland Garros. Swiatek will bid for her 23rd career title on Saturday against US top seed Jessica Pegula, who rallied past Czech Linda Noskova 6-7 (2/7), 7-5, 6-1 in the northern suburbs of Frankfurt.

Earlier, fourth seed Swiatek lost her opening service game but then settled in to break back to love and dominated Paolini for her fifth win in as many meetings against the Italian. "I wasn't expecting to win this match, so I'm happy that I just did my job," Swiatek, 24, said.

"I knew how I wanted to play and I just went for it. I'm happy I kept the momentum going until the end of the match, Jasmine, you can't let her get back in the game because she's a fighter." Pole Swiatek is playing her first tournament since the three-time defending champion lost to world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals of Roland Garros.

She has never before reached a final on grass, and her best result at Wimbledon is a quarter-final finish in 2023. Pegula, 31, won her fifth semi-final of the season out of as many contested.

Norris leads team-mate Piastri in Austria practice



AUSTRIA (Agencies): Lando Norris led team-mate and title rival Oscar Piastri to a McLaren one-two in Friday practice at the Austrian Grand Prix.

Norris was 0.157 seconds quicker than Piastri, with Red Bull's Max Verstappen third fastest, 0.318secs off the pace.

Aston Martin's Lance Stroll took fourth place, ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and the Mercedes of George Russell.

McLaren, Red Bull and Ferrari all have upgrades to their cars this weekend.

McLaren have new front suspension shaping that is aimed at working with a new front wing that was first tested at the last race in Canada. Red Bull have a new floor edge, Ferrari, for whom Lewis Hamilton was 10th fastest, have a com-

pletely redesigned new floor, their first upgrade since Bahrain in April.

Red Bull's Yuki Tsunoda was seventh, while Sauber's Gabriel Bortoletto, Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso and Hamilton completed the top 10.

The race-simulation runs later in the session provided a complex picture, as the leading drivers chose different tyre compounds.

On the medium tyre, Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli, 11th fastest on the list of headline lap times, appeared to have a slight edge over Norris and Leclerc.

Verstappen was slightly quicker than Hamilton, both using the soft tyre, while Piastri did his long run on the hard tyre.

In the first session, there was an impressive F1 debut

by McLaren's Alexander Dunne.

The 19-year-old Irishman, leading the Formula 2 championship this season and having his first taste of an F1 car on a grand prix weekend, took over Norris' car and ended up fourth fastest, just 0.069secs slower than Piastri.

Dunne had a test in McLaren's 2023 car in Austin, Texas, last week in preparation for his run at the Red Bull Ring, but it is rare for a young driver to be so close to a regular racer in such circumstances.

As such, Dunne's performance can be seen to be comparable with Norris' similar pace when he drove in practice at the 2018 Italian Grand Prix, alongside then McLaren driver Alonso.

PM felicitates Sana Mir on her induction into ICC's Hall of Fame

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday felicitated former captain of Pakistan Women Cricket Team, Sana Mir for her induction into the International Cricket Council (ICC)'s Cricket Hall of Fame and hailed her performance as an ace team lead.

The former captain of Pakistan Women Cricket Team and prominent cricketer Sana Mir called on the prime minister at the PM's Office, a news release said. PM Shehbaz Sharif appreciated Sana Mir's performance as the captain of the Pakistan women's cricket team, adding, "Under your leadership, the Pakistan Women Cricket Team has achieved significant successes and made Pakistan famous all over the world."

He hoped that she would play an active role in pro-



viding training to new talent in cricket with her experience. The prime minister informed the former Women Team captain that the government was trying to promote talent on merit in every field of sports.

The Prime Minister underlined that providing equal opportunities and

facilities to men and women in every field of sports, including cricket, was among his priorities. "I am trying my best to represent Pakistan fully in the World Cricket Association and ICC," he said.

Former Women Captain Sana Mir thanked the PM. She also put up

recommendations to promote cricket in Pakistan, especially for further promotion of women cricket in the country. She said, "Hopefully the government will take steps to develop cricket grounds and new talent in Pakistan, especially to create more opportunities for women in cricket."

Sri Lanka spinners leave Bangladesh on verge of crushing defeat

COLOMBO (AFP): Spinners Dhananjaya de Silva and Prabath Jayasuriya rounded off another dominant day for Sri Lanka on Friday, taking two wickets each to leave them on the brink of a crushing innings victory over Bangladesh in the second Test.

By close of play on the third day at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo, the visitors had slumped to 115-6 in their second innings, still 96 runs away from making Sri Lanka bat again. Bangladesh started their second innings with a daunting deficit of 211 after Kusal Mendis's forthright 84 had taken the Sri Lanka first innings to 458 all out earlier in the day.

All seven batters so far in the Bangladesh second innings made it into double figures but only Mushfiquur Rahim made it beyond 20, making 26 before being beaten all ends up by Jayasuriya. With only four wickets in hand, it will be a tough ask of the Bangladesh lower order to see off the Sri Lanka spinners, who have been gaining plenty of turn, from wrapping up the Test and the two-match series. The first Test ended in a draw.

Sri Lanka batter Kamindu Mendis said that the "wicket is spinning now from both ends and its not easy for the batters". "We will look to wrap this up quickly," he said after the day's play. Earlier, leading from the front, skipper De Silva dealt twin blows with his off-spin in the evening session on Friday. He had



Mominul Haque (15) caught at first slip before trapping his opposite number Najmul Hossain Shanto (19) leg before.

Left-arm spinner Jayasuriya, under pressure to keep his spot after a lean patch, also responded in style with a probing spell.

He struck with the new ball, removing Shadman Islam (12) caught behind, and then bowled Mushfiquur.

The early part of the day belonged to Kusal Mendis who hammered a rapid 84 off 87 balls, with eight fours and two sixes, when it looked as though the Sri Lanka first innings was faltering.

"Help my team"

Replying to Bangladesh's first innings of 247, Sri Lanka resumed on a strong overnight platform of 290-2 but lost four wickets in the morning session, three of them to the

second new ball.

First to go was overnight century-maker Pathum Nissanka who added 12 before chipping left-arm spinner Taijul Islam to short cover. It was a soft end for the in-form opener whose 158 came after career-best 187 in the first Test in Galle.

But Kusal Mendis dug in his heels steering Sri Lanka past the 450-run mark before running himself out, ninth wicket down, going for an unlikely second run. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam wrapped up the innings four balls later to finish with 5-131, his 17th five-wicket haul in Test cricket.

Islam said that bowling with the new ball "when there is nothing much on the wicket" is an "advantage".

"There was a bit of zip this morning when the sec-

ond new ball was available," he said after play.

"I know that I need ten more wickets to overtake Shakib Al Hasan as the leading wicket taker for Bangladesh" in Tests, Islam added.

"But I am not overly bothered about it. It will come when it comes. What I am concentrating on is to bowl well and help my team do well".

Brief scores: Bangladesh: 247 (Shadman Islam 46, Mushfiquur Rahim 35; Sonal Dinusha 3-22, Asitha Fernando 3-51)

Sri Lanka: 458 (Pathum Nissanka 158, Dinesh Chandimal 93, Kasul Mendis 84; Taijul Islam 5-131, Nayeem Hasan 3-87)

Bangladesh second innings: 115-6 in 38.4 overs (Mushfiquur Rahim 26, Dhananjaya de Silva 2-13, Prabath Jayasuriya 2-47)

Man City crushes Juventus, Real Madrid reaches Club WC last 16

ORLANDO, United States (AFP/APP): Pep Guardiola's Manchester City demonstrated their Club World Cup credentials with a 5-2 victory over Juventus on Thursday while Vinicius Junior starred as Real Madrid beat Salzburg 3-0 to secure a spot in the last 16.

Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia beat Pachuca of Mexico 2-0 to pip Salzburg to the last berth in the knockout phase, as Al Ain battled to a 2-1 win over Wydad Casablanca in the day's other game.

City became the only side at the tournament to win all three of their group matches as they put Juventus to the sword in front of 54,320 at the Camping World Stadium in Orlando.

City now face Al Hilal, the only Asian representative in the next round after goals from Salem Al-Dawsari and Brazilian Marcos Leonardo against Pachuca.

"We played well and I'm happy with the victory," said City winger Jeremy Doku, who opened the scoring.

Doku pounced for the early opener after new arrival Rayan Ait-Nouri set him up with a clever ball.

However City stopper



Ederson passed the ball straight to Teun Koopmeiners who levelled for Juventus, in one of the few moments in which Guardiola's team let their focus slip.

Pierre Kalulu bundled into his own net from Matheus Nunes' cross to restore City's lead.

The Premier League side, hoping to make up for a poor season by their standards in which they finished without a major trophy, stepped up a level after the break with Erling Haaland's introduction.

The Norwegian striker tapped home the third and then helped create the

fourth for Phil Foden, before Savinho smashed home from distance for the fifth. Dusan Vlahovic netted late on for Juve but it did not take the shine off an impressive triumph for City, who were able to give holding midfielder Rodri a first start after his long injury lay-off.

"Manchester City have a lot better (quality of) players than us, that's the truth, that needs to be acknowledged," said Juventus coach Igor Tudor as his side finished second in Group G.

"The stars didn't align for us to play better tonight." Al Ain got the better of Wydad in

Washington, DC in a meeting of two teams who were already eliminated but were hoping to sign off with a victory.

South African striker Cassius Mailula blasted the Moroccans into an early lead but Togo international Kodjo Fo-Doh Laba levelled from the spot just before the break for Al Ain.

That was their first goal of the tournament after 5-0 and 6-0 thrashings by Juve and City respectively, and Paraguayan international Alejandro Romero curled home from the edge of the box to earn the team from the United Arab Emirates victory.

**In brief****RWMC kicks off cleanliness drive**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) has kicked off its special cleanliness campaign for Muharram ul Haram, besides deploying additional sanitary workers. Presiding over a meeting to review the operational plan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of RWMC, Rana Sajid Safdar, said that all the arrangements had been finalised under a special cleanliness program prepared for Muharram and Ashura Day. He said that staff holidays have been cancelled from Muharram 1 to 10. Under the special cleanliness program, all Imambargahs, procession routes, and their vicinity were being cleaned, besides the waste containers were also emptied, he said and added that nullahs and drains adjacent to Imambargahs were also being cleared with excavators and heavy machinery. The construction material or debris was also being removed from the routes of procession route and its adjacent areas. He informed that a special monitoring team had been formed under the leadership of senior manager Operations, Dr. Hamid Iqbal and manager operations Aamir Naik, which will be in close contact with the organisers of the processions and gatherings and will continuously monitor the cleanliness issues. Safdar said that relief camps would be set up at various places to carry out cleanliness work regularly till the conclusion of Ashura's day processions. The CEO added that the staff had been directed that no negligence would be tolerated. He urged the scholars, volunteers, mourners and residents to cooperate with the RWMC staff and not to dump waste and other materials in drains and the open.

Indoor sheesha café sealed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration took action against the indoor sheesha café operating in Sector F-8, where officials sealed the premises and arrested those running the business. The spokesman of ICT administration said that an indoor sheesha café in Sector F-8 of Islamabad was sealed on Friday after being found operational in violation of rules, despite holding a terrace-only smoking permit. According to the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, the establishment had been granted permission to offer sheesha on the terrace only. However, during a surprise inspection, a magistrate discovered that the café was serving sheesha indoors, which is not allowed under local regulations. The inspection was led by a magistrate, who found multiple sheesha pipes in use inside the closed area of the café. Following the inspection, the café was immediately sealed and a case was registered against the owners. The magistrate stated that such actions will continue against all businesses found violating sheesha regulations. Indoor smoking is banned across public places in the capital, and only outdoor or terrace areas are allowed to offer limited smoking services under special permits. Officials also added that several complaints had been received from local residents about indoor smoking in the café. Acting on these reports, the magistrate conducted the raid without prior notice. The administration has reiterated that it will not tolerate unauthorized indoor smoking facilities in cafés, restaurants or lounges. ICT officials said a city-wide campaign is ongoing to monitor all sheesha outlets and ensure they follow the terms of their permits strictly.

Acting U.S. Ambassador meets Naqvi to discuss regional peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Natalie Baker on Friday met with Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to discuss matters of mutual interest, including regional security, counterterrorism, and enhanced bilateral cooperation.

Ambassador Baker reaffirmed the importance of U.S.-Pakistan relations, stating, "Pakistan is a valued partner of the United States. We attach great importance to our relationship and look forward to further strengthening our cooperation across multiple sectors."

The meeting highlighted the shared commitment of both countries to advancing peace and stability in the region through sustained dialogue and collaborative efforts.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on matters of shared interest, including counterterrorism,

anti-narcotics collaboration, and growing security concerns in the region. The dialogue underscored the importance of strategic cooperation to address evolving transnational challenges.

A key highlight of the discussion was the recent meeting between Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir, and U.S. President Donald Trump. Both officials viewed the engagement as a constructive step toward deepening strategic ties between Islamabad and Washington.

Naqvi lauded President Trump's leadership in facilitating a ceasefire between Iran and Israel, describing his efforts as "extraordinary and sincere." "President Trump's impressive role in brokering peace between Iran and Israel, following his earlier contributions to the Pakistan-India ceasefire, will always be

remembered," Minister Naqvi remarked.

"We hope President Trump will also succeed in bringing about a ceasefire in Gaza," he added. "Pakistan highly values every step taken for the promotion of peace. We have always believed in resolving disputes, including the Kashmir issue, through dialogue and diplomacy."

Acting Ambassador Natalie Baker praised Pakistan's diplomatic initiatives aimed at stabilizing the region. She acknowledged Islamabad's constructive role in promoting peace and emphasized that the United States regards Pakistan as a key partner in South Asia.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides reaffirming their commitment to expanding cooperation in security, counterterrorism, drug control, and regional peace-building efforts.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker in federal capital. —APP Photo

Int'l Day against drug abuse observed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan observed the International Day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking with a reinvigorated pledge to eliminate the menace of drugs from society.

According to an ANF spokesman, the main ceremony was held at ANF headquarters, Rawalpindi. Among the notable guests were the Country Representative of UNODC, the Director of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Drug Liaison Officers (DLOs) from 37 countries, accredited with Pakistan.

In tandem, events commemorating World Drug Day were organised at ANF's Regional Directorates in Islamabad, Punjab, KP, Sindh, and Balochistan. The highlight of the event was a graceful wreath-laying ceremony at ANF Yadgar-e-Shuhada.

Participants paid homage to the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives in the fight against narcotics, followed by keynote speeches by the eminent guests.

Unity of all stakeholders and their commitment to a Drug-Free Pakistan were exhibited through a group photograph. Pakistan remains resolute in its mission to create a drug-free society through actions taken domestically and with international cooperation with partners like UNODC, INL-P, NCA, DEA and other countries.

Muharram teaches brotherhood & unity: Aleem Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan has extended his heartfelt best wishes to the nation on the commencement of the new Hijri year.

In his message, he prayed for blessings upon the entire Muslim Ummah and every Pakistani as the lunar year begins. Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that Muharram-ul-Haram symbolizes unwavering unity and mutual brotherhood.

He said that this sacred month teaches us the values of compassion, harmony and raising our voice for truth, said a press release issued here on Friday.

In a message shared on X (formerly Twitter), the Federal Minister stated that the grandson of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) along with his companions, nurtured the religion of Islam with their blood during Muharram.

The "Hussaini Ideology"

is a timeless lesson in standing firm against falsehood for the sake of truth. By following their noble example, Muslims can attain the pleasure of Almighty Allah, Abdul Aleem Khan added.

He concluded by praying for the protection of Pakistan and the uplift of the Muslim World, expressing hope that this new year will bring an end to extremism and usher in an era of peace and harmony.

7,000 cops deployed for Muharram security: CPO

RAWALPINDI (APP): More than 7,000 police personnel have been deployed to provide security to around 1,800 gatherings and over 400 processions during the first 10 days of Muharram-ul-Haram.

City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani, in a statement on Friday, said over 1,000 volunteers (Razakars) would also assist the police in security arrangements.

The volunteers had been imparted special training in that regard at the Police Headquarters, he added.

Moreover, the CPO said, around 930 traffic police personnel would also be in the field to maintain smooth traffic on the city roads and

in the surroundings of the Imambargahs and procession routes. He reaffirmed that the Rawalpindi Police would be on toes for the security of some 413 processions and 1,796 gatherings to be held during Muharram-ul-Haram.

The instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar for foolproof security arrangements would be strictly complied with, the CPO added.

He said a special control room had been established in the Safe City Rawalpindi to monitor the processions and gatherings through Safe City and other cameras.

The CPO said no person would be allowed to enter the procession without a body search, while all the roads and streets adjacent to the procession routes would be sealed. Parking of vehicles would also not be allowed near Imambargahs, he added. CPO Hamdani said the standard operating procedures and the code of conduct issued by the Punjab Government regarding Muharram-ul-Haram would be fully implemented.

He warned tenants of legal action in case of their non-registration. He asked the owners of hostels, hotels and inns not to allow anyone to stay in violation of the SOPs.

Country's development directly linked with uplifting of railways system: Abbasi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, revolutionary steps have been taken for the restructuring of Pakistan Railways, marking an unprecedented era of reform and development in the department's 77-year history.

Speaking to media outside Parliament on Friday, he said, "I firmly believe that the progress of Pakistan Railways is directly tied to the development of Pakistan itself."

He said that soon after being entrusted with the ministry, he began implementing the PM's reform agenda, which focused on three core pillars: maximizing public-private partnerships, enhancing outsourcing of services, and ensuring full transparency.

Under these directives, punctuality of train services has significantly improved — from a mere 46 percent to over 86 percent — even while operating on old railway tracks. "This alone is a testament to the positive shift underway," he said.

To further increase efficiency, the ministry has begun outsourcing hospitals, schools, and both freight and passenger trains. Advertisements for outsourcing have already been issued for these services, he added.

Abbasi also highlighted major improvements in passenger facilities, all AC Parlour, Business, and Economy classes in trains are being upgraded. "People who buy tickets worth Rs 12,000 to Rs 14,000 deserve better travel conditions," he said.

Regarding railway land, the minister said a comprehensive plan is being prepared for presentation to the Prime Minister, aiming at the recovery and optimal utilization of Pakistan Railways' vast land assets. "A landmark MoU regarding railway land will be signed next

week," he disclosed, noting that many encroachments had already been removed.

He praised the support of the Punjab Chief Minister, who had instructed all commissioners and deputy commissioners to fully cooperate in protecting and reclaiming railway land across the province.

In line with the government's transparency goals, Pakistan Railways has signed a major agreement with Allied Bank Limited (ABL) and we are going to install digital Point-of-Sale (POS) systems and ATMs at 348 stations across the country.

"These digital initiatives will not only boost revenue but also enhance passenger facilitation," Abbasi said. "Previously, passengers would wait in queues for hours and be asked to bring cash — a system vulnerable to misuse. Now, with digital payment machines and ATMs, we're eliminating these hurdles."

The minister said that as per the Prime Minister's instructions, the railways are being moved towards digitization. He said with the cooperation Punjab government free Wi-Fi facility to 40 stations are being provided.

Highlighting Punjab's support, he said that Chief Minister Punjab allocated over Rs. 350 billion for upgrading the Main Line-1 (ML-1) segment from Lahore to Rawalpindi and Lahore to different branches.

Similarly, Balochistan's government, led by Sarfaraz Bhugti, has allocated Rs 3 billion for Saryab to Kuchlak area development.

The minister further shared that, on July 6, he would be visiting Karachi on PM Shehbaz Sharif's directive to meet Sindh Chief Minister, in response to growing demands from the province, particularly for branch lines. "We aim to build the same kind of coordination with Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as we have with Punjab and

Balochistan — because Pakistan belongs to all of us," he added.

The minister also revealed that a major international freight initiative — a rail route from Lahore to Zahedan via Rohri, extending to Tajikistan and Russia — had been fully prepared, but had to be postponed due to the Iran-Israel conflict. "Had it not been for the war, this international cargo train would have rolled out on June 22," he noted.

He stated that the government has allocated \$5 million in the current fiscal budget to enhance regional railway connectivity with Uzbekistan and an equivalent amount has also been earmarked by the Uzbekistan.

Abbasi also highlighted longstanding inefficiencies in the system, noting that four redundant companies had been operating within Pakistan Railways for years without meaningful contributions, despite drawing millions in salaries. "Some employees were retiring with packages as high as Rs. 1.4 million despite not performing any duties," he said.

He stated that after a thorough audit, the matter has been referred to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for investigation. "We've shut down these ghost operations and audits are underway," he said.

The Minister said that Pakistan Railways is collaborating with the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) to implement a modern attendance and monitoring system across all departments. "We will know in real-time where our workforce is and whether they are present on duty," he said.

On July 19, the ministry plans to launch a new business-class train from Lahore, for which passenger coaches including 46 coaches imported from China, another 184 coaches are being

manufactured locally at the carriage factory, each designed for speeds of up to 160 km/h.

The Ministry of Railways has initiated a countrywide plan to address the critical issue of over 2,000 unmanned level crossings that pose a major threat to rail and road safety. The minister emphasized that it was practically impossible to run trains efficiently and safely with such a large number of unprotected level crossings. "We are actively addressing this challenge. For Punjab alone, the Chief Minister has allocated Rs 9 billion in the current budget to install protective barriers and gate systems at these crossings," he said.

Abbasi stated that similar initiatives will be taken in other provinces as well. "We will soon be engaging with the Chief Minister of Sindh to seek his government's cooperation for similar safety upgrades. After that, I plan to meet with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well," he added.

Abbasi said that the development witnessed in Islamabad and Rawalpindi is testimony to the performance of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team. "Wherever there is development, you will find the stamp of Shehbaz Sharif and his workers — and I, Hanif Abbasi, am one of them," he said.

About "Clean and Green" campaign, he cited successful agreements with Solid Waste Management Companies across several cities including Lahore, Khanewal, Multan, Okara, and Sahiwal. "These are not routine administrative shifts. Real, on-ground efforts — sleepless nights and committed leadership — made these improvements possible," he emphasized.

He urged journalists to independently inspect stations like Margalla, Rawalpindi Main Station, and Chaklala even during nighttime, saying, "You will

not find garbage there anymore — a testament to effective agreements with companies like RWMC."

Further, Abbasi shared updates on development in Balochistan, stating that stations in Sibi, and Machh are being upgraded, and many such projects have already been implemented or are in progress.

He said that Pakistan Railways has achieved historic revenue this year, surpassing all previous records. "For the first time in 77 years, Pakistan Railways is on track to achieve a revenue target of Rs110 billion. Those who work with honesty and dedication will stay; those who create hurdles in implementing the PM's vision will be removed," he warned.

Abbasi revealed that five saloons including those reserved for senior officials have been opened to the public for commercial use.

He also announced a clampdown on unnecessary foreign visits and misuse of official resources. "No officer will undertake foreign trips without justification. Those on extended leaves abroad, particularly those applying for foreign nationalities, must either return or resign," he said, sending a clear message through the media.

Hanif Abbasi, has issued a stern warning to Pakistan Railways officers who have taken prolonged leaves or are residing abroad. He urged them to return to their duties immediately or tender their resignations, failing which strict disciplinary action will be initiated.

He revealed that under the Prime Minister's vision, Pakistan Railways is moving forward with renewed determination to complete major infrastructure projects. "By the grace of Almighty Allah, we aim to substantially complete the ML-1 project," he said.

He highlighted the critical

segment of ML-1 between Karachi and Rohri, calling it the most challenging portion. "If needed, I will personally request the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Sindh to allocate funds to ensure its completion. This section is vital for the success of future projects like Thar coal transportation, reko diq project, freight connectivity with Central Asia and Russia, and realization of the greater Asian rail linkage dream," he said.

He added that both ML-2 and ML-3 lines are equally important for Pakistan's economic uplift. "The country's development is directly linked with the modernization of its railway system," Abbasi stated, reaffirming his resolve to deliver on the Prime Minister's railway vision.

Abbasi said the government is committed to transforming Pakistan Railways into a revenue-generating, service-driven institution.

He added that with the support of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the implementation of an ambitious outsourcing plan, Pakistan Railways is expected to become financially sustainable.

Abbasi also stressed the importance of food quality in trains, vowing not to tolerate any negligence. "I told my team that I've only done 25% of what I plan — 75% still remains," he added.

He also highlighted infrastructure upgrades, including the construction of three international-standard railway stations and modernization of Quetta station. "Quetta's station has been upgraded, a Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) train will soon begin operations within the city. We are also launching Project Management Units (PMUs) in key urban centers," he announced.

He reaffirmed his commitment to transforming Pakistan Railways into a transparent, efficient, and profitable national institution.

Afghan envoy highlights investment opportunities

KABUL (Ariana News): Bilal Karimi, Afghanistan's Ambassador to China, highlighted investment opportunities in Afghanistan as he addressed the 5th Trans-Himalayan Forum in Linzhi. Karimi described the forum much valuable for regional connectivity, economy, climate, energy, and investment, and expressed hope for tangible outcomes. He further stated that Afghanistan has entered a new phase of stability and economic growth.

Afghanistan urged advocates support for climate right

KABUL (BNA): In a consultative meeting chaired by Mawlawi Mati-ul-Haq Khalis, Director General of the National Environmental Protection Agency, Afghanistan is preparing to make its case at the upcoming international climate change conference (COP-30). The meeting brought together representatives from Islamic Emirate agencies, national and international organizations, university professors, and climate experts.

Muttaqi urges Iran to adopt gradual approach in refugee returns



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi called on Iran to adopt a more gradual approach to the return of Afghan refugees during a meeting late Thursday with Alireza Bikkeli, Iran's acting ambassador in Kabul. According to a statement from the Afghan foreign ministry, Muttaqi expressed concern over the mass deportations of Afghan refugees from Iran amid the summer heat, stating that addressing their challenges under such conditions is extremely difficult. He requested Bikkeli to raise the issue with senior Iranian officials and proposed the establishment of a structured mechanism that would allow the gradual

return of Afghan migrants, so both countries can jointly address issues related to transportation and migrant management. He also described the ceasefire between Iran and Israel as beneficial for the region and stressed that future developments should be managed in a way that avoids further escalation. Bikkeli assured Muttaqi that he would convey the concerns about Afghan migrants to the Iranian government and that serious steps would be taken to resolve their issues. Earlier, Iranian officials had announced that all census cards issued to Afghan migrants were no longer valid, and those lacking legal documents must leave

Iran within ten days. Meanwhile, experts have noted that addressing all the challenges faced by returning migrants will be difficult without the cooperation of host countries and aid organizations. This comes as the number of returnees from Iran has reportedly exceeded 17,000 per day. Some recently returned migrants have said they were unable to bring their belongings, household items, or cash with them, which remain in Iran. According to Iranian authorities, there are currently about 6.1 million Afghan migrants in Iran, of whom 4.1 million do not have legal residency and are required to leave the country.

IE rejects US claims of terrorist safe havens in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate has once again rejected accusations that terrorist groups are active in Afghanistan. Bill Huizenga, chairman of the US House Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs, claimed that following the withdrawal of US troops, Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven for terrorist groups, contrary to the Doha Agreement. He stated: "Despite the Taliban's Doha Agreement's commitments Afghanistan has once again become a hotbed for terrorists looking for safe harbor as they grow their ranks and abilities to project attacks across the region and frankly the world." Yuri Kokov, Deputy Secretary of Russia's Security Council, also expressed concern in an interview with a state newspaper, saying that instability in

Afghanistan remains a threat to neighboring countries. He said: "Despite the end of large-scale military conflict, instability in Afghanistan persists, posing a threat to neighboring states. There is particular concern about the plans of international terrorist groups such as ISIS, which intend to export terrorism to Central Asian countries and eventually to Russia." Military analyst Sayed Muqadam Amin commented: "Russia plays a central role in global decision-making and acts with caution. It is closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan. However, it has not yet developed a strategic relationship that would lead to formal recognition of the Afghan government." In response, the Islamic Emirate strongly rejected the US claims regarding the presence of terrorist



groups in Afghanistan. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said that no one is allowed to use Afghan soil to threaten other countries. "We strongly reject the claims made by the US

House suggesting the presence of foreign groups in Afghanistan or threats emanating from our soil. Afghanistan has a strong and unified government with full control over its territory and does not permit anyone to use its land

against another country," Mujahid added. Concerns voiced by Western and regional countries about Afghanistan's security situation have been repeatedly denied by the Islamic Emirate in the past.

Residents protest worsening power outages in heat



KABUL (TOLONews): Residents of the capital are complaining about continued power outages during the summer heat. They say that in a 24-hour period, they only have access to electricity for a few limited hours, which is not enough to meet their daily needs. Mohammad Kazem, a resident of Kabul, said: "Sometimes electricity comes for two hours, sometimes four, and sometimes not at all. Right now, it's 1 p.m. and our power was cut off at 8 a.m. and still hasn't come back." Lal Agha, another Kabul resident, said: "We only have electricity for about six to seven hours a day, and that too during hours when we don't even need it." Some Kabul residents are calling on the authorities to take serious action to

resolve the electricity shortage. Miskin, a Kabul resident, told TOLONews: "We urge the Breshna Company to provide electricity for the people. Electricity is very important for us. We are forced to have power—life is impossible without it, and the weather is hot." At the same time, Breshna Company announced it has activated the 105-megawatt Tarakhil power plant to reduce power outages. Ahmad Wais Sargand, Deputy Head of Operations at Breshna Company, said: "As the agency responsible for electricity supply, Breshna has decided to turn on the thermal plant during the hot season, which will add 80 megawatts to the national grid." Meanwhile, some experts believe that solving

the country's power crisis requires both short- and long-term planning. Abdul Zahoar Modabber, an economic affairs analyst, said: "There are both short-term and long-term solutions. The government can consider certain assistance programs, including the use of household solar systems. In the long run, solar energy projects should be developed." Afghanistan imports a large portion of its electricity from neighboring countries such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Tajikistan. Although some steps have been taken recently to improve the power situation, unless domestic power production is strengthened, outages will remain an inseparable part of daily life for Kabul residents.



Flash floods cause heavy damage in Khost

KHOST (Amu tv): Heavy rains and storm winds triggered flash floods in multiple districts of Khost Province on Friday morning, causing significant financial losses and at least one reported fatality, according to local sources. In Nadershahkot District, two brothers were swept away by the floods. One of them died, while the other is receiving treatment at the provincial hospital in Khost, sources said. In Spera District, the floodwaters inundated the Halabsat marketplace, destroying dozens of shops and inflicting severe damage on local businesses. Residents described widespread losses, with much of the area submerged in muddy torrents. Taliban-run meteorological department issued a weather alert, urging residents to seek safety in elevated areas and avoid flood-prone zones during periods of heavy rainfall. The flooding comes after earlier warnings about the risk of severe rainstorms and flash floods across several provinces in Afghanistan. A local bridge, which had recently been constructed with funds raised by the community, was also damaged in the flood, residents said. The full extent of the damage is still being assessed.

Taliban ban photography for students at Kandahar University

KANDAHAR (Amu tv): Students at Kandahar University say Taliban have prohibited photography and videography on campus, extending a growing pattern of restrictions across the country's educational institutions. Several students told Amu TV that during a recent award ceremony, Taliban members warned attendees that capturing images or video was forbidden and instructed them to refrain from such activity going forward. Journalism students at the university reported that similar warnings

had been issued previously, specifically targeting their field of study. They said they had been told not to take photos or record footage within university grounds — a rule that they say undermines their academic training and professional development. The reported ban comes as Taliban authorities continue to impose increasingly restrictive social regulations across the country. In nearly half of Afghanistan's provinces, photographing living beings — including people and ani-

mals — has been declared illegal, with Kandahar cited as the starting point of this nationwide trend. The ban on images of living beings was imposed after the Taliban's controversial morality law was approved last August. Taliban have not officially commented on the directive at Kandahar University. However, rights advocates and press freedom groups have raised alarms over mounting censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression under their rule.

Fuel market instability; Promises of price reductions still not fulfilled



KABUL (TOLONews): Four days after the end of clashes in Iran, fuel prices in Afghanistan remain high, with no noticeable reduction observed in the market. Previously, the price of one liter of petrol had increased from 59 to 64 afghani, one liter of diesel from 59 to 68 afghanis, and one kilo-

gram of gas from 48 to 58 afghanis due to the recent tensions in Iran. However, these prices have still not changed. "When the war in Iran started, fuel prices increased by almost ten afghani per liter. This caused many problems for us, and we couldn't fully meet our needs. Now that about a week

has passed and the situation has calmed, we ask the government to bring fuel prices back under control," said Qais, a driver. "Gas, oil, fuel, and other food items should become cheaper, and the Islamic Emirate should work to reduce their prices because there is no work, and people face

many problems," said Delawar, a Kabul resident. Nine days ago, the Oil and Gas Union promised price reductions in fuel, but this promise has not yet been fulfilled. The ongoing instability in the fuel market has raised concerns among drivers about its long-term impact. "Until prices return to normal—whether it's oil, gas, or food items—it might take one and a half to two months. Therefore, we urge our national traders not to burden the people during this time and avoid increasing the pressure," said Asadullah, another driver. "If prices rise further, there will be no work left, and we'll be forced to park our vehicles and stay home. In such a situation, no work will be done, vehicle issues won't be addressed, and nothing will be brought home," said Usman, another driver. Meanwhile, the Chamber of Commerce and Investment stated fuel imports from Iran have decreased, and low-quality fuel imports have also been restricted.

Deportations Spike of Afghan Migrants from Iran



HERAT (TOLONews): The return and deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran has increased significantly in recent days. According to statistics from local Herat officials, nearly 100,000 Afghan migrants have returned to the country through the

Islam Qala border crossing in the past three days. Adam Khan Saad, the head of the Herat department for migrants and returnees, said: "Last night we relocated 30,000 people, and the new facility we've built can accommodate between 20,000 to

25,000 people. We have the capacity to relocate between 50,000 to 55,000 individuals." Abdullah, who was recently deported from Iran with his family of five, said he had lived in Iran for five years and was arrested and deported by

Iranian police after his residency permit expired. Abdullah, deported from Iran, stated: "We ask the Islamic Emirate to provide us with job opportunities so our wives and children can have a future and not remain without one." Many of these Afghan migrants have been forcibly deported from Iran. They are urging the interim government to create job opportunities for them within the country. Mohammad Nader, deported from Iran, said: "They gave us a census paper and said it was valid until the 15th of Saratan, but on the 1st of Saratan, security forces came and evicted us from our home and did not allow us to take any belongings. Everything we had was taken from us until we reached our own soil." Shamsuddin, another deportee from Iran, said: "They evicted me and my

family and took my money. All the money I had was taken. I have nothing with me now, not even the fare for transportation. What can I do?" Meanwhile, Alireza Bikkeli, Iran's ambassador to Afghanistan, along with a delegation, has traveled to the Islam Qala border in Herat to assess the issues facing Afghan migrants. The Iranian ambassador has pledged that steps will be taken to resolve the problems of returning migrants and to address their complaints. **Afghan Returnees Surge at Pakistan's Spin Boldak Crossing:** As the third phase of the forced deportation of Afghan migrants from Pakistan approaches, the repatriation process through the Spin Boldak crossing has intensified. According to local officials, more than a hundred families are being returned to the country each day. Abdul Latif Hakimi,

head of migrant registration in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar, said: "The Islamic Emirate has provided all necessary facilities for returning migrants whether in the areas of healthcare, transportation, or housing. We are fully prepared to serve. I can confidently say the number of returnees has doubled compared to the past." Several Afghan migrants recently deported from Pakistan say the Pakistani government not only prevented them from working but also denied them access to basic necessities. Mohammad Qasim, deported from Pakistan, said: "The situation in Pakistan has worsened compared to the past. Shopkeepers and homeowners were arrested, and all their property was confiscated. Now, anyone can be detained." Bashir Ahmad, also deported from Pakistan,

said: "Pakistan's treatment of Afghan refugees has become extremely harsh. They didn't even allow us access to basic life necessities. Afghans are arrested and sent back to Afghanistan without any investigation." Mohammad Ismail, a 69-year-old Afghan migrant, was recently returned through the Spin Boldak crossing. He described the harsh conditions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan: "I lived in Pakistan for 45 years. The situation there was terrible, but I feel happy to be back in my country. I don't have a single good memory of life as a refugee in Pakistan." Meanwhile, the Pakistani government has announced that in the third phase of Afghan migrant deportations—including those with P.O.R. (Proof of Registration) cards—nearly 1.4 million more Afghans will be expelled from the country.

that in 1403, over \$1.2 billion worth of fuel was imported from Iran, while imports from Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan totaled over \$733 million. Iran has played the main role in supplying Afghanistan's market.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressing during meet the press at National Press Club.

US Supreme Court curtails power of individual judges to block Trump

WASHINGTON (AFP): A divided US Supreme Court handed President Donald Trump a major victory on Friday by curbing the power of lone federal judges to block executive actions. In a 6-3 ruling stemming from Trump's bid to end birthright citizenship, the court said nationwide injunctions issued by district court judges "likely exceed the equitable authority that Congress has granted to federal courts."

The top court did not rule on the constitutionality of Trump's executive order seeking to end automatic citizenship for children born on American soil. But the broader decision on the scope of judicial rulings removes a big roadblock to Trump's often highly controversial policy agenda and has far-reaching ramifications for the ability of the judiciary to rein in Trump or future American presidents.

Trump celebrated by telling reporters he had "a whole list" of policies he could now proceed on without opposition in the courts. Trump's executive order on birthright citizenship is just one of a number of his moves that have been blocked by judges around the country -- both Democratic and Republican appointees - since he took office in January.

Courts have, for example, blocked or slowed down his headline immigration crackdown, firing of federal employees, efforts to end diversity programs and punitive actions against law firms and universities. Past presidents have also complained about

national injunctions shackling their agenda, but such orders have sharply risen under Trump, who saw more in his first two months than Democrat Joe Biden did during his first three years in office.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett, a Trump appointee who authored the majority opinion joined by the other five conservative justices, said "the universal injunction was conspicuously nonexistent for most of our Nation's history." "Federal courts do not exercise general oversight of the Executive Branch," Barrett wrote.

"When a court concludes that the Executive Branch has acted unlawfully, the answer is not for the court to exceed its power, too," she said. The three liberal justices dissented with Justice Sonia Sotomayor saying "no right is safe in the new legal regime the Court creates."

"The Court's decision is nothing less than an open invitation for the Government to bypass the Constitution," Sotomayor said. "The Executive Branch can now enforce policies that flout settled law and violate countless individuals' constitutional rights, and the federal courts will be hamstrung to stop its actions fully," she said. Trump, in a post on Truth Social, welcomed the ruling as a "GIANT WIN." The case was ostensibly about Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship, which was deemed unconstitutional by courts in Maryland, Massachusetts and Washington state. But it actually focused on whether a single federal district court judge has the right to

issue a nationwide block to a presidential decree with a universal injunction.

The issue has become a rallying cry for Trump and his Republican allies, who accuse the judiciary of impeding his agenda against the will of voters. Steven Schwinn, a law professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, said the court's ruling "sharply undermines the power of federal courts to rein-in lawless actions by the government."

"The ruling will likely create a patchwork of birthright citizenship rights," Schwinn told AFP, where it is recognized in some locations for people who have successfully sued and not recognized for people who have not sued. "This patchwork approach to individual rights is inconsistent with our history and tradition of federal rights in the United States and is inconsistent with the rule of law," he said.

The Trump administration had asked the Supreme Court to restrict the application of a district court's injunction solely to the parties who brought the case and the district where the judge presides. Trump's executive order on birthright citizenship decrees that children born to parents in the United States illegally or on temporary visas would not automatically become citizens. The three lower courts ruled that to be a violation of the 14th Amendment, which states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States."

Pak Army not interested in talks with political parties

RAWALPINDI (INP): Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said that the Pakistan Army is not interested in engaging in talks with political parties.

DG ISPR) Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry in an interview with the BBC urged that the armed forces be kept out of politics, emphasizing that the military has consistently maintained a clear stance on this matter. "It is the responsibility of politicians to engage in dialogue with each other," the DG ISPR said, reiterating that the Pakistan Army should not be dragged into political affairs.

He clarified that the military communicates with the state of Pakistan, which is formed by political parties under the Constitution, and the government in power represents the state at any given time.

The DG ISPR further said that the Pakistan Armed Forces operate under the authority of the state. Addressing concerns about political instability, he advised that such questions should be directed to political entities, not the military. "We request that politics be kept within political circles and the armed forces be left out of it," he added.

The DG ISPR also criticized the spread of rumors and assumptions against the military for political purposes, urging political actors to refrain from involving the armed forces in their agendas.

CJCSC visits Australia

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: General SAHJ Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), visited Australia to attend the 14th session of Annual Defence and Security Talks.

During the visit, Chairman JCSC met high ranking civilian and military leadership of Australia including Admiral David Johnston, Chief of Defence Forces, Andrew Shearer, Director General Office of National Intelligence (ONI), Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of Australian Army and Ms Gemma Huggins, Ambassador Counter Terrorism at Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, said an ISPR news release.

Defence and Security Talks aimed at strengthening mutual understanding and identifying areas for further expanding defence collaboration between the respective militaries. During the meetings, both sides engaged in discussions on a wide range of issues, including the evolving global and regional environment, security challenges and opportunities to enhance existing bilateral military exchanges.

During the visit, CJCSC delivered a lecture in the Australian Defence College (ADC) on Pakistan's Security Perspective and highlighted Pakistan's contributions to regional peace and stability, and also visited the Australian naval ship HMAS Adelaide. Upon arrival at the CDF office, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented a guard of honour to CJCSC.

President, PM greet nation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif have expressed best wishes for nation and Muslim Ummah on the advent of new Islamic year 1447 Hijri.

In their separate messages, they prayed that the new Hijri year may bring peace, prosperity, and stability to Pakistan and the entire Muslim world. The President said the holy month of Muharram is one of the sacred months in Islam, and Allah Almighty has prohibited us from indulging in all forms of conflicts and discord during this revered month. He said the spirit of Karbala teaches us to rise above sectarianism, anarchy and despair.

In his message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that Muharram-ul-Haram reminds us of the unprecedented sacrifices rendered by our forefathers in the path of truth, justice, and the promotion of noble values.

Pakistan always advocated for peace: Bilawal

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, addressed the "Meet the Press" event at the National Press Club Islamabad, on Friday afternoon. Bilawal said that he considers Pakistan's victory in the war with India in three dimensions. Our armed forces defeated a much larger Indian army. Diplomatically, Pakistan played a historic role. In narrative, Pakistan achieved a significant triumph.

Our youth defeated India on digital and social media platforms. The role of Pakistan's media has been historic. Within five days, the Pakistani media achieved a historic victory on the international stage. The world appreciated the role of Pakistan's media. Despite all challenges, the media successfully presented Pakistan's narrative to the world. We are proud of our youth, he said.

Bilawal added, "You, the journalists, played a frontline role, and I value that. You did not compromise your credibility." The Prime Minister made the right decision at the right time. He declared that Pakistan is ready for international investigations because our hands are clean. India didn't even share its information with anyone. During the war, Pakistan was transparent, while India spread lies not

only through the media but also through diplomatic channels.

Bilawal said that Pakistan has always advocated for peace and presented its narrative to the world in the best manner. We want peace globally. India claimed Pakistan is a terrorist state, but the world outright rejected that narrative. We speak not just for the Pakistani people but for the Indian people too. We don't want hatred to pass down through generations. The new generation will not accept India's message of hate. Kashmir is an international dispute. If war erupts between two nuclear powers, it will endanger global peace.

He said that India conspired to label Pakistan as a terrorist state. We foiled that conspiracy. We got Pakistan off the FATF grey list and onto the white list. India failed on every front. After this, the U.S. President invited our Field Marshal for a meal — this is a major achievement for Pakistan. India threatens to stop water — this is a violation of the UN Charter. We want peace, but if India stops water, there will be war — and we will win again. If we have to fight a war for water, we will, he said.

"Modi was once the butcher of Gujarat, then the butcher of Kashmir, and now he wants to become the butcher of the Indus Valley Civilization," Chairman PPP said.

NA okays Rs743.48b in supplementary, excess grants

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday approved supplementary and excess demands for grants amounting to Rs743.48 billion for the financial years 2023-24 and 2025 to meet additional expenditures of various federal ministries and divisions. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, presented the demands for grants in the House, which were subsequently passed.

The grants approved by the house included, airports security force, emergency relief and repatriation, intelligence bureau, atomic energy, Pakistan nuclear regulatory authority, communications division, defence division, federal government educational institutions in cantonments and garrisons, defence production division, economic affairs division, miscella-

neous expenditure of economic affairs division, power division, higher education commission, superannuation allowances and pensions, grants, subsidies and miscellaneous expenditure, housing and works division, information and broadcasting division, information technology and telecommunication division, interior division, Islamabad capital territory, combined civil armed forces, law and justice division, national accountability bureau, national food security and research division, national health services, regulations and coordination division, railways division, water resources division, federal miscellaneous investments and other loans and advances, development expenditure of ERR, development expenditure of Suparco, development expenditure of power division, development expenditure of finance division,

development expenditure of interior division, development expenditure of water resources division, capital outlay on maritime affairs division, climate change and environmental coordination division, Pakistan post office department, defence services, power division, federal education and professional training division, higher education commission, grants, subsidies and miscellaneous expenditure, federal board of revenue, foreign affairs division, national commission for human rights, national commission on the status of women, industries and production division, information and broadcasting division, interior division, Islamabad capital territory, combined civil armed forces, national accountability bureau, national food security and research division, national health services and capital outlay on civil works.

9 dead bodies recovered

(Continued from Page 1)

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has expressed profound sorrow over the tragic loss of lives and announced compensation for the deceased individuals from Punjab as well. He has also called for a detailed report on the damages and instructed the Chairman of the Chief Minister's Inspection Team to initiate an inquiry into the incident.

The report further notes that over ten individuals were confirmed drowned near Relax Hotel on Swat Bypass, with rescue teams on site continuing the search operation. Three more bodies were recovered from Angro Dheri, and at Imam Dheri, 22 people trapped in the floodwaters were successfully rescued. In Ghalegay, seven individuals were stranded—one body has been recovered, and search efforts for the remaining are underway. Similarly, reports indicate that seven individuals were trapped in Maniyar, where rescue operations are ongoing. In Panjigram, one person remains stuck in floodwaters, and efforts to rescue him are in progress. Meanwhile, 20 to 30 people trapped in a flash flood in Bara Bama Khel, Matta, have been successfully rescued.

Overall, the report states that a total of 75 individuals were stranded at various points along the Swat River near the bypass road. Timely rescue efforts saved 58 people, while eight bodies were recovered. As of the time of the report's release, 10 individuals are still missing.

Rescue operations are ongoing at eight different locations across Swat, with 105 personnel involved. The high intensity of the floodwaters is posing significant challenges to the rescue teams.

To prevent further incidents, all hotels, restaurants, and commercial activities near the Swat River have been closed. The provincial government emphasized that, due to monsoon rains, a Section 144 ban on recreational activities in rivers remains in effect throughout the province. The local administration has launched extensive awareness campaigns via various media platforms, urging tourists and the public to stay away from water channels and adopt precautionary measures.

The provincial government has once again appealed to the public and tourists to avoid entering river areas and to strictly follow the safety guidelines issued by the administration to prevent further tragedies.

Rs1m for families of Swat drowning tragedy announced: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government here Friday announced Rs1 million each for the families of deceased of River Swat tragedy. The spokesperson of KP CM also announced that the families of the deceased will receive financial compensation of Rs1 million each after 17 people were swept away by the flash flood in River Swat on Friday morning.

Following the tragic drowning incident involving tourists in the Swat River, several government

officials have been suspended over poor performance. According to the spokesperson for the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an inquiry committee has been formed at the CM's orders to investigate the incident. The head of the Chief Minister's Inspection Team will lead the inquiry.

The committee will determine the causes of the tragedy and identify those responsible. Acting on the CM's directives, multiple officials have been suspended for negligence, including the Assistant Commissioner of Babuzai. The Assistant Commissioner of Khwazakhela was suspended for failing to issue timely warnings, while the ADC Relief was suspended for not making necessary arrangements in advance.

Additionally, it has been decided to suspend the district in-charge of Rescue 1122 immediately. Earlier today, a flash flood in the Swat River swept away 17 tourists. Nine people lost their lives, four were rescued, and four remain missing. After breakfast, the tourists went to a dry riverbed to take photos when suddenly they were surrounded by a brutal surge of water.

The group tried to save themselves by climbing to higher ground and called for help, but the river's current was too strong for anyone to intervene effectively. Local residents made efforts to save the victims but were unsuccessful. Among the victims, 10 were from Sialkot, 6 from Mardan, and 1 was a resident of Swat.

Two dead, 15 injured in Lebanon following intense Israeli airstrikes

BEIRUT: A series of Israeli airstrikes targeted southern Lebanon on Friday, including a residential building in Nabatieh, located 77 km south of Beirut. According to the Ministry of Health, the raids killed two people, including the owner of a shop located within the targeted building, and injured 15 others.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has condemned the attacks, calling them "a blatant violation of national sovereignty and of the ceasefire agreement reached in November. "They also threaten the stability we are striving to maintain." According to official and security sources, the Israeli army launched a wave of violent and extensive raids on the hills surrounding Nabatieh. This marks the second-largest assault on Nabatieh since the ceasefire.

The strikes appear to have targeted ammunition depots, as prolonged explosions were heard across the area. Rumors Nabatieh suggest that the missile that hit the building was the result of explosions at the weapons depots targeted by Israeli airstrikes. It is said that a missile flew from the depots and hit the building, rather than it being the result of an Israeli military drone.

However, this information has not been confirmed by anyone, except the Israeli side, which denied targeting

the building. More than 20 airstrikes were launched on Nabatieh within 15 minutes. This formed a ring of fire around its forests, valleys and hills, in particularly the Ali Al-Taher hills, Jarmaq, Al-Dabshah, Kfar Tebni heights and Nabatieh Al-Fawqa. As explosions echoed across southern Lebanon, a security source stated that "the missiles used in this attack were likely concussion missiles given the intensity of the blasts."

Residents claimed that the targeted sites included Hezbollah warehouses and tunnels used by the group. Dozens of homes in Kfar Tebni, Nabatieh Al-Fawqa and Kfar Rumman sustained damage, with windows shattered by the blasts. Rocks and debris from the strikes also blocked the Nabatieh-Khardali road. The Israeli army carried out similar attacks in the area at the beginning of May.

Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee said that "Israeli warplanes targeted a site used by Hezbollah to operate fire control and defense systems in Jabal Shqif, southern Lebanon." He claimed: "The site was part of an underground project that had been put out of service following previous Israeli airstrikes on the area. The army observed attempts to restore the site, which is why the terrorist infrastructure in the area was

struck." Israeli Army Radio reported that "extensive raids are once again targeting underground structures in southern Lebanon after restoration efforts were detected."

The Israeli army insists on blocking any restoration efforts or the removal of debris from the destroyed border area. Earlier this morning, an Israeli drone dropped a stun grenade near two pickup trucks in the town of Ramyeh while the drivers were loading scrap metal. The drivers fled the scene, and no injuries were reported. The ceasefire agreement faces a political deadlock because it is linked to several issues including the disarmament of Hezbollah forces north of the Litani River, Israel's withdrawal from five occupied Lebanese hills, and the granting of social rights to Palestinian refugees.

In this context, former head of the Progressive Socialist Party, Walid Jumblatt, a key political figure in Lebanon, revealed unexpectedly that "his party had handed its weapons over to the relevant authorities about three weeks ago." During a press conference on Wednesday evening, Jumblatt reiterated that he had informed President Joseph Aoun of his decision immediately after the latter's election, "and of his intention to fill constitutional vacancies," a declaration that sparked political debate on Friday. — Arab News

Russia kills 5 in Ukraine's Samar, as Putin seems ready for new peace talks

KYIV: Russian forces have continued to hammer Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region, launching a deadly attack on the industrial city of Samar for the second time in three days. Friday's missile attack killed five people and injured 23 others in southeastern Samar — located outside the region's main city, Dnipro — said regional governor Sergiy Lysak in a post on Telegram.

At least four of the wounded were in severe condition and were taken to hospital, he added. The attack followed missile strikes earlier this week on both Dnipro and Samar, which killed at least 23, as Russian forces attempted to gain a foothold in Dnipropetrovsk for the first time in over three years of war. Officials gave no immediate details about the damage inflicted on Samar, where an attack on an unidentified infrastructure facility on Tuesday killed two people.

Moscow earlier this week claimed to have captured two more villages near the border of the Dnipropetrovsk region. Separately, authorities in

Ukraine's northern region of Kharkiv said Russian attacks killed one person and wounded three others. Hundreds of kilometres to the south, in the Kherson region, authorities urged residents on Friday to prepare for extended periods without power after a Russian attack hit a key energy facility.

Governor Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram that "Russians decided to plunge the region into darkness". The Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched 363 long-range drones and eight missiles overnight into Friday, claiming that air defences stopped all but four of the drones and downed six cruise missiles. Russia's Defence Ministry, meanwhile, said 39 Ukrainian drones were downed in several regions overnight, including 19 over the Rostov region and 13 over the Volgograd region.

The continued attacks on Dnipropetrovsk came as President Vladimir Putin said that he intended to scale back military expenditure and also indicated he was ready for a new round of peace negotiations with

Ukraine. The Russian president said his country was ready to reduce the military budget in the long term, owing to budgetary pressures and the increased defence spending having fuelled inflation.

Speaking to reporters in Minsk, Belarus, on Friday, he alluded to a new round of peace negotiations with Ukraine, potentially in Istanbul, although the time and venue had yet to be agreed. He acknowledged that the peace proposals from Russia and Ukraine "are two absolutely contradictory memorandums", but added, "That's why negotiations are being organised and conducted, in order to find a path to bringing them closer together." Putin added that the two sides' negotiators were in constant contact and that Russia was ready to return the bodies of 3,000 more Ukrainian soldiers. He also said relations between Russia and the United States were beginning to stabilise, attributing the improvement to efforts by US President Donald Trump. — Aljazeera